



"I look at YoungStar not as a task but as a way for me to continually strive towards excellence. You are able to set your own goal and establish a pathway to that ultimate goal."

*- Angela Lampkin, Head Start and Early Head Start Director
Next Door, Milwaukee*

Next Door Head Start 29th Street, Milwaukee

Falling in Love with Child Care

Angela Lampkin got her start in early education in 1990 when she began working at a Milwaukee child care program geared towards teen moms. It was her first experience in child care as a support person in the infant room, but she was hooked. "I fell in love with the work," said Angela, "and have been doing it ever since." Angela is currently the Head Start and Early Head Start Director supporting sites owned and operated by Next Door in Milwaukee, including the 5 Star program Next Door Head Start on 29th Street. Angela was the program Director at the 29th Street location when the program transitioned into YoungStar participation and earned a 5 Star rating. "Some of the infrastructure was already there for quality," said Angela, noting that having a larger program with an HR and a finance department helped, allowing her to focus on things that dealt more directly with the children and their families. "YoungStar highlighted other opportunities we had to further enhance what was in place." Angela was uniquely prepared for YoungStar since she was actually able to provide input and feedback around the creation of the system due to her role in the WI Child Care Administrator's Association. She was also a part of the first cohort for the 3-class Leadership Credential, and her final project involved researching and presenting on a state quality rating system to a WI Department of Children and Families representative. She said this not only prepared her for the YoungStar transition in terms of what needed to be done, but set her up to better understand the need for a quality rating system before her program ever started in YoungStar.

Post-YoungStar

Transitioning into YoungStar went smoothly for Next Door Head Start, with a slow but steady process of adjustments in the program to bring certain programming pieces in line with YoungStar policies. A few of the things the program focused on included staff training, their process for tracking individual child outcomes through weekly lesson plans, creating policies and procedures for parents/employees around breast-feeding (including adding a lactation room), and family engagement changes, such as a focus on Healthy Bites that lead to the creation of mini children's gardens in collaboration with families. "What I would say overall, is that you are doing YoungStar with the mindset of improving the services you provide for children, families and staff," stated Angela. "Use it as an opportunity to really grow your business and grow your staff. You want the children you serve to be better off at the end of the day as a result of your services. With YoungStar you get some support in order to do that." Moving forward, the program continues to look for ways to be increasingly innovative and efficient, focusing on a whole family approach to support parents as their children's primary and most important teacher. Angela added that the program has mentored other programs to help them increase their YoungStar rating so that more children are receiving high quality care in the Milwaukee area.

Wisconsin's Stars are Shining

YoungStar informs parents, recognizes quality providers and brings resources and support to programs committed to improving quality. But what it's really all about is helping Wisconsin children shine bright.