



FIRST THINGS FIRST

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- AGENDA ITEM: Second Read on Quality First Policies and Procedures for:
1. Informal Dispute Resolution
 2. Corrective Action Process
 3. Appeals Procedure for Star Rating or Enrollment Termination
 4. Disenrollment due to Funding Reduction
- BACKGROUND: The high stakes nature of Quality First Star Ratings requires the development of policies and procedures to formalize the processes that First Things First, Quality First grantee partners, and participating providers may use to ensure viable communication and resolutions ensuring effective use of Quality First resources. Four polices were presented to the Board in April 2012 for the first read. There were no recommended changes, and these polices are presented again for second read, and possible approval.
- RECOMMENDATION: The CEO recommends review and approval of these policies.

INFORMAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

The Informal Dispute Resolution Policy will be implemented by the Quality First grantee when a participant has a complaint with an agency partner or Quality First programmatic decision and/or policy. The informal dispute process will assist in addressing complaints that may include but are not limited to items such as: personality conflict, communication differences, explanation of assessment reports or any programmatic complaint relating to coaching, assessment, or consultation. In such instances, the Quality First grantee will facilitate the informal dispute process with participants. If the Quality First grantee, agency partner and/or participant believe that the complaint was not satisfactorily resolved after the initial informal review, First Things First will then participate in the informal dispute process and attempts will be made to assist all parties in reaching a reasonable solution.

INFORMAL DISPUTE PROCEDURE

1. Informal Review
 - a. The Quality First grantee and coaching agency should make all attempts to resolve complaints through direct communications with Quality First participant. In this step, the complaint should be discussed verbally during a teleconference and/or scheduled meeting with the participant. The Quality First grantee or coaching agency should document the discussion with the participant in the activity log of the extranet.
 - b. If it is determined that the participant is reluctant to discuss the complaint with the Quality First grantee and coaching agency, the grantee will notify the Director of Quality First. The Director of Quality First will then contact the participant to discuss the complaint and attempt to determine a solution. First Things First will notify the grantee of all discussions and meetings related to the complaint.
2. Formal Review
 - a. If the complaint is not resolved through the informal review, the participant, Quality First grantee and coaching agency may proceed to step two by submitting a Quality First Complaint form. The Quality First Complaint form will be used to document the following:
 - i. Description of the complaint
 - ii. Previous attempts made to resolve the issue
 - iii. Recommendations of possible solutions

*The Quality First Complaint form must be signed and submitted via postal mail, e-mail or fax to:

Quality First Director
First Things First
Central Avenue, Suite 800
Phoenix, Arizona 85012
Email: qualityfirst@azfff.gov
Fax: (602) 274-6351

3. Upon receipt of the Quality First Complaint form, the Quality First Director will:



- a. Review the complaint and determine if the process was followed. If the Informal Review did not occur, the Quality First Director may recommend that the Quality First grantee and coaching agency meet with the participant before proceeding further in the informal dispute resolution process.
- b. The Quality First Director will attempt to resolve the dispute through a meeting with all involved parties, first separately and then together. The Quality First Director will contact all parties and attempt to schedule the meetings within **14 days** of receipt of the Quality First Complaint form.
- c. The Quality First Director will mail a letter within **14 days** of the final meeting to all parties involved identifying the agency decision.



Quality First Complaint Form

Site Name and Address:	Telephone Number:
	Coaching Agency Name:
Director/Owner Name:	Date Form Completed:

Directions: Please complete this form and submit to the Quality First Director. All submissions are reviewed by First Things First.

The questions below are to be answered by the person making the complaint or by a person acting with knowledge and consent of the person making the complaint.

1. Describe the complaint/issue.

2. Has there been any attempt to resolve the complaint with the Quality First team (coach, assessor, consultant, supervisor etc.)? If so, please describe details of the telephone discussion, meetings, or written correspondence. Please also include a copy of the Corrective Action Plan as applicable.

3. Do you have recommendations for possible solutions?

Signature of Person filing the complaint

Type Name

Date

Signature of person completing the form
(if other than the person filing the complaint)

Type Name

Date

CORRECTIVE ACTION PROCESS

POLICY STATEMENT

The Corrective Action Process policy will be implemented when a participating center or home fails to adhere to the participant responsibilities as outlined in the Quality First Enrollment Agreement. The corrective action process is initiated after the coach and provider have discussed the areas of noncompliance with no successful outcome.

*Regulatory deficiencies are handled with the applicable regulatory agency. The corrective action process is not used for regulatory deficiencies.

PROCESS

1. The Quality First agency partner will notify the grantee when a Quality First participant fails to adhere to the participant responsibilities as outlined in the Quality First Enrollment Agreement. The notification will include the following:
 - a. Documentation of how the participant has failed to adhere to the participant responsibilities, including dates of non-adherence; and,
 - b. Documentation of dates when the participant was notified about the concerns noted above.
2. The Quality First grantee and/or agency partner will implement the corrective action process as indicated below:
 - a. First Notice
 - b. Development of a Corrective Action Plan
 - c. Recommendation for enrollment termination if a program does not adhere to the corrective action plan.
3. If a participant's performance is severe and/or repetitive, steps may be skipped and/or combined as approved by First Things First.

FIRST NOTICE

1. The first notice must be in writing and delivered by the coaching agency (both coaching supervisor and coaching program manager) during a scheduled in-person meeting with participant. The first notice should identify the following:
 - a. Specific incidents of concerns relating to participant participation or performance
 - b. Documentation that the above concerns have been verbally addressed with the provider prior to the First Notice
 - c. Specific standards in the Quality First Enrollment Agreement or Implementation Guide that were not followed
 - d. Necessary actions needed to remedy the situation

*The following language should be included in the letter: "Failure to improve the concerns addressed above will result in corrective action."

2. The Quality First grantee and/or agency partner will document the meeting discussion and attendees in the participant's activity log in the extranet. Additionally, the grantee will submit a copy of the first notice to First Things First.

DEVELOPMENT OF A CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

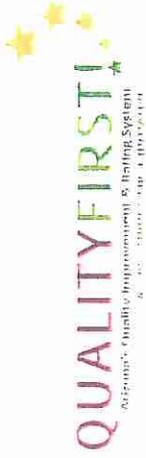
1. If noncompliance continues or is repeated after a first notice is completed, the Quality First grantee and/or agency partner will develop a Corrective Action Plan (CAP). The CAP will assist in monitoring performance and participation in efforts to foster an improved commitment to quality improvement.
 - a. FTF will review the developed CAP prior to the grantee and/or coaching agency reviewing with the provider.
2. The Quality First Corrective Action Plan form (attached) will be used and include the following components:
 - a. Program Name and Address
 - b. Program Designee/Main Contact
 - c. Date of Probationary Period (period of time that CAP is in place)
 - d. Grantee Name
 - e. Agency Name
 - f. Date of the first notice
 - g. Action Item - the specific areas of participation and performance that resulted in corrective action
 - h. Responsible Person for each action item
 - i. The target completion date for each action item as applicable
 - j. Action Deemed Successful When - the action to be taken to correct the noncompliance and persons responsible
3. The Quality First grantee and/or coaching agency will review the CAP with the provider during a scheduled, in-person meeting.
 - a. The Quality First grantee, coaching agency and participant will sign the CAP.
4. If the participant refuses to sign, refusal will be noted in place of the participant's signature. The Quality First supervisor and coach will meet regularly during the period that a CAP is being implemented to discuss and document the participant's progress or lack of progress for each action item in the Status Update column.
5. Following the last implementation date of the CAP, the Quality First coaching grantee and/or coaching agency partner will meet with the participant to review the CAP and identify whether participation or performance has been improved.

RECOMMENDATION OF TERMINATION

1. If the CAP fails to result in improved participation or performance, the Quality First coaching grantee will notify First Things First to recommend termination. First Things First will review the recommendation for termination and accompanying documents. First Things First will submit a decision in writing within **10 days** of the submitted recommendation.



2. Once a recommendation of termination from Quality First has been communicated by First Things First to a participant, that participant has the option to appeal their termination, per the Appeals Process.



Quality First Corrective Action Plan

Program Name/Address:	Grantee:
Program Designee:	Agency:
Date of Probationary Period:	Date of First Notice:

Action Item	Responsible Person	Target Completion Date	Action Deemed Successful When	Status Update

The Corrective Action Plan will be implemented for INSERT days. At the end of the INSERT days (or earlier if determined necessary) a meeting will be scheduled to review the outcomes of the Action Plan. **If it is determined that there is no improvement in participation or performance a termination from the Quality First program will be recommended.** If a recommendation for termination is submitted, First Things First will review the Corrective Action Plan, Quality Improvement Plan and all accompanying documents. First Things First will submit a decision in writing within 10 days of the submitted recommendation.

Participant Signature _____ Print Name _____ Date _____

Coaching Agency Designee _____ Print Name _____ Date _____

Coaching Grantee _____ Print Name _____ Date _____

APPEALS PROCEDURE

POLICY STATEMENT

The Appeals Procedure will be implemented by First Things First when a Quality First participant has requested the right to appeal a Star Rating or enrollment termination. Star Rating and enrollment termination are the only two appealable actions in the Quality First program. The Appeals Process includes three steps indicated below:

- Review of Appeal
- Administrative Hearing
- Board Approval

REVIEW OF APPEAL

1. The Review of Appeal is intended to resolve the appeal at First Things First before moving forward with an administrative hearing.
2. A participant may submit a Request for Appeal within **60 days** of being notified of a Star Rating or enrollment termination. The Request for Appeal must be submitted in writing to the Quality First Director using the Request for Appeal form (attached) and sent by electronic or postal mail to:

Director of Quality First
First Things First
Central Avenue, Suite 800
Phoenix, Arizona 85012
Email: qualityfirst@azftf.gov
Fax: (602) 274-6351

3. Upon receipt of the Request for Appeal, the Quality First Director and Senior Director for Early Learning, Chief Program Officer (CPO), and/or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will review the Request for Appeal and provide a written response, which includes a scheduled meeting date, to the participant within **14 days** of the receipt of the request.
4. Upon receipt of the Request for Appeal, First Things First Leadership designee(s) and Quality First Director will review the following as applicable:
 - Relevant Quality First policy and/or procedure in the Quality First Implementation Guide
 - Assessment Reports
 - Quality Improvement Plans
 - Documentation of previous meetings/discussions, activity logs and written correspondence
 - Corrective Action Plans



5. The Quality First Director and Senior Director for Early Learning, CPO, and/or CEO will meet with the participant and provide a decision on the Request for Appeal.

ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING

1. If attempts to resolve the appeal as above are not achieved, the participant may contact the Office of Administrative Hearings to request an administrative hearing with an Administrative Law Judge. Written requests must be submitted by postal mail to:

Office of Administrative Hearings
1400 West Washington Suite 101
Phoenix, Arizona 85007
Office (602) 542-9826 Fax (602) 542-9827
Website: www.azoah.com

2. If a participant proceeds with an administrative hearing, all Quality First services and benefits, including incentives, coaching, assessment and consultation services, will be placed on hold until a decision is rendered.
 - a. If a participant has a current T.E.A.C.H. scholar/employee, that person will be able to continue receiving the scholarship for the remainder of their current contract.
 - b. If an employee has been deemed eligible for an award through FTF Professional REWARDS, that award will remain valid for the timeframe for which it was awarded.

BOARD APPROVAL

Once a recommendation decision is rendered by the Office of Administrative Hearings, the First Things First Board will review the decision and take action to accept, reject or modify the recommendation. The Quality First Director will notify the participant of the final Board decision in writing.



Request for Appeal

Directions: Please complete this form and submit to the Quality First Director. All appeal requests are reviewed by First Things First. In addition, please include all documentation that has been received in regards to enrollment termination or Star Rating. Documentation may include but is not limited to: Corrective Action Plans, Quality Improvement Plans, Assessment Reports, meeting notes, emails or any written correspondence.

Site Name and Address:	Telephone Number:
	Email Address:
Director/Owner Name:	Date Form Completed:

The questions below are to be answered by the person making requesting the appeal.

1. What is reason for the appeal? Star Rating Enrollment Termination
2. Have you reviewed the Quality First Star Rating Policy and/ or the Participant Selection Policy? Yes No
3. Provide the reason for appealing the action.
4. Have you met with the Quality First coaching team to discuss the action? If so, please describe details of the telephone discussion, meetings, or written correspondence.
5. Is there any other information you would like to share relevant to this appeal request?

Signature of Person requesting the appeal	Type Name	Date
Signature of Person requesting the appeal (if other than the person filing the complaint)	Type Name	Date



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.