

QUALITY FIRST DISENROLLMENT DUE TO FUNDING REDUCTION POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

Quality First is a multiyear strategy that provides **continuous enrollment** for eligible center-based programs and family child care homes as funding is available. Beginning in FY 13, the Quality First model will not distinguish between state funded providers and regionally funded providers. Statewide funding will support the Quality First system by funding the costs for assessment, administration and TEACH scholarships for every participating program. Regional funds will fund the remaining Quality First components including coaching, financial incentives, child care scholarships and QF specialized technical assistance. It is recommended that Regional Councils continue to support all existing programs enrolled in Quality First.

In the event a Regional Council recommends reductions to Quality First in their funding plans, which requires board approval, and there is not enough funding to support all current enrolled programs, the Quality First Disenrollment due to Funding Reduction Policy will be implemented for disenrollment of programs.

CONSIDERATIONS PRIOR TO FUNDING REDUCTION

The following considerations are intended to be used by Regional Councils when considering reducing Quality First funding. The list is not exhaustive and is not meant to be used as a checklist or tally, but rather as suggestions for considerations during funding planning discussions.

1. Review System Building Goals
 - What is First Things First's philosophy about Quality, Access and Affordability?
 - What are the Regional priorities?
2. Duplication of Services
 - Are there strategies being funded that are providing services similar to Quality First?
3. Un-expended Funding
 - What current strategies are being underutilized?
 - Are there strategies in which funding could be reduced due to a trend of unexpended funding?
4. Cost/Benefit of Quality First
 - How will Quality First funding reduction impact other strategies?
5. Review of Quality First Data
 - Current wait list
 - Current vacancies
 - Number of eligible programs for Rating Only Enrollment Option
(Head Start, IDEA, Title 1, FTF Pre-K Program, school district tuition-only pre-K)
6. Linkage between Quality and Access

- How does reduction of Quality First impact the Region's ability to fund scholarships in future years as scholarships are increasingly tied to high quality programming?

APPROVAL FOR FUNDING REDUCTION

1. Quality First is a Quality and Access Strategy that requires Regional Council's approval for regional implementation. During each funding planning cycle, Regional Councils are able to:
 - approve funding for continued enrollment of participating programs;
 - expand Quality First for new enrollment opportunities; or,
 - reduce the Quality First funding allocation.
2. The Regional Director will inform the First Things First Senior Regional Director, the Quality First Director, Quality First Fiscal Specialist and Regional Fiscal Specialist in writing if a discussion on reducing Quality First funding is pending or ready to be placed on a Regional Council's agenda.
3. Recommendations for funding reductions go to the state board for consideration.
4. Contingent upon Board action, the Quality First team will implement the reduction process as indicated below.

PROCESS FOR REDUCTION

The following reduction steps will occur in sequential order. Each step will occur only if the number of slots targeted for reduction is not met in the previous step.

1. **Step One: Vacancy by attrition**
The Quality First team will place a hold on all current and new vacant slots. No new programs will be selected for enrollment. If the targeted number of slots for reduction is not reached through vacant slots, additional steps for disenrollment will be initiated.

If the targeted number of slots were not met in step one, the Quality First team will send a letter to all regionally enrolled programs informing them of the funding reduction prior to initiating any additional reduction steps.
2. **Step Two: Disenrollment of programs in Quality First corrective action**
Programs in Quality First corrective action enrollment status due to non-compliance of participant responsibilities as outlined in the Quality First Enrollment Agreement will be dis-enrolled.
3. **Step Three: Voluntary withdrawal**
Each enrolled program will be contacted and provide an opportunity for voluntary disenrollment. Additionally, programs will be provided the opportunity to be placed back on the Quality First waiting list. The Quality First team will inform programs if there is a Rating Only enrollment option available in their region.
4. **Step Four: Disenrollment of programs in enforcement action**



Programs with a license in enforcement action with the Department of Health Services (DHS) or certificate in suspension or revocation with Department of Economic Security (DES) will be disenrolled from Quality First.

5. Step Five: Disenrollment of most recent enrolled programs

The Quality First team will audit the enrollment date of all enrolled programs. Programs with the most recent enrollment dates will be dis-enrolled until the number of slots targeted for reduction are met.

NOTIFICATION OF DISENROLLMENT

1. All notifications of disenrollment will be administered by the Quality First team and documented in the Quality First database.
2. Programs which are disenrolled under the Quality First Reduction Policy will be offered an opportunity to be on the Quality First Waitlist. If the program is placed on the Quality First waiting list, the program will remain eligible for other FTF strategies, where available, and will be offered an opportunity to access telephone consultation through the Quality First Specialized Technical Assistance warmline in the areas of child health, early childhood mental health and inclusion special needs. Additionally, the program will receive selection priority should funding become available for future enrollment opportunities.

If a program declines the opportunity to be placed on the Quality First waiting list, the program **will not** be eligible for other FTF strategies.

***PLEASE NOTE:** Programs rated with a star of 3, 4 or 5 will be exempt from this process. Additionally, upon publication of Star Ratings, the Reduction Policy will be amended to reflect changes as linked to quality levels.