

# Public Reviews of Delaware Licensed Child Care Centers



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November 2021



DELAWARE INSTITUTE FOR  
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**Early Childhood**

## Introduction to the Child Care Public Review Study

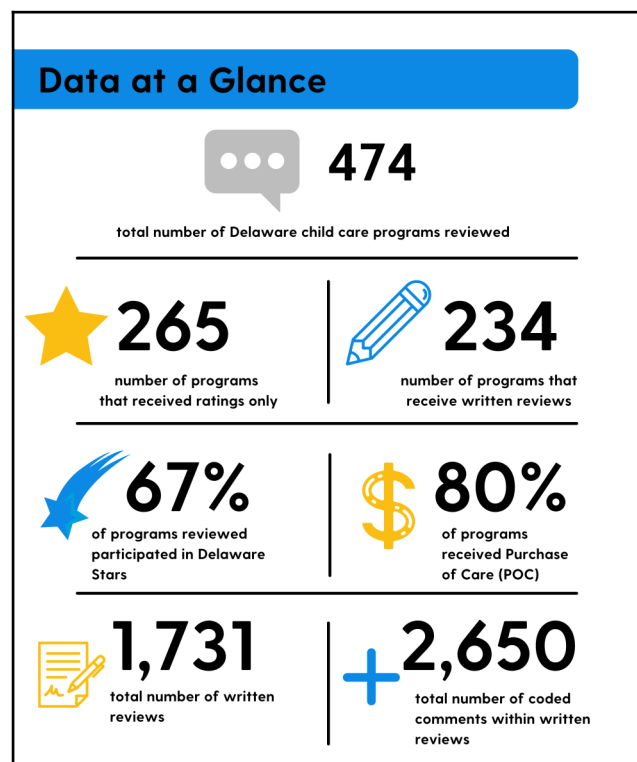
This study aims to examine consumers' satisfaction with and evaluation of their child care programs in Delaware. Google and Facebook consumer reviews posted between 2012 and 2019 were analyzed for 474 child care centers in Delaware. Public ratings were compared with Delaware Stars ratings to examine the alignment of ratings between consumers and Delaware Stars.

### Why are public consumer child care reviews important?

Public consumer reviews and ratings (generally a scale of 1 to 5 or 1 to 10) are generated by consumers based on their personal usage and experience. Public consumer reviews serve multiple purposes; they provide potential consumers with information about the quality of products and services from individuals who have used the service or product and they provide businesses with feedback on the perceptions of their product quality. Child care center reviews provide consumers with insights about reliability, trustworthiness, and cost. Additionally, reviews offer parents a quick and convenient way to “judge” the fit of a provider to their needs and offer information about program quality. Public reviews such as those found on Google and Facebook may also be useful to inform states on parent perspectives on child care quality.

### How were child care reviews gathered and analyzed?

Public consumer reviews from 2012 to 2019 were manually extracted from Google and Facebook by searching for each Delaware child care center's name and address. Programs' quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) participation and ratings were drawn from the Delaware Stars QRIS database. Centers' information (e.g., capacity and whether the program received Purchase of Care) was retrieved from the database of Delaware's Office of Child Care Licensing.

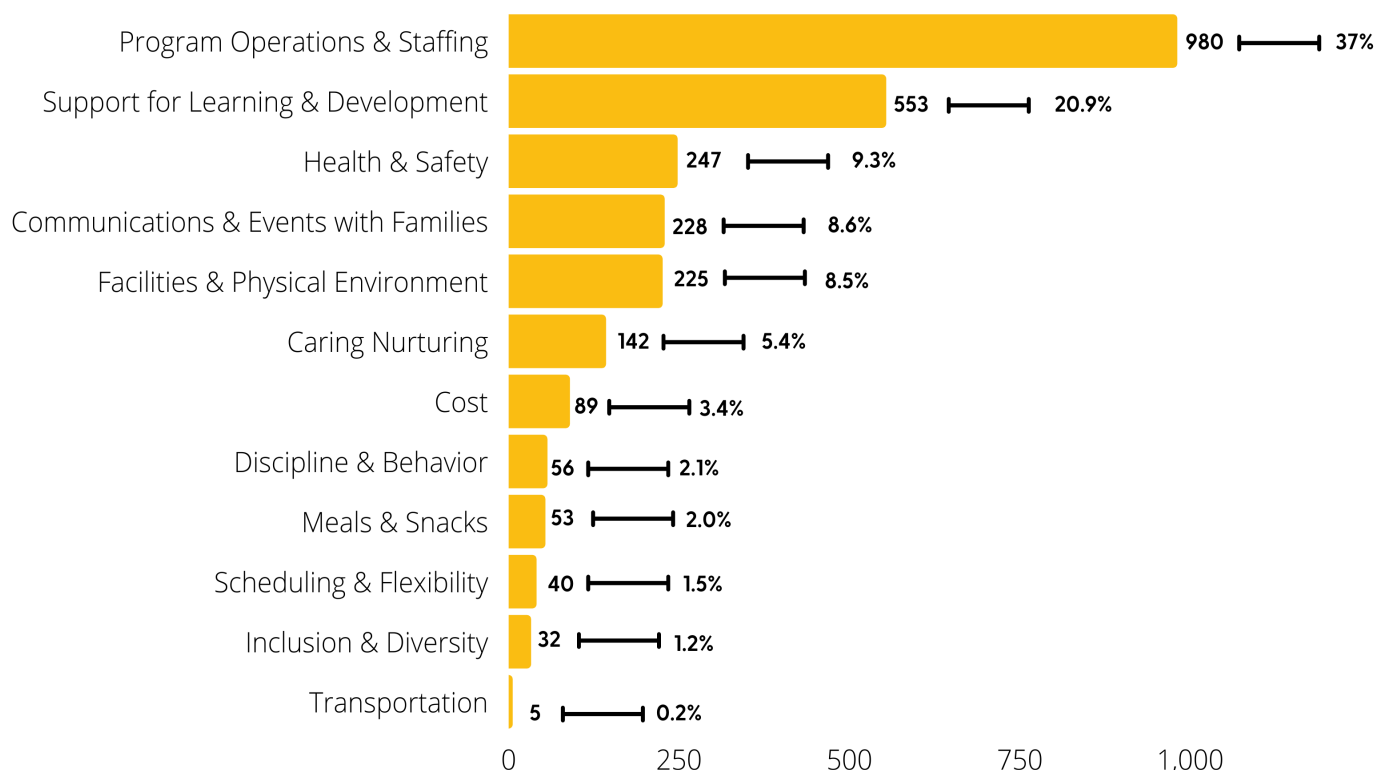


### What are the characteristics of child care programs that received public reviews?

Google and Facebook public ratings and reviews were retrieved from 474 child care centers in Delaware. There were 1,731 written reviews and 2,681 Google/Facebook ratings (scale of 1 to 5). Of the 474 centers, 265 centers received ratings only and 234 received written reviews or both ratings and written reviews. Of the 474 centers, 318 centers (67%) participated in Delaware Stars, and 381 centers (80.4%) reported receiving child care subsidies from Purchase of Care (POC).

## What topics are discussed in public child care reviews?

### Most Common Comments of Public Reviews

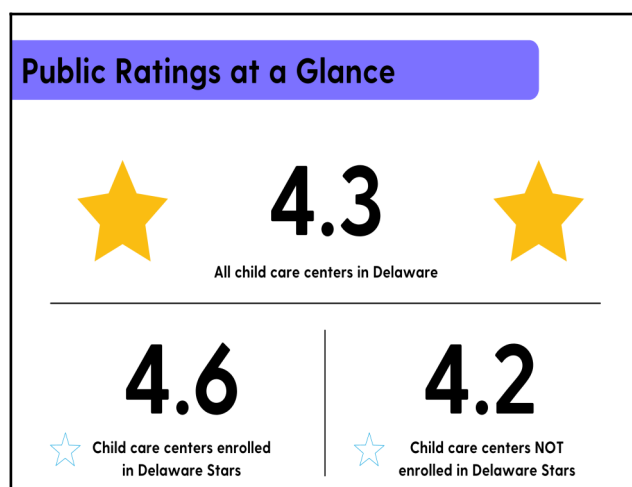


Note: 234 centers received written reviews. A total of 2,650 comments were coded within these reviews.

The analysis provides insight into what consumers view as important in evaluating child care centers. Of the 1,731 written reviews, a total of 2,650 comments were coded across multiple themes. Individual reviews were coded one time for each identified applicable theme. The majority of the consumer reviews centered on three main themes: Program Operations or Staffing (n = 980), Support Learning and Development (n = 553), and Health and Safety (n = 247). Most negative reviews were related to Program Operations or Staffing, Health and Safety, and Communication and Events with Families. However, the majority of reviews were positively rated (84.4%), indicating that most families were happy with program services.

## How do child care reviews differ between programs participating in Delaware Stars and non-participating programs?

The analysis of the Google and Facebook reviews showed that Delaware Stars programs are more likely to receive public ratings than programs that did not participate in Delaware Stars. Also, Delaware Stars programs tend to receive higher public ratings than non-participating Delaware Stars programs. However, the Delaware Stars ratings are significantly negatively related to consumers' ratings. This means that programs with higher star levels have lower public ratings. However, there are many variables that could affect this relationship, and when we account for the influences of several program and community characteristics, there are no longer significant differences between Delaware Stars ratings and consumer ratings.



## How is this information useful for improving the quality of child care?

Positive and negative platform reviews affect parent perceptions of child care centers. Positive reviews are shown to promote the image of a business and induce other consumers to purchase from the business, while negative reviews damage the reputation of a business and stop consumers from purchasing products and services. Further, negative reviews can serve as important feedback to businesses as means of improving quality.<sup>1</sup>

## What are the implications of these study findings?

To date, Delaware and most states use a Quality Rating and Improvement System to communicate quality levels to families and other community stakeholders. Public reviews of child care centers provide a mechanism for families to share their perspectives and their experiences with child care programs. Delaware public reviews indicate that the overwhelming number of comments were positive, with respondents sharing a wide range of strengths of child care centers throughout the state. Of the negative comments, most focused on health and safety and program operations. It is important to note that some public comments addressed issues not currently included in the state's QRIS system (e.g., health and safety), and efforts to incorporate parent perspectives may be useful in the future design of state systems of quality.

## Limitations

Although parents posted most consumer reviews, we do not technically know all the reviews are from parents. Public reviews may be subject to self-selection biases. In particular, consumers with negative experiences might be more likely to leave reviews. Also, since not all centers were reviewed, the characteristics of centers that received ratings or reviews may not represent the universe of all centers in Delaware.

<sup>1</sup> Amin, F., & Nika, F. A. (2019). EWOM as a Catalyst for Development of Quality Perception among E-Buyers. *Abhigyan*, 36(4), 57-67.

## About the Authors:

***Rena Hallam:*** Rena Hallam is a professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences and also serves as Director for the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood. Her research focuses on strategies for improving quality of both center-based and family child care environments with an emphasis on the design and implementation of state systems and policies.

***Jing Tang:*** Jing currently works as a Research Scientist at Child Trends. She recently completed her Ph.D. in the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences at the University of Delaware. While at UD, Jing worked as a research assistant at the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood from 2015-2021. Her research aims to improve the quality of early child care settings and ensure families' equitable access to high-quality child care programs. Specifically, Jing studies quality disparities in child care, parental child care decision-making processes, and the child care workforce. Jing was formerly a Mandarin teacher in different early child care settings.

***Annette Pic:*** Annette Pic is a doctoral student at the University of Delaware in the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences. She has a MS in Human Development and Family Sciences and is a certified Delaware early childhood education teacher. Her research interests include child-initiated learning and assessment in nature-based preschools, peer conflict resolution in the context of play, and early care and education access.

***Susan Lewis:*** Susan is currently a fourth-year Ph.D. student in the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences at the University of Delaware. Susan's research interests include policy implications on early childhood teacher well-being, specifically in the context of state Quality Rating Improvement Systems. Previously, Susan taught special education preschool, worked for the Arizona Department of Education, and has developed and conducted teacher professional development for a variety of early childhood organizations.



**The Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) is dedicated to improving early childhood experiences for young children and their families. This product was funded by the Office of Early Learning in partnership with the DIEEC.**