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# Quality Rating Improvement Systems: National Scan of School Age Programs

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# Contents

# Introduction

This report contains information on a study conducted by American Institutes for Research (AIR) to make recommendations for a School Age Design of Great Start to Quality, Michigan's tiered quality rating improvement system (QRIS). The first report contained information about the current quality improvement efforts for school age programs in Michigan. This second report presents information about the current quality improvement efforts for school age programs nationally. Together, these reports will inform a final report of recommendations for Michigan's School Age Design of Great Start to Quality.

The Early Childhood Investment Corporation contracted with AIR to gather recommendations for the development of Michigan's School Age Design of Great Start to Quality. The collaborative project has the following three key objectives:

1. Develop a definition of school age with input from Michigan stakeholders
2. Review current school age quality improvement efforts in Michigan and nationally
3. Make recommendations to build a comprehensive QRIS for school age programming in Michigan.

This report outlines information collected about current quality improvement efforts for school age programs from statewide and national stakeholders.

# Methods

The project team used a mixed-methods approach to data collection that included two key components: (1) a review of available quality improvement documents and (2) phone interviews with statewide and national stakeholders. Each form of data collection and associated data source is described in the sections that follow.

## Sample

The project team invited individuals from 11 states to participate in a phone interview to share information related to school age QRIS. The following states were included as part of the scan:

- Arkansas
- Delaware
- Maine
- Maryland
- Massachusetts
- New York
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- Pennsylvania
- Wisconsin

The project team identified participants based on their connection to school age QRIS. Most interviewees worked for their state's department of education in positions such as registry coordinator, program manager, or branch chief, whereas others worked closely with the state department of education, but for an independent organization (e.g., a university).

In addition to the 11 state representatives, the project team also invited individuals from two national organizations to participate. National stakeholders represented school age child care at the Quality Center, as well as Zero to Three. Appendix A contains a list of individuals interviewed.

## Document Review

The project team reviewed documents related to the current school age quality improvement efforts in each of the states identified as part of the national scan. The project team used the states' QRIS standards as the primary data source. We also reviewed QRIS application manuals or guides, QRIS program website information (e.g., rating application forms, tools, and updates sections), internal program evaluations of state QRIS models, and technical assistance consultant organizational content. The document review also included external documents provided by

third-party organizations: Council on Accreditation (COA) Child and Youth Development Program Standards; QRIS National Learning Network resources and state profiles; third-party evaluations of statewide QRIS models; and AIR's Statewide Afterschool Network National Scan. Appendix B contains a reference list of resources used during document review.

Two key themes emerged from the document review: QRIS models are administered from a range of government departments across states, and most state's standards are aligned with national standards. The following two subsections will explain each of these themes in more detail.

**Administration of QRIS**

QRIS models were administered in a range of government departments across states, with the two main bodies being the states' Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services. Table 1 summarizes the various state departments that administer QRIS. No themes emerged from the "Other" category. Ohio's model was administered by both the Department of Education and the Department of Job and Family Services; Pennsylvania's was operated by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning within the Department of Public Welfare; and Wisconsin's model was administered by the Department of Children and Families. New York's situation is somewhat unique in that the QRIS model is implemented by the New York Early Childhood Advisory Council, a division of the Council on Children and Families, which serves as a broker between the state's health, education, and human services agencies.

**Table 1. Administration of State QRIS Programs**

| | Arkansas | Delaware | Maine | Maryland | Massachusetts | New York | North Carolina | Ohio | Oklahoma | Pennsylvania | Wisconsin |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Department of Education | | X | | X | X | | | | | | |
| Department of Health and Human Services | X | | X | | | | X | X | X | | |
| Other governance or administration | | | | | | X | | X | | X | X |

**Alignment of State Standards With National Standards**

The second theme that emerged from the document review was that most states have standards for school age programs that align with national standards, either the COA Standards for Child and Youth Development Programs or the National AfterSchool Association (NAA) standards.

The NAA standards are designed for programs serving children and youth ages five to 14. The NAA standards are organized under six main categories: human relationships; indoor environment; outdoor environment; activities; safety, health, and nutrition; and administration. Eight elements included in the human relationships category pertain to interactions among staff, children and youth, and families. The indoor environment category includes two elements related

to the indoor space meeting the needs of children and youth in the program. One element within the outdoor environment category related to the outdoor space meeting the needs of children and youth in the program. The activities category includes four elements related to the program schedule, youth choice in activities, intention of activities, and materials for activities. The safety, health, and nutrition category includes five elements related to the safety and security of the children and youth, supervision, and food and drinks. The final category, administration, contains 15 elements related to ratios, supervision, family involvement, program planning, policies and procedures, orientation and training, and management practices.

The content of the COA for child and youth development (CYD) programs is specifically targeted at early childhood education (ECE), afterschool programs (ASPs), and youth development (YD) programs. The standards are designed to support these programs' growth and stability, providing indicators to measure results, with a focus on the health, safety, and rights of children and youth (Council on Accreditation, n.d.).

The COA standards fall into two main themes with three associated subcategories:

1. Administration and management standards

    • Child and youth development human resources (CYD-HR)

    • Child and youth development program administration (CYD-AM)

2. Service standards

    • Afterschool and youth development standards (CYD-AYD)

Each category incorporates specific practices that support quality programming and promote positive outcomes for children and youth. Most states included in the scan have standards that are aligned with the COA afterschool and youth development standards (CYD-AYD) and fall into six broad categories:

1. Licensing and accreditation

2. Administrative policies and procedures, leadership, and management

3. Learning environment and developmentally appropriate practice

4. Program evaluation

5. Staffing and professional development

6. Parent and family involvement and community engagement

Appendix C shows the alignment of state standards for school age programs with the COA Afterschool and Youth Development Standards. Generally speaking, within these categories there was the most alignment of state QRIS standards with continuous quality improvement, family connections, community involvement and partnerships, outdoor environment, indoor environment, and building healthy relationships between children and youth and adults.

In addition to the document review, the AIR project team conducted phone interviews with the key stakeholders. The following section describes the measure used and the information collected.

## Interview Measure

AIR developed a phone interview protocol to collect information about how other states have designed a QRIS to include questions about school age. Phone interviews were one hour in duration with selected interview participants from states listed on page three. The interviews were semistructured, posing some closed-ended questions but mostly open-ended questions. At the beginning of each interview, interviewees were provided with the project background and the objectives of the interview. The project team used a data collection theme tracker to compile interview results. The data collection theme tracker can be found in Appendix D.

The project team explored six categories in the interviews related to other states' school age QRIS: system models, tiered program standards, monitoring, public availability of quality ratings, supports available to meet progressive standards, and the operating system used. In the following sections, we briefly describe each theme.

### System Models

The AIR team was interested in learning whether the QRIS for school age programs is included in the QRIS for early learning and care programs, and the extent to which they are linked (or separate). We were also interested in whether the QRIS is linked to licensing or to child care subsidies, and what types of programs are included in the school age QRIS, as well as the age of children and youth served by program in the QRIS.

### Tiered Program Standards

The AIR team wanted more information about the standards that are assessed in each state's QRIS, including the number of tiers and the approach to scoring and rating programs. The AIR team also asked questions related to the alignment of the tiered program standards across different program types, as well as with the state's early learning standards and national standards (e.g., NAA and COA standards). Included in this category is information related to how states have attempted to avoid duplication of the school environment while also supporting the curriculum used during the school day.

### Monitoring

The phone interview gathered data on the assessment measures and tools that states use to discern quality levels within the QRIS. If an instrument is used, interviewees were asked about the reliability and validity of the tool. In terms of staff for monitoring, the AIR team was interested in knowing who conducted the assessments, how many assessors are involved statewide, the qualifications necessary to become an assessor, and the way in which the reliability of the assessors was checked. Interviewees were asked about the process of assessment and what role this played in the overall QRIS. Finally, the AIR team wanted to know how states were funding their monitoring process.

### Public Availability of Quality Ratings

To learn how ratings are made public, including how families are made aware of the ratings, the AIR team included questions about this topic on the survey. In addition, the AIR team asked how

families access information about QRIS and the specific program ratings, as well as the longevity of the public quality ratings.

**Supports to Meet Progressive Standards**

Included in the category about supports, interviewees were asked about the professional development and technical assistance that is available to programs that are interested in becoming part of the QRIS or programs that want to improve their quality rating. In addition, interviewees were asked to explain the quality improvement consultation provided in their state and the resources in place to support this process. The AIR team was interested in learning more about the incentives, financial and otherwise, that are available to programs and whether there are any requirements to participate in other programs, such as licensing or having a 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) grant. Interviewees were asked whether there is a credentialing process in the state. Finally, the AIR team asked questions about how the supports to programs are funded.

**Operating System**

The AIR team was interested in learning about each state's operating system, including whether it required online or paper submission, or a combination of the two. In addition to the application system, interviewees were asked about the validation and assessment system and whether it is online, paper, or a combination. Interviewees were also asked about how the operating system is funded.

The AIR team analyzed and summarized the resulting data using traditional qualitative methods. Individual state profiles can be found in Appendix E. The findings section summarizes the themes that emerged from the interviews and document review, providing specific examples when appropriate.

# Findings

As noted in the previous section, interviewees were asked a series of questions to learn more about the design of the school age QRIS in their state. A total of 14 individuals, representing 11 states, as well as the national perspective, were interviewed between July 30 and August 13, 2014. The AIR team analyzed information from the interviews, along with information collected during document review to determine themes in each of the study categories. This section has six subsections that correspond with each study category: system models, tiered program standards, monitoring, how quality ratings are made public, supports to meet progressive standards, and the operating system used. In addition, we summarized information about funding for the QRIS.

## System Models

Several types of programs are included in state QRIS models, including center based (infant, toddler, and school age), family child care, large family child care, group child care, Head Start, prekindergarten, school age before school and afterschool programs, public school exempt programs, standalone school age programs, part-day programs, special education, and Title I programs. Table 2 shows the type of program included in QRIS by state.

**Table 2. Type of Program Included in QRIS by State**

| Program Type | AR | DE | ME | MD | MA | NY | NC | OH | OK | PA | WI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Child care centers | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Day camps | | | | | | | | | | | X |
| Early Head Start | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Family child care homes | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Group child care | X | | | | X | | | | | X | |
| Head Start | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| In-home child care | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| License-exempt providers | | | | | X | X | | | | | X |
| Preschools and prekindergarten | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X |
| Public preschools and prekindergarten (Title 1) | | | | X | X | | X | | | | |
| School-age programs | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X |
| NY State Education Department-registered nursery schools | | | | | | X | | | | | |
| Special education preschools | | | | | | X | | X | | | |

There is variety in how states define school age; however, most definitions encompassed the age 5–12 range, with two states going up to 18, one to 16, and one to 13. One state defines school

age as "kindergarten and up," with no defined end date; however, the stakeholder from that state stated that most children age out of child care programs around 12 or 13 years of age because of the facility's guidelines. Table 3 shows the coverage of licensing and the definition of school age across states covered by this scan. Licensing requirements are indicated by an X, and the ages included in the "school age" definition is presented as a boldface **X**.

**Table 3. Licensing and Definition of School Age by State**

|  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arkansas | X | X | X | X | X | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** |
| Delaware | X | X | X | X | X | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** |
| Maine | X | X | X | X | X | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | X | X | X | X |  |  |
| Maryland | X | X | X | X | X | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | X |  |  |
| Massachusetts | X | X | X | X | X | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** |  |  |  |  |  |
| New York | X | X | X | X | X | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| North Carolina | X | X | X | X | X | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ohio | X | X | X | X | X | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** |  |  |  |
| Oklahoma | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Pennsylvania | X | X | X | X | X | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Wisconsin | X | X | X | X | X | **X** | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Most states require programs to be licensed to be part of the QRIS. As shown in Table 3, licensing and "school age" definitions overlap between 5 and 12 years of age across all states included in the scan. Several states require programs to be licensed for one year before becoming eligible to participate in QRIS. Of those states, in some cases, programs that have not been licensed for a year can apply for a waiver to enroll students during that period. One state recognizes approved license-exempt programs; even though licensing is part of the first star, a license exempt program can complete an affidavit acknowledging that they have met the other criteria for Level 1 to proceed to Level 2. One state does not require programs to be licensed to participate in the QRIS; however, to move past a two-star rating, programs must be licensed and in good standing. One state is considering a revision that would make a Level 1 rating in the QRIS a required component of licensing.

Most of the states in the scan indicated that QRIS was not a required component of licensing; however, at least two states had plans to review their licensing rules and incorporate QRIS participation. For example, Arkansas is currently reviewing their licensing with the intention to incorporate the QRIS Level 1 standards as a requirement for being in good standing. In only one state is licensing a component of the QRIS and the QRIS reciprocally a requirement for licensing; in this case, the state fully integrated QRIS and licensing functions and governance due to capacity and cost considerations. North Carolina does not require before-school and afterschool programs to be licensed to participate in the QRIS unless those programs want to receive subsidy payments.

States do not provide for substantially different licensing regulations for school age programs; if licensing is linked with the QRIS, the nature of that link is largely the same across program types. The only notable exception made would be in the coverage of licensing; for example in New York, child care center licensing applies to children between the ages of 0 and 12, whereas licensing for school age centers applies to children up to the age of 13. Most states published separate licensing requirements for each of the program types covered, including school age. Interviewees at the national level noted that these licensing requirements can be very difficult for school age programs to acquire. The relative size, and longer history, of the early child care field as compared with school age programming means that licensing may appear out of reach for school age programs. In particular, the indoor and outdoor environment requirements of typical licensing criteria are often much more stringent than school age programs can achieve relative to early care programs.

States vary in their approach to connecting early care and learning with school age care. Some states differentiate program types by focusing on family child care versus a "center-based" program, which is inclusive of school age groups. Other states have separate but "linked" systems, whereby standards are similar but programs serving a school age population have special criteria (this is discussed in greater detail in the Tiered Program Standards section).

According to interviewees at the national level, there is significant variation of participation in QRIS models across program types; generally, early care and learning programs are more likely to participate in QRIS than school age care programs. Interviewees at the national level noted that one of the factors contributing to this comparison is that school age programs report that the benefits of and incentives to participation are not clearly presented. More generally, school age programs are not always included into the strategic decision making at the inception of QRIS models, and this likely has residual impacts on participation. Data to support these claims are outside the realm of the current study.

QRIS is linked to the child care subsidy in all but two states in the scan. One of the two has a deadline of January 2015 for all subsidy reimbursement programs to participate in QRIS. In at least one state, being part of the QRIS was not originally required for subsidy reimbursement; however, they have transitioned over time to make it a requirement. With the transition, programs already receiving subsidy are given two years to obtain a one-star rating in the QRIS and new programs are required to have a one-star rating or higher to receive subsidy reimbursement. Five states have a tiered reimbursement system for the higher ratings, so that either subsidy reimbursement begins for a three-star rating or reimbursements are tiered across all QRIS ratings. Interviewees at the national level reported that school age programs often report difficulty in implementing tiered subsidy reimbursement as part of their QRIS participation. It was suggested this is the case due to the wide variety of programs serving school age children and youth. Relevant technical assistance and resources should be made available to programs at the inception of a QRIS model if participation is not to be discouraged.

## Tiered Program Standards

States have a variety of standards in their QRIS, including compliance with licensing, professional development, workforce development and education qualifications, learning environment, healthy indoor and outdoor environments, family and community engagement and

partnerships, program evaluation, management and administration, child and youth health and development, curriculum, authentic assessment, accreditation, and developmentally appropriate learning and practices. In addition, at least one state includes ratios and accreditation as optional standards for higher level ratings. In this case, the QRIS is a hybrid model in which higher tiers were points based. Programs can opt to earn points from being assessed on ratios and accreditation to supplement their overall points.

Most states have common standards across different program types and introduce variation in scoring or special criteria for certain program types, including programs serving school age children and youth. For example, family child care programs in Arkansas are required to use a business administration scale, whereas center-based school age programs are required to use a program administration scale. Only one state indicated that there is no variation in standards across program type or alternative pathway that exists.

The majority of states interviewed have a block system, whereas four have a points system and one state is a hybrid. With a block system, programs must meet all qualifications of a given rating level to receive that rating. If a program does not meet all qualifications, then it is automatically dropped down to the next level. Even in the states reporting to use block systems, individual criteria of assessment within a given level are often published for parent's reference. In contrast, for a points system, there is a cutoff that programs must meet to be rated at each level. For example, in New York the rating is determined by a points system in such a way as to ensure that points are earned evenly across each category assessed.

At least one state uses a hybrid system whereby the first three tiers are a building block approach, meaning that programs must meet all program standards of a lower star rating to achieve a higher rating for one, two, or three stars. However, to achieve a four- or five-star rating, there is a points system with cutoff scores. At least one state also reports integrating licensing in such a way that the otherwise points-based system might present as a hybrid model. Specifically, while scoring is points based, failure to be in compliance with licensing results in a program being dropped down to a one-star rating regardless of which level the program received initially.

Several states report considering transitioning to a hybrid model. Of the four states that currently have a points system, at least one is undergoing a review of the model with the intent to transition toward a hybrid system. Of the six states reporting to use a block system, at least two are intending to introduce hybrid elements. For example, Arkansas is currently implementing a review of their QRIS model that would add a fourth and fifth star level that would be points based, while retaining a block system for their lower star levels. Similarly, Massachusetts is currently reviewing whether to incorporate hybrid elements into their QRIS model.

## Monitoring

To obtain information about program monitoring, interviewees were asked a series of questions that fell into three categories: the assessment measures and tools, the role and qualifications of the assessors, and the process of assessment. Each of these categories is described next.

**Assessment Measures and Tools**

States use a variety of measures and tools to determine a program's level of quality; however, most states included in the scan use the School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS). According to the Environment Rating Scale Institute's website, SACERS is "designed to assess group-care programs for children of school age, 5 to 12" (Environment Rating Scales Institute, n.d., para. 2).

Two states do not require a specific observation tool to be used as part of the QRIS. However, in one case, school age programs use an age-appropriate environment rating scale to complete the self-assessment criteria required for some of the QRIS levels. In these states, staff complete the self-assessment tool and submit it as part of the rating process. At least seven states reported allowing programs to self-administer the assessment tool: Arkansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. One state uses an internally developed measurement tool; in this case, the state moved away from other tools to an internally developed tool because of capacity constraints at the state level. However, even in this case, programs are still allowed to use an age-appropriate environment rating scale to complete the self-assessment components of the ratings process as long as the tool addresses the quality of the classroom environment and the staff/child interaction.

In addition to the SACERS and internally developed tools, programs in Arkansas use the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) tool. According to the Center for Youth Program Quality's website, the YPQA "is a validated instrument designed to evaluate the quality of youth programs and identify staff training needs" (Center for Youth Program Quality, n.d., para. 1). The YPQA is designed to assess programs serving youth in Grades 4–12. There is also a School-Age PQA for children in kindergarten through sixth grade; however, the interviewee did not specify whether the state uses the YPQA or the School Age PQA (Smith & Hohmann, 2005).

Finally, Massachusetts allows programs to use two additional tools: the Arnett-Caregiver Interaction Scale (Arnett/CIS) and the Assessment of Program Practices–Observation (APT-O). The APT-O is used as a self-assessment tool in the state, whereas programs may choose to use the Arnett/CIS to "measure the emotional tone, discipline style, and responsiveness of the caregiver in the classroom" (Massachusetts Executive Office of Education, n.d., para. 4; see also Tracy, Surr, & Richer, 2012).

**Assessors**

The number of assessors in each state and how states fill those positions varies. The number of assessors ranges from six in one state to 130 in another. It is important to note that the states that employ more assessors do so through their licensing entity, whereas other states have fewer assessors who are dedicated to conducting site visits solely for the QRIS, separate from licensing. It should also be noted that some states contract out assessment work, whereas other states directly hire assessment staff. For example, in Arkansas, assessment is contracted to a team of assessors at Arkansas State University Childhood Services; in contrast, in Massachusetts, the state hires program quality specialists (assessors) directly, and these are located in each QRIS region.

Most states require their assessors to have at least a bachelor's degree in a relevant field (e.g., child development), as well as experience with the types of programs they are observing. Additional requirements may include experience as an assessor, experience at the administrator level within a program, a certain number of years of experience in the field, or achieving a certain degree of reliability on the state's assessment tool. One state requires a practicum for all assessors and employs behavioral interviewing techniques. The interviewee stated seeing a positive difference from conducting behavioral interviews; the assessors' strengths and preferences are easily seen from the beginning. Finally, in the case of Arkansas where assessment is contracted out, assessors are still required to be trained in YPQA or SACERS, to hold at least a bachelor's degree in a relevant field, and have experience in administrator work in a program setting.

**Assessment Process**

Most states have a formal rating process that involves varying levels of assessment. For example, in at least four states, Level 1 of the QRIS is licensing and thus does not require assessment outside of the licensing requirements. For these states, programs must demonstrate that they are licensed and in good standing with licensing agencies, have been in operation for a specified period of time, and provide associated evidence to the administrating body of the QRIS before receiving their Level 1 rating. However, additional assessments, visits, or information such as staff education may be required for programs that want to apply for a higher level. States have different requirements for the number of classrooms or program offerings that must be visited, ranging from 30 to 60 percent, during an assessment visit. For other states, participation in the QRIS may require a program to be licensed and in good standing with licensing agencies, but the license is not itself equivalent to a first-tier rating.

In addition, in some states, the frequency of visits varies according to rating. In one state, programs with a one-star rating are required to have a reassessment after one year, programs with a two- or three-star rating after two years, and programs with four- or five-star ratings are required to have an assessment after three years. In other states, a program's rating may be valid for one year regardless of level, whereas programs in other states keep their ratings for three years. One state reported significant cost savings by performing complete rating assessments once every three years. Programs in that state are still visited by a licensing specialist annually to ensure compliance with licensing.

There is variation among states in terms of how assessment is related to the quality improvement process. For most states, assessment was conducted alongside quality improvement consultations, and the role of the assessor was also linked to the quality improvement process and technical assistance providers. However, in at least one state, assessment is kept separate from the quality improvement process.

## Public Availability of Quality Ratings

States included in the scan did not differentiate between early childhood and school age in terms of how ratings are made public. Most states make program ratings available through their websites. Only two states do not make ratings publicly available at this time. One of these states mentioned that only 330 programs are participating and making ratings available could be

deemed as unfair. The other state shares aggregate data with parents. However, both states indicated that they intend to make ratings available in the future, and one state reports a requirement to post public ratings on their website as a criterion of the Early Learning Challenge Grant, thus intending to begin publishing ratings in the medium term.

For most states that make ratings public via their website, ratings remain online from one to five years. At least one state shows ratings from prior years as well as the current rating. One state does not have a time limit associated with ratings. Because they conduct ongoing monitoring, ratings last as long as the facility meets the criteria. In addition to the use of departmental website, one state also has an app for the iPhone that lists ratings associated with programs.

In addition to making ratings available online, many states offer ways for programs to advertise their involvement in the QRIS; there is no evidence that these awareness-raising activities are targeted specifically at school age programming, but rather all programs in the QRIS are advertised. Several states provide certificates, banners, and other marketing materials to programs. For example, programs in Oklahoma receiving higher than a one-star rating are given a certificate to display next to their license. In both Oklahoma and Wisconsin, programs are provided with decals for the windows at their facility and for their vehicles. In North Carolina, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has developed a system to spread the word about programs that receive a star rating. DHHS gives programs a press release template to make it easy for them to send information to their local newspaper. Arkansas does not currently produce traditional printed material; rather, they rely on online social networks, such as Facebook, to target younger parents. Other common methods for raising awareness of the QRIS rating system and program ratings among families includes newsletters, public service announcements, printed brochures, and collaboration with local Child Care Resource and Referral partners.

In addition to programs advertising their rating, states have developed ways to advertise QRIS to families and the community. Several states conduct presentations and run workshops to educate the field. States also provide informational brochures to families and the community. One state created a marketing video that was on their website and distributed via Facebook and Twitter, whereas another state uses social media to spread the word about QRIS.

## Supports to Meet Progressive Standards

All states included in the scan offer professional development, training, or technical assistance to support programs in the QRIS. States provide training sessions around the state, often regionally, as well as offer one-on-one consultation for programs to learn more about QRIS and the rating levels. Much of these training services are focused on early childhood; however, these types of supports are available also to school age program staff. Often, the available training will be the same but the content of the training will differ.

States often require a minimum number of hours of professional development within a set amount of time (e.g., annually or every two years) to be included in the QRIS. Training sessions are offered in-person and online (e.g., via webinar) for staff in all program types, including school age, in the QRIS. Some states offer trainings free of charge to participants, some try to keep charges to a minimum (e.g., $5 per training), and others allow program staff to apply for

reimbursement for training costs up to a certain amount (e.g., $400 per year). At least two states partner with their statewide afterschool network to provide training to staff in school age programs.

Some states have a professional development registry that programs are required to enter trainings into for credit. Another state offers online training through a professional development registry.

Many states have technical assistance consultants that will work one-on-one with a program to help program staff achieve their goals related to QRIS. These consultants often work with program staff to develop quality improvement plans and link programs to needed professional development around the state. Several states have afterschool experts as consultants to work specifically with the school age programs. Interviewees at the national level noted that program administrators for school age programs often report a lack of knowledge on how to apply for various funding sources, and once awarded do not know how to balance various sources of funding in a sustainable manner.

Several states offer financial incentives for participating in QRIS; however, states did not report specific and distinct incentives for school age programs. Financial incentives include program bonuses, credential bonuses, grants, accreditation fund support, curriculum funding, training vouchers and reimbursement, scholarships for coursework or conferences, increased subsidy reimbursement rates by level, Child Care Investment Tax Credit for expenses made to improve quality, grants for operational costs, and tuition for college coursework.

In Maryland, program staff can apply for reimbursements for training costs, up to $400 per year, as part of the professional development program. In addition, program bonuses are awarded based on the level rating and capacity of the facility; these range from $50 to $1,000 for family child care and from $50 to $4,500 for centers. North Carolina has a loan program that helps providers make improvements to their site facilities. Providers that increase their level during the loan period may have a portion of the loan converted to grants, thereby incentivizing program improvement.

Financial incentives vary across program type. For example, in Wisconsin, licensed group child care programs may be awarded a microgrant for $1,000 to help finance professional development, whereas licensed family child care programs are eligible for $500 and certified family child care programs are eligible to receive $250. One state plans to move away from annual financial awards to a one-time award alongside a tiered reimbursement system.

Other states have a tiered reimbursement system for programs at the top levels of the QRIS. For example, in Maine a reimbursement differential is available for each child whose care is subsidized by the DHHS Office of Child and Family Services: A 10 percent quality differential is available to programs that have reached Step 4 in the QRIS, a 5 percent progress differential for programs that have reached Step 3, and a 2 percent quality differential for programs that have reached Step 2.

Several states have a school age professional credentialing process. These are offered through partnerships with local universities, community colleges, and technical colleges. Some states

require staff to have a credential for the upper levels of the QRIS. As mentioned previously, some states have a credential bonus that is tied to the credential level of the staff and whether they have an administration credential. The credit ranges from $200 to $1,500 as a one-time bonus for lower levels or annually for upper levels. Some states report having a credential for infant toddler programs and family child care but not specifically for school age.

## Operating System

Although many states included in the scan use standards specific to school age programs, states did not have separate operating systems for school age programs. Most states in the scan use a paper submission process, but five states have an online system available as well. Two states require online submission. Most states require programs to complete a form to apply for the QRIS. Depending on specific requirements, programs submit their licensing information and required self-assessments or onsite monitoring visits. Once the application is submitted, staff at the state level review all information and make a recommendation for the specific star level for the program. The final rating decision is administered differently across states. For some states, the final decision is with DHHS, whereas in other states, such as Maine, the final decision goes to both DHHS and another entity (Maine Roads to Quality, in this example) that focuses on the staffing data submitted.

One state's system tells the applicant about information that is missing and what the program would need to do to move to the next level in the QRIS. Of those states that do not currently have an online application submission process for QRIS participation, at least one state reports an intention to transition toward an online application system.

One state partners with the Web-based Early Learning System foundation to develop and maintain their Web-based QIS data system that houses participant information, formulates the ratings, and monitors a program's status and progress. Two other states contract with Branagh Information Group to provide online validation and assessment. Similarly, two states partner with local universities to operate the validation and assessment system. For example, in Maryland the online validation and assessment system is operated by the assessment partner, John Hopkins University Center for Technology; the data are available to be validated by internal staff using online profiles and rubrics.

Four states report that their validation and assessment system does not have online components. Of these, at least two states report that they intend to build an online and automatic licensing platform that is integrated into the QRIS operating system.

## Funding

In addition to the six categories addressed in prior sections, the AIR project team asked interviewees where funding for monitoring, professional development, and the operating system comes from. The majority of states in the scan use the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) for funding related to the QRIS. It should be noted that this funding supported the overall QRIS models across states; no evidence was provided that suggested the school age component of QRIS models received separate or distinct funding. In addition to CCDF, Oklahoma also uses funding from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funding.

Maryland, New York, Massachusetts, Delaware, and Ohio use Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant funds; however, Maryland plans to transition to CCDF for sustainability. Approximately 3 percent of New York's funding for QRIS comes from private foundations, specifically The Rauch Foundation and the Western New York Women's Foundation.

Two states use state money to fund their operating system and one uses state money to pay for coaches and mentors. Other states access funding for elements of the QRIS from local non-for-profit organizations. For example, Wisconsin accesses funding from the Celebrate Children Foundation, which is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping "communities throughout Wisconsin create the most effective early learning systems for children from birth to age five" (Celebrate Children Foundation, n.d., para. 1).

Interviewees at the national level noted that at the state level there is a potential to formally merge, or informally braid together, CCDF and 21st CCLC funds. Currently, only three states have formally merged funding streams in support of QRIS and school age programming: Connecticut, Oregon, and New Jersey. Even in these three cases, Connecticut is implementing only a QIS and New Jersey did not include school age in their QRIS pilot. Several barriers must be overcome at the state and national level before funding streams, cooperation, and communication between these two programs can improve. First of all, there is a structural difference between 21st CCLC programs that are typically free, and CCDF programs that can be fee-for-service program models. Interviewees at the national level often observe a lack of coordination between 21st CCLC and the state agencies that operate CCDF. These interviewees noted that including representation from both areas in strategic decision making processes would contribute toward better alignment of communication and funding.

# Conclusion and Next Steps

The purpose of this report is to present information about the current quality improvement efforts for school age programs nationally. Through a scan of publically available documents and interviews with key stakeholders in 11 states, the project team learned that although there is variation among states in how school age programs are incorporated into QRIS, there are common implementation themes.

States that have incorporated school age programs into a preexisting QRIS while maintaining the characteristics unique to the population have involved organizations and individuals who specialize in working with out-of-school time and afterschool programs. Almost all states in the scan align their standards with the COA standards. In addition, states use similar standards across different program types but may employ slightly different criteria for school age programs. There is not much difference between the types of supports offered to school age programs and infant toddler programs; however, there are differences in the content, and some states are employing consultants who have specific afterschool and youth development experience.

Most states in the scan make ratings publically available via their state department's website and many also have other avenues (e.g., social media and banners). Most states require programs to be licensed to participate in QRIS. States most often use the SACERS tool to assess school age programs; however, some of the states use other assessment tools, including the YPQA and APT-O.

Most states reported having a credentialing system for infant toddler programs and family child care; however, it was less common for states to have a school age credentialing process. Furthermore, states that do have a school age credential do not always find it being used as much as the credential for working with younger children. States most often use CCDF to fund the QRIS components in the state.

The information provided in this report, along with information from the first report on current quality improvement efforts in Michigan, will help lay the groundwork for the final recommendations of this project, including a recommended definition of school age for Michigan. As stated previously, most states included in this scan used a definition of school age that encompasses the age 5–12 range.

The project team will next present this information, along with a draft definition of school age, to the project's Advisory Committee to solicit feedback for the final recommendations.

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# Appendix A. List of Interviewees

**Table A1. List of Individuals Interviewed by State**

| Name | Organization | State |
|---|---|---|
| Vicki Mathews | Arkansas Department of Human Services | Arkansas |
| Evelyn Keating | Delaware Office of Early Learning | Delaware |
| Priscilla Armstrong | Maine Roads to Quality | Maine |
| Lindi Mitchell Budd | Division of Early Childhood Development Maryland State Department of Education | Maryland |
| Gwen Alexander | Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care | Massachusetts |
| Jennifer M. Johnson | North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services | North Carolina |
| Sherry Cleary | New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute | New York |
| Janene R. Kehl | Ohio Department of Job and Family Services | Ohio |
| Jennifer Towell | Oklahoma Child Care Services Oklahoma Department of Human Services | Oklahoma |
| Leslie A. Roesler | Pennsylvania Key | BCIU | Pennsylvania |
| Bridget Cullen | Wisconsin Department of Children and Families | Wisconsin |
| Susan Rohrbough, Darlene Hamilton, and Susan O'Connor | ICF International and Zero to Three | National interviewees |

# Appendix B. Document Review

**QRIS Standards**

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# Appendix C. Alignment of State Standards with COA Standards

The Child and Youth Development Human Resources Standards include recruitment and selection; background checks; training and professional development; personnel qualifications: afterschool and youth development; personnel qualifications: early childhood education; positive work environment; supervision and performance review; personnel records; and volunteers.

The Child and Youth Development Program Administration Standards include legal and regulatory authorization and compliance, program planning guidance and oversight, ethical practices, research protections, financial planning and management, risk management and review, information management and security, files of children and youth, and continuous quality improvement.

The After School and Youth Development Standards include outreach and program accessibility; program mission and philosophy; registration and orientation; building healthy relationships among children, youth, and adults; promoting positive behavior and healthy peer relationships; programming and activities; academic programming; indoor environment; outdoor environment; nutrition and physical fitness; specialized sports and fitness programming; health and wellness; safety; family connections; community involvement and partnerships; supervision; and protecting the rights of children and youth and their families. The After School and Youth Developments Standards are designed to address "school-age children," defined by the COA as children and youth from the ages of five to 18.

It should be noted here that certain elements of the COA standards may be contained under the licensing requirements for a state; these cases are not indicated in Table C1.

**Table C1. COA Standard Requirements by State**

| | | Arkansas | Delaware | Maine | Maryland | Massachusetts | New York | North Carolina | Ohio | Oklahoma | Pennsylvania | Wisconsin |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Administration and Management Standards** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Child and Youth Development Human Resources (CYD-HR)** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CYD-HR X | Recruitment and selection | X | | | | | X | | | | X | X |
| CYD-HR 2 | Background checks | | | | | | | | | X | | |
| CYD-HR 3 | Training and professional development | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| CYD-HR 4 | Personnel qualifications: Early childhood education | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| CYD-HR 5 | Personnel qualifications: After school and youth development | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| CYD-HR 6 | Positive work environment | | | X | | | | | | | | X |
| CYD-HR 7 | Supervision and performance review | X | | X | X | | X | | | X | X | X |
| CYD-HR 8 | Personnel records | | | | | | | | | X | X | |
| CYD-HR 9 | Volunteers | | | X | | | X | | | | X | |
| **Child and Youth Development Program Administration (CYD-AM)** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CYD-AM X | Legal and regulatory authorization and compliance | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| CYD-AM 2 | Program planning guidance and oversight | | | X | | | X | | | | | X |
| CYD-AM 3 | Ethical practice | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CYD-AM 4 | Research protections | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CYD-AM 5 | Financial planning and management | X | X | | | X | X | X | | | X | X |
| CYD-AM 6 | Risk management and review | X | X | | | | | | | | X | |
| CYD-AM 7 | Information management and security | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CYD-AM 8 | Files of children and youth | | | | | | | | | | | X |
| CYD-AM 9 | Continuous quality improvement | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

| | Service Standards | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Afterschool and Youth Development (CYD-AYD)** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CYD-AYD X | Outreach and program accessibility | | | | | | X | X | | X | | X | |
| CYD-AYD 2 | Program mission and philosophy | | | | X | | | | | X | X | X | |
| CYD-AYD 3 | Registration and orientation | X | | | X | | | | | X | X | X | |
| CYD-AYD 4 | Building healthy relationships between children and youth and adults | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | |
| CYD-AYD 5 | Promoting positive behavior and healthy peer relationships | | | | X | X | | X | X | X | | X | |
| CYD-AYD 6 | Programming and activities | X | X | | X | X | X | | | X | | X | |
| CYD-AYD 7 | Academic programming | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CYD-AYD 8 | Indoor environment | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| CYD-AYD 9 | Outdoor environment | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| CYD-AYD X0 | Nutrition and physical fitness | X | | | X | | X | | | X | X | X | |
| CYD-AYD XX | Specialized sport and fitness programming | | | | X | | | | | | | | |
| CYD-AYD X2 | Health and wellness | X | X | | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | |
| CYD-AYD X3 | Safety | | | | X | X | X | | | X | X | X | |
| CYD-AYD X4 | Family connections | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | |
| CYD-AYD X5 | Community involvement and partnerships | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | |
| CYD-AYD X6 | Supervision | | X | | X | X | X | X | | X | | X | |
| CYD-AYD X7 | Protecting the rights of children and youth and their families | | | | | | | | | | | | |

# Appendix D. Data Collection Theme-Tracking Spreadsheet

**Table D1. Spreadsheet for Data Collection for Each State**

| System Models | Notes | | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Included in or with QRIS for early learning and care programs (programs serving children birth to kindergarten) | | | ☐ |
| Separate from QRIS for early learning and care programs | | | ☐ |
| Linked to/with QRIS for early learning and care programs | | | ☐ |
| Programs included in school-age QRIS | | | ☐ |
| Ages of children served by programs in QRIS | | | ☐ |

| Tiered Program Standards | Notes | | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Categories assessed | | | ☐ |
| Alignment across different program types | | | ☐ |
| Alignment with state's learning standards | | | ☐ |
| Number of tiers | | | ☐ |

| Monitoring | Notes | | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Assessment measure(s) or tool(s) used to discern quality levels | | | ☐ |
|     Reliability of instrument | | | ☐ |
|     Validity of instrument | | | ☐ |
| Assessors | | | ☐ |
|     Number of assessors | | | ☐ |
|     Qualification(s) of assessors | | | ☐ |
|     Reliability of assessors | | | ☐ |

| Public Availability of Quality Ratings | Notes | | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|
| How program ratings are displayed publicly | | | ☐ |
| How parents are made aware of the ratings | | | ☐ |
| How parents access information about the QRIS and specific program ratings | | | ☐ |

| Supports to Meet Progressive Standards | Notes | | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Professional development | | | ☐ |
| Quality improvement consultation | | | ☐ |
| Training and technical assistance | | | ☐ |
| Quality improvement resources | | | ☐ |
| Financial incentives | | | ☐ |
| Other incentives | | | ☐ |
| Requirement for participation in other programs (licensing, 21st CCLC, etc.) | | | ☐ |

| Operating System | Notes | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Online application system | | | ☐ |
| Paper submission application system | | | ☐ |
| Combination application system | | | ☐ |
| Online validation and assessment system | | | ☐ |
| Paper submission validation and assessment system | | | ☐ |
| Combination validation and assessment system | | | ☐ |

# Appendix E. State Profiles

## Arkansas State Profile

**August 7, 2014**

**Interviewed Vicki Mathews, Better Beginnings, DHS Division of Child Care and Early Education**

**System Models**

- QRIS is a block system that includes child care centers, group child care homes, family child care homes, in-home child care, early head start programs, Head Start programs, prekindergarten programs, and school age programs.

- Standalone school age programs, serving only school age children, are treated under the center-based QRIS; however, these standalone programs have their own specific QRIS standards table including indicators of meeting a given standard.

  - "School age" is defined as kindergarten to age 17.

  - Define school-age program as a program in which the majority of participants are kindergarten and up; this does not include the summer before kindergarten enrollment.

- All programs that participate in QRIS must be licensed.

  - Licensing entities in Arkansas cover programs serving ages 0–17.

  - There is a licensing requirement for QRIS participation; however, QRIS is not part of the licensing requirement.

  - A program that is licensed can choose to participate in QRIS.

  - A revision to the model currently being implemented will mean that the Level 1 within the QRIS is a component of licensing.

  - There is only one QRIS system model, and this includes programs serving school age children and youth. Therefore, Arkansas does not have an approach for rating programs that serve children between ages 17 and 18 (outside of their school age bracket). There is no separate rating process for programs serving children outside of this definition.

  - Arkansas' QRIS does not accept programs that are not licensed, and therefore it does not have to have an approach to handle the basic components that licensing covers for programs that are not licensed.

- QRIS is linked to child care subsidy in Arkansas.

- Specifically, child care facilities that participate in the subsidy are given two years to obtain a one-star rating under the QRIS; a new participant coming into the child care subsidy for the first time is required to have a one-star rating or higher.

- Arkansas does not operate a tiered subsidy reimbursements system, in which higher quality programs are paid higher reimbursement rates for the children who receive child care assistance.

**Tiered Program Standards**

- Arkansas uses the Better Beginnings QRIS model, which has three levels or stars, each with its own research-based performance standards.

  - Arkansas is currently working on a revision to the QRIS model that would add a fourth and fifth level or star.

- Categories include administration; administration and staff qualifications and professional development; learning environment; environmental assessment; child and youth health and development.

- There are common program standards used for all programs in the QRIS; however, there are slightly different criteria for program types.

  - For example, Arkansas uses the business administration scale for family child care programs, whereas they use the program administration scale for school age within the center-based program type.

- The QRIS model is aligned with the state's learning standards; early childhood learning standards are aligned, and in the case of school-age programs, Arkansas QRIS also aligned with the Department of Education learning standards. The QRIS model also makes use of the developmental assets concept.

- The QRIS model is not explicitly aligned with national standards (e.g., NAA standards);

  - However, Arkansas accepts accreditation for QRIS from the Commission on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities: Child and Youth Services Standards

  - Council on Accreditation, After School Programs; National Association for the Education of Young Children, Academy for Early Childhood Program Accreditation; and the National Association for Family Child Care.

- The scoring is all or nothing—either the program meets all qualification within a certain category to achieve that status or they are dropped to the status below.

  - To be eligible to participate and receive a Level 1 rating, providers must have licenses in good standing. In addition, providers are required to conduct a self-evaluation using an approved rating tool for each age group served. Moreover, the administrator of a program must attend Program Administration Scale (PAS) or Business Administration Scale (BAS) Basics training to fulfill the Level 1 requirements.

  - For Level 2, providers must meet the requirements of that level and those of Level 1. This includes receiving a program review from a certified PAS or BAS assessor, and meeting specific requirements on the environment rating scale (ERS) used.

  - For Level 3, providers must meet the requirements of Level 1 and Level 2, and then meet the requirements of Level 3.

- The current revision to the QRIS model, which would add a fourth and fifth level or star, would incorporate hybrid elements; Levels 4 and 5 would be a points-based system.

**Monitoring**

- Arkansas reports using the YPQA tool for school-age programs; programs are also allowed to use SACERS.
  - The overall QRIS system (including family child care programs) makes use of the following program assessment tools: Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R); Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R); Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised (FCCERS-R); SACERS; Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS); YPQA; PAS; and BAS.
- Assessment is contracted to Arkansas State University Childhood Services team of assessors.
  - Assessors are trained to use both the YPQA tool and SACERS.
  - QRIS employs approximately 35–40 assessors statewide; this number includes both part-time and full-time assessors.
  - Assessors are required to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in a relevant subject; a master's degree is preferred. Experience in assessment or administrator-level work within a program is also required.
- An assessment is required every three years to continue QRIS participation, regardless of the rating level.
- QRIS model incorporates reliability checks for assessment;
  - Assessors have received training on ERS reliability upon hire.
  - Moreover, regional coordinators are responsible with quality assuring assessments, conducting assessments so as to enable reliability checks across assessors, and for providing training to assessors.
  - Annual training is provided to assessors on the use of assessment tools.
- QRIS has a defined process of assessment:
  - Level 1 is a self-certified level: Participants are asked to attend a series of trainings on the YPQA, or ERS tool.
  - Level 2 requires an onsite assessment on classroom, or a program assessment using either tool that they chose in Level 1. The minimum score required is 3.0 on both tools.
  - Level 3 programs are required to have an onsite assessment, with a minimum score of 4.0 on SACERS or 3.75 on YPQA.

**Public Availability of Quality Ratings**

- Arkansas has a website for families to search for child care; the ratings are included on the website.

- Quality ratings are public for three years at a time.
  - Parents are made aware of the ratings through program branding conducted by a specially hired advertising agency that included media campaigns and public service announcements. Arkansas does not currently produce printed material; rather, they rely on online social networks, such as Facebook, to target younger parents. Arkansas does produce printed cards and a brochure with a quick response code linking to information on child care programs.

**Supports to Meet Progressive Standards**

- Arkansas offers supports to professional development and technical assistance.
  - QRIS relies on online assessment and training material, targeting the unique needs of beneficiaries. Arkansas maintains a resource training center with online training modules that can be accessed through a program's professional development registry. QRIS collaborates with Arkansas State University to receive certificates for these modules.
  - Orientation training for directors and preemployment training for staff new to the field of child care.
  - Training offered on SACERs, YPQA, and youth developmental assets.
  - Collaboration with the Arkansas Out-of-School Time Network to provide resources or youth development programs, through the specialist Youth Development Institute. This institute offers Web-based training classes for school age caregivers on core knowledge areas of working with school age children and youth. These sessions take approximately one to two hours to complete, and the user is free to choose which modules they wish to take. This training can also be entered into the professional development registry. After completion of all 17 courses through the institute, a user receives a certification of completion.
  - Training and technical assistance to assist program staff to understand diversity, appreciate cultural differences and similarities, learn strategies to support English language learners, and promote inclusion.
- Arkansas has a credential and certification process:
  - Certificate programs for administrators, caregivers, and child care specialists based on ages of children served.
  - School age credential through the Arkansas State University and the University of Arkansas.
- Arkansas reports supporting progressive standards with financial incentives.
  - Better Beginnings Grant awarded after a program has achieved a given level or star, regardless of the starting level. This grant is dedicated to operational costs (materials, supplies, and administration) and has a separate component that must be used on professional development costs.

- Arkansas allows certain taxpayers to claim an additional 20 percent of their Federal Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit if they incur child care expenses at child care facilities certified at Better Beginnings Level 2 or Level 3 standards.

- Many of the trainings offered are at no cost to the user (paid for by CCDF funds).

- Arkansas has a school-age associate's credential through Arkansas State University and University of Arkansas; it should be noted that grant awards can be dedicated to the pursuit of this degree as a scholarship or stipend.

- Arkansas is reviewing their supports system and is intending to move away from an annual-based system toward a system of one-time awards alongside a tiered reimbursement system with voucher participants.

- Arkansas does report requirements for participation in other programs.

  - Specifically, programs are required to be licensed and in good standing with the child care licensing body.

  - Applicants have a license review to see if they have operated within licensing standards; in the event that they have not, they can reapply once they have brought their licensing into compliance.

**Operating System**

- There is an online application system within Better Beginnings; this system is accessible through the provider section of the site and includes a checklist, a toolkit, and a guidebook.

  - The site includes a school-age specific toolkit that was recently developed.

- There is an online validation and assessment system.

  - Assessment receives the application, and if this meets requirements for the given level, the program is referred to the assessment team for the onsite assessment.

  - Level 1 programs must conduct a self-assessment in collaboration with the assessment team; specifically, programs conduct a self-assessment using the YPQA tool, and an external assessor conducts an observation using the YQPA tool. The staff and external assessor then meet to discuss scoring and next steps. This assessment is conducted using the online system provided by the YPQA and SACERS tools.

  - Level 2 and Level 3 programs require an onsite assessment. Assessors use the Branagh software system to generate a summary report of the assessment; the YPQA system also generates a summary report if this is used.

**Funding**

Funding for the monitoring, professional development, and the system all come from Child Care and Development Fund.

# Delaware State Profile

**July 30, 2014**

**Interviewed Evelyn Keating, Program Manager, Delaware Office of Early Learning**

## System Models

- QRIS is a points system that includes early childhood education and school age under the same framework. QRIS also serves Head Start, state-funded Head Start, prekindergarten, special education, and Title 1 programs.

    - In Delaware, "school age" is defined as "kindergarten and up."

    - "School-age" is defined programming as before school and afterschool programming, school-based or community-based, serving school age children and youth.

- All programs that participate in QRIS must be licensed.

    - All participating programs must be licensed unless they are legally exempt; however, only licensed programs can access all of the financial incentives in the QRIS.

    - Licensing entities in Delaware cover programs serving ages 0–18.

    - There is not a separate rating component where licensing is not required. The rating process is the same for licensed and unlicensed programs.

    - There is no explicit approach to handle the basic components that licensing covers, such as safety, for programs that are not licensed. The frame, or QRIS model, focuses on intentional teaching, not health and safety.

- QRIS is linked to child care subsidy in Delaware for the highest star levels: stars 3–5. The model has a tiered reimbursement system; higher reimbursement begins for stars 3–5.

## Tiered Program Standards

- Delaware uses the Stars for Early Success QRIS model, which has five levels or tiers, each with its own research-based performance standards.

- Categories include family and community partnerships, management and administration, qualifications and professional development, and learning environment and curriculum.

- There are common program standards used for all programs in the QRIS; however, there are special criteria for program types.

- The QRIS model is explicitly aligned with state learning standards; they are required to align with early learning standards (foundations) and with competencies.

- The QRIS model is aligned with National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), but not with National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) and NAA/COA standards.

    - The QRIS accepts accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Academy for Early Childhood Program Accreditation. Once a

NAEYC accredited program is accepted into the QRIS, they are required to provide a copy of their accreditation and complete a NAEYC program-specific Delaware Stars Orientation. Once they have completed this, they are designated Star 5 and may keep their star level by maintaining their NAEYC accreditation and submitting copies of their annual NAEYC reports to the QRIS.

- Delaware is currently reviewing a request to align with COA.
- QRIS model is aligned with NAFCC for the fifth level or Star 5.

▪ The scoring is points based; as recently as 2012, Delaware was a block system.

- A current review is being conducted, and in 2015 Delaware will move toward a hybrid system with six standards. School age programs will mostly be under a points system.

**Monitoring**

▪ QRIS uses the SACERS assessment tool; the old format of the SACERS is employed in Delaware, with plans to move toward the updated format of the tool in the next year.

- The overall QRIS model makes use of the following ERS measures: ECERS-R, ITERS-R, FCCERS-R, and SACERS.

▪ QRIS has an explicit process of assessment:

- Participants of the QRIS are required to be licensed child care programs and in good standing with the Office of Child Care Licensing and the Child and Adult Care Food Program and Child Care Subsidy; once their application is accepted they are automatically rated as Star 1.

- Programs at Star 1 are given one year to complete the standards for Star 2. Once the program is ready to move up a level, they request an ERS assessment.

- For Stars 3–5, the level is determined by the total number of points earned (points may be earned in any one of four standards area) and required minimal scoring on the ERS.

- Assessments cover one third of classrooms in each age group for their program.

- Once they have completed this, a verifier will conduct a site visit to check that the standards have been met and to ensure that the program has the required number of points to move up to the desired level.

- A reassessment is conducted every three years; a reassessment may be triggered before this time frame if there is a significant amount of change in the program (such as staff turnover).

▪ The measure or tool is subjected to reliability checks.

▪ Approximately 12 assessors are employed to support the QRIS, covering 460 licensed centers (including early child care and school age).

- Assessors are required to have a minimum bachelor's degree qualification in relevant field, as well as three to five years of relevant experience. They are also required to be reliable and accurate on the tools used.

**Public Availability of Quality Ratings**

- Delaware has a website for families to search for child care; the ratings are included on the website.

  - This website is housed under the Office of Childcare licensing department.

  - All star levels are public; programs have reported being dissatisfied that Star 1 ratings are published.

- Delaware has conducted marketing campaigns, collaborated with contracts in community events, published a newsletter (with 9,000 subscribers), conducted individual interviews and focus groups, and developed a website to promote the QRIS.

- Public quality ratings are available for three years; if a program changes their rating during that time, then the rating is updated.

**Supports to Meet Progressive Standards**

- Delaware offers supports to professional development.

  - Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood coordinates professional development for the state.

  - Delaware has one community college with four campuses, two public universities, and two private universities supporting professional development.

- Delaware offers supports to quality improvement consultations.

  - Programs moving above a Star Level 2 are required to develop a quality improvement plan and to work alongside provided technical assistance to achieve this. This plan can be revised at any time. The quality improvement plan is a component of this level within the QRIS; therefore, without implementing this component, the program does not qualify for higher rating levels.

  - Department of Education developed a database to track standards being worked on by programs and when they have met them, across four domains.

  - Technical assistance consultants encourage programs to work on all four domains.

- Delaware reports supporting progressive standards with incentives.

  - QRIS awards points to programs if the administrator achieves a credential or qualification.

  - Programs in place since before QRIS model are actively encouraged to encourage their staff to achieve qualifications or degrees.

  - QRIS includes standards on career lattice, credentials, quality assurance professional development, staff evaluated for professional development needs against competencies, and standards for facilities professional development plan. However, these are not requirements: There is no requirement for individuals to be at a given career lattice level, as long as they are compliant with licensing.

- Current review intends to require administrators of early care centers to possess a credential; however, this requirement will not apply to school-age programs. Support for this review will include free training and materials.
- Tiered subsidy reimbursement across stars.
- Quality Improvement Grants supporting the implementation of program's quality improvement plans.
- T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Delaware.
- Compensation, Retention, and Education Awards (CORE).
  - Delaware has six formal credentialing processes:
    - (1) Administrator credential, in partnership with McCormick Center and paid for with Early Learning Challenge Grant funds offered at no cost to users; (2) family child care credential; (3) inclusion credential; (4) preschool credential; (5) infant-toddler credential; (6) school age credential.
    - All of these credentialing process can be taken for college credit except for the school age credential. The school age credential is a collection of 60 hours of material that is consolidated into a portfolio that can be presented as a credential.

**Operating System**

- There is paper submission; forms are downloaded and submitted in hard-copy format.
  - Programs can use the online system for other functions, such as requesting a grant.
  - Delaware intends to move toward more digital/automatic functions for submissions.
- The validation and assessment system is done manually.
  - Intention to move toward more digital or automatic functions for assessment.

**Funding**

Funding for the monitoring, professional development, and the system all come from Early Learning Challenge Grant funds.

# Maine State Profile

**July 30, 2014**

**Interviewed Priscilla Armstrong, Registry Coordinator at Maine Roads to Quality: Child Care and Early Education Career Development Center**

**System Models**

- QRIS is a block system, with separate (but linked) components for child care centers, family child care homes, School Age care, and Head Start programs.

  - "School age" is defined as a program that operates as before- and afterschool care programs, serving children between the ages of five and 12 (aligned with the SACERS tool).

- QRIS is voluntary, except if a program receives CCDF funds.

- All programs that participate in QRIS must be licensed for a year. In addition, programs that have been licensed for under a year must request a waiver to enroll students during that time, and apply to the QRIS at the end of that period.

- Participating programs must be licensed and have no significant licensing violations.

  - Public prekindergarten programs are not participating unless the program is community based and licensed.

  - Standalone afterschool programs are licensed as centers and face a requirement to be licensed if they are to participate in the QRIS.

  - The only program type not required to be licensed are Family Friend and Neighbor (FFN) child care. In Maine, a FFN provider can care for up to two children that they are not related to. These providers do not participate in the QRIS.

- Maine does not rate programs that serve children between the ages of 13 and 18.

  - Maine is not funded to work with this age group and is not funded to work with FFN care.

- QRIS is linked to child care subsidy in Maine: The program is linked to the license number housed within the Maine Roads to Quality database.

  - Providers who meet Quality for Maine's fourth level receive a 10 percent quality stipend tied to their subsidy reimbursement. A 5 percent progress differential for each child whose care is subsidized is given to programs that have reached Step 3 and have submitted program descriptions.

**Tiered Program Standards**

- Maine uses the Quality for ME (QFM) QRIS model, which has four steps (tiers), each with its own research-based performance standards.

- Categories assessed include compliance history/licensing status, learning environment/developmentally appropriate practice, program evaluation, staffing and

professional development, administrative policies and procedures, parent/family involvement, family resources, and authentic assessment.

- The standards are common across all program types assessed by QFM; however, there are special criteria for child care centers, family child care homes, school-age care, and Head Start program standards.

- The QRIS model is explicitly aligned with state and national learning standards.

  - For example, school age standards require that the COA standards are used to guide the development of an age appropriate curriculum and activities.

  - Accreditation is also required to achieve Step 4. The accreditation organizations accepted for this purpose are as follows: American Montessori Society; Council on Accreditation, After School Programs; National Association for the Education of Young Children, Academy for Early Childhood Program Accreditation; and National Association for Family Child Care.

- The scoring is all or nothing—either the program meets all qualification within a certain category to achieve that status or they are dropped to the status below.

  - Step 1 requires meeting licensing standards.

  - For each remaining step, providers must meet the requirements of that step and those of previous steps.

  - Step 4 requires accreditation.

## Monitoring

- Measurement tools are not specified in the QFM QRIS model.

  - Maine does not require a specific ERS assessment in QFM.

  - Centers and school-age child care programs may select an age-appropriate ERS to complete the self-assessment that contributes toward specific levels; SACERS is not uncommon.

## Public Availability of Quality Ratings

- Maine has a website for families to search for child care and the ratings are included on this website.

- Maine did not conduct a public awareness campaign when QFM was implemented. After reviewing other states, Maine is aiming to commit funds and resources to support printed materials for parents.

- Ratings are valid for one year.

## Supports to Meet Progressive Standards

- Maine offers some supports to professional development.

  - A significant portion of the standards achievement is attainment on a career lattice.

- Maine does not explicitly offer supports to quality improvement consultations.

- In Step 2 of Maine's Quality for ME, the program provides an opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses with input from staff, administrators, and families. These results are incorporated into a quality improvement plan, which is made available for onsite review.

- At Step 3, the program is evaluated each year using a self-assessment tool. No specific tool is required, but ERS such as SACERS, Accreditation Guidelines, and Head Start Standards are common. The results are incorporated into a quality improvement plan.

▪ Providers that participate in Maine's Quality for ME QRIS have access to targeted technical assistance from a range of organizations, resource materials, and publicity. In addition, they may receive the following financial incentives:

- Priority access to scholarships for income-eligible staff who wish to pursue early childhood education degrees

- A reimbursement differential for each child whose care is subsidized by the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Child and Family Services; specifically, a 10 percent quality differential is available to programs that have reached Step 4 in the QRIS; a 5 percent progress differential for programs that have reached Step 3; and a 2 percent quality differential for programs that have reached Step 2;

- Double child care state income tax credit for parents whose child is enrolled in a program at the Step 4 level

- A Child Care Investment Tax Credit for expenses made to improve quality for programs that pay state taxes and have a quality improvement program. Maine does not have a formal credential process.

▪ Maine supports progressive standards with the following financial incentives:

- Tiered subsidy reimbursement

- Maine Roads Scholarship Program

- Child Care Investment Tax Credit (double child care tax credit)

**Operating System**

▪ There is an online application submission system; however, if programs prefer to submit a paper application they are able to do so.

- For its QRIS (QFM), Maine created an online application process, which is linked to the State's automated professional development registry.

- Providers begin the application process by entering their six-digit, unique child care license number.

- This number enables access to the system and automatically triggers the Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Registry records for the site. Providers verify or update these records and go on to respond to queries that request the additional information required to determine their quality level.

- The Maine Roads to Quality Registry provides accreditation and Head Start data, which are also used to help determine a quality level.

- After completion of the application, the system triggers a report that includes a brief overview of what quality level the provider is likely to receive based on the information entered. It also tells the applicant what is missing as well as what it would need to do to move to the next step in the QRIS.

- This report is then sent to DHHS staff to verify licensing compliance data and provide any other necessary approvals.

- The validation and assessment system is not online. Although information is ultimately entered into an online database, assessors use paper forms to validate whether standards are met in the field.

**Funding**

Funding for the monitoring, professional development, and the operating system come from Child Care and Development Block Grant.

# Maryland State Profile

**July 30, 2014**

**Interviewed Lindi Mitchell Budd, Maryland EXCELS Branch Chief, Division of Early Childhood Development**

**System Models**

- QRIS is a block system that includes child care center-based programs, family providers, school age (only) before and after school programs, Head Start, and public prekindergarten programs. Some programs serving school age children are treated under the child care center-based programs within QRIS; the QRIS separates programs serving only school age children as school age (only) before and after school programs.

  - "School age" is defined as children and youth between kindergarten and 16 years old.

- Most programs that participate in QRIS must be licensed; any licensed child care center program (including school age only) that is in compliance with licensing or other state requirements and has been in operation for at least 12 months is eligible to participate in Maryland EXCELS.

  - In Maryland, the Office of Child Care regulates licensed programs serving children between the ages of six weeks and 16 years old.

  - Youth that are younger than 21 years old and have a disabling condition or other emotional, developmental, physical, educational, or medical need necessitating child care beyond 16 years old are also included in the licensing bracket.

  - Maryland requires most participating programs to have a license. However, Maryland does not strictly require that all programs participating in their QRIS model be licensed.

    - QRIS accepts military child care programs, and these are not subject to licensing requirements. In this case, Maryland has developed an alternative verification rubric for military child care programs using their own inspection and reporting documents that align with our requirements for health, safety, injurious treatment, and other areas that would normally result in a noncompliance preventing a program from moving beyond a Level 1 rating.

  - Most Head Start programs are licensed; however, some are operated by a local school system, and these are not subject to Maryland's licensing regulations.

  - Informal providers that are unlicensed programs are not eligible to participate in Maryland's QRIS.

  - Maryland does not generally rate programs serving school age children between 15 and 18 years old, as most programs (except those outlined above) are required to be licensed to participate.

- QRIS is not currently linked to child care subsidy in Maryland. However, conditions of the Race to the Top funds specify a timeline to January 2015 in which subsidy reimbursement programs are mandated to participate in the QRIS. Currently,

approximately 50 percent of programs that receive subsidy reimbursement are participating.

**Tiered Program Standards**

- Maryland uses the Maryland EXCELS QRIS model, which has five checks or tiers, each with its own research-based performance standards.

- Program participation in QRIS is currently voluntary, unless a program is a recipient of subsidy reimbursement.

- Categories include licensing, accreditation, staffing and professional development, developmentally appropriate learning and practices, administrative policies and procedures, and family and community partnerships.

- Common program standards are used for all programs in the QRIS; there are special criteria for child care center-based programs, family providers, school age before and after school programs, Head Start, and public prekindergarten programs. However, the QRIS is technically separate for each program type.

- The QRIS model is not explicitly aligned with state learning standards; rather, these standards have been embedded into QRIS components.

  - The QRIS model is aligned with national standards; to achieve Level 5, a program must be accredited by an organization recognized by the Maryland State Department of Education.

  - A full list of accreditation organizations accepted for QRIS includes: Association Montessori International/USA; American Montessori Society; Association of Independent Maryland Schools; Association of Waldorf Schools of North America; Council on Accreditation, After School Programs (formerly the National AfterSchool Association; Maryland State Department of Education; Middle States Commission-Early Ages; Middle States Commission of Elementary Schools; National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs; National Association for the Education of Young Children, Academy for Early Childhood Program Accreditation; National Association for Family Child Care; and National Early Childhood Program Accreditation.

- The scoring is all or nothing—either the program meets all qualification within a certain category to achieve that status or they are dropped to the status below. However, added detail is published to illustrate the check or level rating for each component within a given standard.

**Monitoring**

- QRIS uses SACERS measures and tools to discern quality levels in higher Tiers 4 and 5; in Tier 3, programs conduct a self-assessment.

- QRIS monitoring supported by 30 assessors (including prekindergarten monitors). A random sample of classrooms are monitored. Assessments checked for validity and reliability with SACERS.

- Maryland EXCELS has a formal process of assessment.

- To meet the standards for Level 1, programs must be fully licensed, open, and operating for at least six months and demonstrate compliance with specific licensing requirements.

- With each higher level, a program is required to meet increasingly higher quality standards in the following categories: licensing and compliance, staff qualifications and professional development, accreditation and rating scales, developmentally appropriate learning and practice, and administrative policies and practices.

**Public Availability of Quality Ratings**

- Maryland has a website for families to search for child care; the ratings are included on the website.

- Programs must submit a yearly report to update their program's status online, and at Level 5 they must maintain the accreditation awarded.

- Maryland developed a marketing video for a variety of audiences—early childhood and school age programs, families choosing child care or early education for their children, and community and public awareness. The video was released six weeks ahead of the QRIS opening for statewide participation to draw attention to the initiative and the importance of high-quality programs for children. The video was distributed to their agency's public relations office where it will be featured on their Facebook page and Twitter feed. Partners were asked to add it to their websites and distribute it further to their associations, resource and referral networks, other state agencies, and partners.

- Maryland has plans to implement a new marketing campaign, including bus stop advertisements.

**Supports to Meet Progressive Standards**

- Maryland has a formal credential process:

  - QRIS includes a credentialing process in which, for higher levels, programs are given supports for training. QRIS has a base requirement for programs to obtain a minimum number of hours for licensing. In addition, staff are required to participate in a credentialing process for levels 4 and 5.

- Maryland supports professional development:

  - Program staff are able to apply for a reimbursement for their training costs, up to $400 per year, as part of the professional development program.

  - Tuition assistance scholarships are offered through the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund to staff seeking a higher degree (AA or BA) in a related field.

- Maryland reports supporting progressive standards with financial incentives:

  - Program bonuses. These financial incentives are awarded to participating programs based on the check level rating and assigned capacity of the facility. These bonuses range from $50 to $1,000 for family child care and from $50 to $4,500 for centers.

- Credential bonuses. Full amount bonuses are available to staff in participating programs. Staff bonuses are based on the Credential Level and range from $200 to $500 at Levels 2, 3, and 4 and from $600 to $1,000 for Levels 4 plus, 5 and 6. The bonuses at the lower levels (2–4) are one time only, whereas the bonuses at the higher levels (4 plus–6) are annual. There are also bonuses for the Administrator Credential, with Level 1 amount of $400, and a one-time only award, and Levels 2, 3, and 4 can receive $750, $1,000 and $1,500, respectively, on an annual basis.

- Incentives, grants, and supports: Participating programs and their staff have access to quality improvement incentives, grants, and supports including but not limited to:
  o Accreditation fund support
  o Curriculum fund
  o Child care quality incentive grants
  o Training vouchers and reimbursement
  o Child care career and professional development fund
  o Increased subsidy reimbursement rates by check levels (Levels 3, 4, and 5)
  o Infant and toddler expansion grants

- School age providers in Maryland can receive specific technical assistance from consultants with a specialty in afterschool programs.

  - Contracts with local child care resource referral agencies that work with providers to help with credentialing process, professional development, and meeting training requirements.

  - As part of Race to the Top requirements, Maryland has targeted additional support located in Title 1 school areas identified as high need.

  - Hopkins Program Coordinators offer basic guidance working through the online system use and meeting requirements.

  - Quality assurance staff available in every region of the county to assist individual program staff.

  - Technical assistance sessions held across state to facilitate registration and signing up for programs.

**Operating System**

- There is online submission; Maryland does not offer paper submission.

- The online validation and assessment system is operated by the partner, John Hopkins University Center for Technology. However, the uploaded data are validated by internal staff against documentation provided by a program through their online profile against a rubric of relevant evidence/documentation.

**Funding**

Funding for the monitoring, professional development, and the system all come from Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant funds. However, for sustainability reasons the funding base will shift to CCDF (or others yet to be identified) over the medium term.

# Massachusetts State Profile

**August 6, 2014**

**Interviewed Gwen Alexander, Manager of Program Quality and Improvement, Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care**

**System Models**

- QRIS is a block system that includes separate standards for child care centers, group child care homes, family child care homes, license exempt providers, Early Head Start programs, Head Start programs, prekindergarten programs, afterschool time and out-of-school time programs, public school prekindergarten programs, and school age programs.

  - "School age" is defined as kindergarten and up.

  - Programs may be located on public school premises.

- All programs that participate in QRIS must be licensed: Specifically, the first level of the QRIS is being licensed and in good standing with the licensing agencies.

  - Approved license exempt programs exist; some out-of-school time programs are not licensed, and in this case, the program must complete an affidavit acknowledging that they have met the criteria for Level 1 in order to proceed to Level 2.

- QRIS is linked to child care subsidy in Massachusetts; subsidy (or voucher slot) contracts are not awarded unless a program is participating in the QRIS.

**Tiered Program Standards**

- The Massachusetts QRIS has four levels/tiers, each with its own research-based performance standards.

  - The Department of Early Education and Care is developing plans to introduce a fifth level that links high-quality education and care with positive developmental and educational outcomes for children and youth.

- Categories include: curriculum and learning; safe, healthy indoor and outdoor environments; workforce development and professional qualifications; family and community engagement; and leadership, administration and management.

- Common program standards are used for all programs in the QRIS; criteria are slightly different across program types.

- The QRIS model is explicitly aligned with state learning standards; the QRIS model is also explicitly aligned with national standards (e.g. NAEYC and NAFCC standards).

  - Moreover, accreditation can be used to demonstrate compliance with specific criteria within the standards. Massachusetts accepts accreditation from the Council on Accreditation, National Association for the Education of Young Children, and the National Association for Family Child Care.

- The scoring is all or nothing—either the program meets all qualification within a certain category to achieve that status or they are dropped to the status below.

- The QRIS standards are expressed in terms of levels, which correspond to a QRIS rating. The levels are organized in a series of blocks that outline the indicators for quality within each category. Programs must demonstrate that they can meet all of the criteria in all of the categories in Level 1 to obtain a Level 1 rating, before they can qualify for Level 2 rating, and so on up the levels.

- Massachusetts is also reviewing whether to incorporate hybrid elements (points-based and block system) into their QRIS model.

**Monitoring**

- The overall QRIS model uses the following measurement tools: ECERS-R, ITERS-R, FCCERS-R, SACERS, CLASS, Arnett Caregiver Interaction Scale; PAS, BAS, APT-O and Assessment of Program Practices Tool Questionnaire, and Strengthening Families Protective Factors Self-Assessment.

- All programs participating in the QRIS are required to use the QRIS measurement tools at Level 2–4 as part of a self-assessment process.

  - Specific measurement tools are used for each program type.

  - Afterschool Program QRIS measurement tools measure process quality indicators (teacher–child interactions) and structural quality indicators (program administration and leadership).

  - Afterschool program QRIS programs are allowed to use the SACERS, APT, Strengthening Families Program Self-Assessment, and the APT-O.

  - Afterschool program QRIS programs are also allowed to use the following teacher–child interaction observational tools: the Artnett/CIS and the CLASS.

- The number of assessors employed to support the Massachusetts QRIS model depends on the standard level.

  - There are five program quality specialists, one per region. In addition, there is one program quality specialist located in Central Boston.

  - Massachusetts QRIS also employs a reliable reader team which contributes three additional assessors for Level 4 assessments.

- Massachusetts employs a formal process of assessment.

  - Level 1 is licensing and thus does not include assessors.

  - Level 2 is a self-assessment using the measurement tools and thus does not include assessors.

  - Level 3 requires a program quality specialist to conduct a site visit and technical assistance review of qualifications, documentation, policies and procedures, and classroom observations. This specialist will conduct an individualized follow-up and develop a continuous improvement plan with the program staff. If the center does not meet the criteria, then the program quality specialist will work with them until they have reached the criteria. Classroom visits are conducted with 60 percent of classrooms at a center.

- Level 4 requires a program quality specialist to conduct a site visit with classroom observations and use of SACERS. Level 4 site visits are conducted by assessors that are also reliable readers. Classroom visits are conducted with 60 percent of classrooms at a center.

**Public Availability of Quality Ratings**

- Massachusetts does not currently publish program ratings on their website.
  - Massachusetts does have a requirement to post ratings as part of the Early Learning Challenge Grant, and thus intends to publish program ratings as per this requirement.
  - Massachusetts also shares its aggregate data with parents.
- Parents are not made aware of the program ratings through other avenues currently.
- Ratings are valid for two years at a time.

**Supports to Meet Progressive Standards**

- Massachusetts offers supports to professional development:
  - QRIS standards for Afterschool Programs include professional development requirements (e.g. for a high school diploma).
  - Massachusetts has partnered with the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) that provides conferences and training activities to program staff.
  - Massachusetts also offers professional development through Educator and Provider Support (EPS) grants; the EPS grant focuses on three core areas of professional development, including educator and provider planning, coaching and mentoring, and competency development. All programs must be included in the Professional Qualifications Registry (PQR) and provide EPS leads with their ID number in order to participate in a professional development opportunity supported by the grant.
- Massachusetts does not report supporting progressive standards with financial incentives.
  - Massachusetts does offer tiered subsidy reimbursements.
  - Massachusetts does offer some inexpensive, and free, training in the field.
  - Massachusetts restricts training sessions costs to $5/hour.
- Massachusetts has a formal credential process for licensing (Level 1).

**Operating System**

There is paper submission but no online system.

**Funding**

Funding for the monitoring, professional development, and the system all come from Race to the Top and Early Learning Challenge Grant. Coaches and mentors operating in the field are paid from state funding.

# New York State Profile

**August 8, 2014**

**Interviewed Sherry Cleary, Executive Director, New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, City University of New York**

**System Models**

- QRIS is a points-based system that currently covers licensed, registered, or regulated programs, including center- and family-based providers licensed and registered with Office of Children and Family Services or New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; registered and licensed universal prekindergarten and Head Start classrooms in community-based organizations and public schools; 4410/preschool special education programs; and New York State Education Department registered nursery schools.

  - Specifically, there are separate standards in place for center-based programs, family/home programs, and public school programs.

  - All programs and providers within these groups that had a current quality improvement plan in place were automatically selected to participate.

  - The QRIS does not include separate standards for school age programs. New York is currently reviewing and implementing a new draft of school age program standards.

  - "School age" is defined as serving children between the ages of 5 and 12 years old.

- All programs that participate in QRIS must be licensed; a program must be licensed before participating in QRIS.

- QRIS is not linked to child care subsidy in New York, and there is no tiered reimbursement.

**Tiered Program Standards**

- New York uses the QUALITYstarsNY QRIS model, which has five stars and tiers, each with its own research-based performance standards.

- Categories include: learning environment, family engagement, qualifications and experience, and leadership and management.

- Common program standards are used for all programs in the QRIS; however, there are slightly different criteria across program types.

- The QRIS model is explicitly aligned with state learning standards, including New York State regulations for child care and prekindergarten and New York City regulations.

- The QRIS model is explicitly aligned with national standards and guidance, including Head Start Program Performance Standards, the former Programs of Excellence, assessment tools such as the PAS and ERS, and the accreditation standards of the NAEYC.

- Programs that have been accredited by NAEYC or NAFCC are awarded a certain number of default points.

  ▪ The scoring is points based; a rating is determined by a points system, whereby applicants receive points for meeting standards in each category.

    - A minimum of 10 percent of points must be earned in each category.

    - There are a total of 360 points: 290 points before the ERS observations, 50 points from the ERS observation scores; 20 points depending on which standards apply in special circumstances (depending on population served).

## Monitoring

  ▪ QUALITYstarsNY uses ERS assessments and CLASS assessments conducted by independent observers to assess the quality of a program's learning environment. ERS scores are factored into a program's overall star rating.

    - ERS assessments are conducted using the SACERS-R for school-age care.

    - ERS assessments for other program types allow the use of ECERS-R, ITERS-R, and FCCERS-R.

    - CLASS assessments are offered to programs with active ratings of four and five stars.

    - CLASS assessments are not factored into a site's star rating but are used to inform targeted quality improvement efforts.

  ▪ QUALITYstarsNY employs 11 quality improvement specialists; it is not known how many assessors are employed as these are part time.

    - Assessment is kept separate from quality improvement processes.

  ▪ QUALITYstarsNY employs a formal assessment process:

    - A one-star rating is issued to a program that meets basic licensing requirements by completing the application.

    - When selected, a program is assigned a quality improvement specialist who assists them in launching a self-study.

    - The program conducts a self-study documenting how they meet the standards; they also join the workforce registry. After validation of the self-study, the program receives a preliminary rating requiring them to conduct an external SACERS or a self-applied SACERS, depending on the star level.

    - After conducting the SACERS, they develop a quality improvement plan; once this plan is approved, the program is assigned resources, including higher education, training, consulting, and coaching.

    - In centers and schools, ERS assessments are conducted in at least one third of the classrooms and in at least one classroom of each age group.

    - Observations typically last for three to four hours.

    - ERS observations will be offered once per rating cycle to all participating sites. Sites do not incur any costs for these assessments.

- QUALITYstarsNY employs trained and reliable assessors to conduct ERS observations.
    - All assessors have experience with the types of settings they observe and are trained and required to maintain a high degree of reliability.
    - Assessors have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in a relevant field.
- QUALITYstarsNY tests assessors on reliability:
    - Assessors are trained and tested on reliability; QRIS requires periodic interrater reliability tests.
    - Assessors are not involved in any quality improvement or technical assistance efforts.

## Public Availability of Quality Ratings

- QUALITYstarsNY does not display program ratings publicly; however, they intend to in the future.
    - Ratings are not displayed as there are only 330 participating programs, and thus it has been deemed unfair to publish ratings at this stage.
- Parents are made aware of the QRIS model using several mediums.
    - Presentations and readiness workshops are available around the state to educate the field about QUALITYstarsNY and how programs and providers can begin to study the standards and make improvements.
    - Programs and providers can also use the online Standards Resource Guide to learn more the standards and access links to resources. As QUALITYstarsNY grows, it has been reported that more emphasis will be placed on outreach to parents about the importance of high-quality child care and how they can use the standards to speak with their child care provider about quality.
    - Parents also have access to informational brochures on quality and QUALITYstarsNY.
- Ratings are valid for a three-year period, unless a reassessment is triggered by significant changes in the program.

## Supports to Meet Progressive Standards

- New York offers supports to professional development.
    - QUALITYstarsNY employs quality improvement specialists (QI specialists) around the state to engage directly with programs and providers during the quality improvement process. QI specialists offer a range of services and supports from coaching to basic technical assistance and training. QI specialists work with programs and providers to develop a quality improvement plan based on the standards and other assessment information. The QI specialists then link participants to available professional development opportunities and provide resources to support improvement activities.
    - QUALITYstarsNY uses quality scholars to support programs' professional development and quality improvement goals. In alignment with their quality

improvement plan developed in collaboration with their QI specialist, program staff may receive supports for activities including: consultation, non–credit-bearing training, college tuition, and training and assessment fees associated with certain credential or certificate programs.

- New York reports supporting progressive standards with financial incentives.

    - These include grants and awards as well as scholarships, funded by quality scholars, to support professional development such as training, coursework, and conferences.

- New York has a credentialing process for directors, infant toddler programs, and family child care; however, these are not widely ascribed to.

## Operating System

- There is paper submission but no online application system.

- QRIS uses an online process of reviewing submission documents and monitoring programs.

    - QUALITYstarsNY partners with the Web-based Early Learning System foundation to develop and maintain a Web-based QIS data system. The data system houses participant information, formulates the ratings, and monitors programs' status and progress. Through this collaboration, QUALITYstarsNY is able to analyze and convert program data into ratings and then develop and implement targeted quality improvement plans based on those ratings.

    - QUALITYstarsNY also collaborates with Aspire, New York's registry for early childhood professionals, to collect and monitor workforce data such as staff employment history, education, and ongoing professional development.

## Funding

QUALITYstarsNY is funded with a combination of federal and private funds.

- Approximately 97 percent of the work to implement QUALITYstarsNY has been funded with federal dollars through the NYS Education Department and the Early Childhood Advisory Council.

- The remaining 3 percent of funding comes from private foundations, specifically The Rauch Foundation and the Western New York Women's Foundation, which supports the implementation of QUALITYstarsNY in their local communities.

- Through its Federal Race to the Top grant, NYS Education Department has allocated $4 million over three years to QUALITYstarsNY. The Early Childhood Advisory Council also allocated $535,000 of its federal grant to support QUALITYstarsNY. The federal funding for QUALITYstarsNY is time limited: Early Childhood Advisory Council funding will expire in 2013 and NYS Education Department funds will decrease in 2013 and end in August 2014. Thus, New York's Quality Improvement Workgroup is currently seeking to secure the state investment necessary to continue and to expand the reach of QUALITYstarsNY.

# North Carolina State Profile
**July 29, 2014**

**Interviewed Jennifer M Johnson, Early Learning Head**

**System Models**

- QRIS is a points-based system that includes child care centers, family child care homes, infants and toddlers, preschool-age children, and school-age children.

  - "School age" is defined as kindergarten and up.

- All participating programs must be licensed. However, before-school and afterschool programs are not required to be licensed unless they want to receive subsidy payments; programs can voluntarily go through licensing to participate.

- Licensing entities in North Carolina cover programs serving ages 0–12.

- There is not a separate rating component where licensing is not required. The state law in North Carolina does not allow programs to care for children over the age of 12. The program notifies the state, and they then indicate this information on the program's permit (license).

- The state agency administering QRIS in North Carolina does not have jurisdiction over programs that are exempt from licensure. In terms of how the state handles the basic components that licensing covers, such as safety, if programs are not licensed, law enforcement would get involved depending on the incident.

- QRIS is linked to licensing in North Carolina; the QRIS is incorporated into licensing.

  - The absence of a designated allocation for a QRIS forced the North Carolina Division of Child Development to redesign existing functions in order to implement its QRIS as a star-rated license, an expansion of its existing licensing system.

  - Existing systems and processes—licensing monitoring, staff qualification checks, automation, and the website—were reviewed to determine how to expand or revise them to include the onsite evaluation of child care programs.

  - North Carolina found that it was more effective to integrate the QRIS into the existing licensing process than to create new positions or units that worked on the rating system.

  - Before-school and afterschool programs are not required to be licensed unless they want to receive subsidy payments; programs can voluntarily go through licensing in order to participate.

- QRIS is linked to child care subsidy in North Carolina; programs must achieve a Star 3 rating star before receiving subsidy payments.

**Tiered Program Standards**

- North Carolina uses the Star Rated License QRIS model, which has five stars or tiers, each with its own research-based performance standards.

  - Stars 2–5 are voluntary for participants.

- Categories include: program standards (program environment, staff ratios, and interactions) and education standards (education and experience of the administrator, number of teachers with child care credentials, number of teachers with early childhood experience, and number of teachers with formal education and experience).

- Common program standards are used for all programs in the QRIS; however, there are special criteria for each program type.

- The QRIS model is not explicitly aligned with state learning standards.

- The QRIS model is not explicitly aligned with national learning standards (e.g., NAA); moreover, accreditation is not incorporated in North Carolina's QRIS model.

- The scoring is points based; points are earned based upon the average ERS score from each classroom.

**Monitoring**

- North Carolina uses the ECERS-R, ITERS-R, FCCERS-R, and SACERS.

- North Carolina employs 111 licensing consultants and fewer than 40 ERS assessors.

- North Carolina has a formal process of assessment.

  - Licensing consultants work with the program that wants to apply for a star level.

  - If a program is applying for a star level greater than two stars, they are required to have an ERS assessment to understand whether they are meeting the program standards. The ERS assessment results are returned to the licensing consultant from the assessor; the licensing consultant discusses the results with the program and recommends a star level depending on the score.

  - A program is also required to be evaluated on the basis of staff education: Transcripts and education evidence are sent in and considered by the licensing consultant to determine how many points are received for this component of the QRIS standards.

  - Ratings are valid for a three-year period, after which time a reassessment will be conducted. The licensing consultant also conducts annual monitoring visits to ensure that procedures are in place and that standards are being met. Cost savings were realized by performing complete rating assessments, including the ERS, once every three years, unless a program fails its annual monitoring of rating maintenance.

  - One third of classrooms and programs that could meet the star standards are assessed.

- Assessors and licensing consultants are required to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in a relevant subject area.

**Public Availability of Quality Ratings**

- North Carolina has a website for families to search for child care; the ratings are included on the website.

  - Publicly available ratings are presented for three years; previous ratings are also shown.

- North Carolina has also raised awareness amongst parents of the ratings through several mediums, as follows:
  - Distributed thousands of posters, in English and Spanish, with attractive pictures and simple statements, such as "Is your child care as great as your child?—Demand the stars."
  - Distributed materials on the rated license, including business cards and postcards with the Web address; distribution was through local partners (e.g., Smart Start partnerships, child care resource and referral agencies, health departments, departments of social services, libraries, human resource offices of businesses, and offices of obstetricians and pediatricians).
  - Participated in partner-sponsored star meetings for providers to give them an opportunity to learn about QRIS and begin the application process.
  - Gave providers press release templates along with their star license to make it easy for them to send information to their local newspapers. Arranged for local partners, on an ongoing basis for the first year, to host local media events when a group of programs in their area received their star ratings.
  - Arranged for the Governor to visit the first program to receive 15 out of 15 points, and provided additional press coverage for this accomplishment.
  - Distributed monthly letters to legislators that listed programs in their area that had earned the star license and a template for sending a congratulatory letter to the program.

**Supports to Meet Progressive Standards**

- North Carolina offers supports to professional development:
  - North Carolina has a minimum mandated number of professional development/training hours that must be taken by participant's staff: Someone that has a degree in child development might only do five hours a year, whereas someone with no relevant education will take 20 hours in the year.
- School age providers in North Carolina can receive specific technical assistance from consultants with a specialty in afterschool programs.
  - North Carolina developed a short-term technical assistance project focused on providing child care health consultants to programs and a long-term technical assistance project that involved adding infant and toddler specialists to the child care resource and referral agencies. School-age specialists and behavioral specialists were also added to the child care resource and referral agencies to help with program improvements.
  - Orientation is also delivered to providers on the ERS.
- North Carolina reports supporting progressive standards with financial incentives.
  - Tiered subsidy reimbursement.
  - Teacher Education and Compensation Helps Early Childhood Project.

- • Child Care WAGE$ Project salary supplements.

- • North Carolina also has a loan program that helps providers make improvements to their site facilities; providers that increase their star levels during the loan period may have a portion of the loan converted to grants.

- ▪ North Carolina does have a formal credential process.

  - • An individual takes courses or credits at a community college, or equivalency options.

**Operating System**

- ▪ There is an online component to the application system: Programs download and print the application form, and then mail in the paper copy.

- ▪ The assessment and validation system is on paper.

**Funding**

Funding for the monitoring, professional development, and the system all come from Child Care and Development Block Grant.

# Ohio State Profile

**July 29, 2014**

**Interviewed Janene R. Kehl, Early Learning Challenge Grant, Ohio Department of Job and Family Service**

**System Models**

- QRIS is a hybrid system that separately serves family child care and programs (inclusive of school-age groups).

  - "School age" is defined as kindergarten to age 15.

  - QRIS serves all programs licensed by Child and Family Services, including afterschool programs if they are not owned by a school system or school districts or summer-only day camps.

  - Participation in the QRIS is approximately 25 percent of eligible programs.

- QRIS is loosely linked to licensing through the serious risk noncompliance component: Specifically, if a program is found to have had a six-point serious risk noncompliance at their most recent licensing inspection, then the program will not be eligible for a star rating within the QRIS. However, licensing is not embedded into the tiers or stars of the rating system.

  - Licensing entities in Ohio cover programs serving ages 0–15.

  - Licensing is not the first step of Step Up to Quality. In some states all programs are rated as a "one" and then earn ratings above that. In Ohio, programs must meet standards above licensing requirements in order to be awarded a one-star rating.

  - QRIS is also loosely linked to licensing through the Serious Risk Noncompliance component: specifically, if a program is found to have had a six point serious risk non-compliance at their most recent licensing inspection, the program will not be eligible for a star rating within the QRIS.

  - Ohio QRIS does not rate programs that exclusively serve children between the ages of 13–18 years old. There is not a separate rating component where licensing is not required; programs must be licensed to be rated in the QRIS.

- QRIS is linked to child care subsidy in Ohio.

**Tiered Program Standards**

- Ohio uses the Step Up to Quality Keystone model, which has five stars or tiers, each with its own research-based performance standards.

- Categories include: learning and development, family and community partnership, staff qualifications and professional development, and administrative and leadership practices.

  - In addition, higher rated programs may optionally be assessed according to ratios and accreditation standards.

- Tiered program standards are aligned across different program types; no alternative pathways or exemptions exist. The desk review, verification, and measurement are common across program types.

- The QRIS model is explicitly aligned with state learning standards; the QRIS model is not aligned with national standards (e.g., NAA standards). However, higher rated programs can optionally achieve additional points by becoming accredited using national standards.

  - Accredited organizations accepted by Ohio include Association of Christian Schools International; Council on Accreditation, After School Programs; National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs; National Association for the Education of Young Children, Academy for Early Childhood Program Accreditation; National Association for Family Child Care; and the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation.

- The scoring is hybrid: Stars 1–3 are building blocks and are scored on an "all or nothing" basis. Stars 4 and 5 are points based; programs in these tiers can achieve additional points by being nationally accredited and by reducing teacher-child ratios.

**Monitoring**

- QRIS does not use an externally provided assessment measure or tools, such as SACERS or CLASS. Programs can opt to use these tools to conduct self-assessments as part of the QRIS Star 2.

- QRIS uses the Ohio Classroom Observation Tool (OCOT) for Step Up to Quality, an internally developed measurement tool.

  - OCOT does not cut score or graduate scoring; rather, it is either met or not met.

  - Approximately 16 staff are trained in the use of the OCOT tool.

  - Further staff are responsible for conducting the Stars 1 and 2 evaluation.

  - Approximately seven staff conduct a dual role of assessing family child care QRIS.

  - Ohio has conducted an initial crosswalk of reliability for OCOT.

  - Ohio moved to OCOT from other tools due to capacity constraints.

  - The OCOT tool includes a checklist that is used to determine whether a program meets all qualifications for their rating level.

- Assessment site visits vary according to the star rating held by a program. For programs with Star 1 rating, they are required to have a reassessment after one year; programs with Star 2 or 3 ratings are required to have an assessment after two years; and programs with Star 4 or 5 ratings are required to have an assessment after three years.

- Assessments include an onsite review of a random sampling of classrooms as well as a desk review.

- There are no standardized qualification requirements for assessors.

- Staff are trained on reliability and the use of the tool, and assessors checked for reliability in using OCOT.

**Public Availability of Quality Ratings**

- Ohio has a website for families to search for child care; the ratings are included on the website.

- Ohio publishes marketing materials, including banners and hardcopy text, to distribute to programs in order to raise awareness of the QRIS. Each program receives a marketing kit once they become star rated. Resource and referral partners also conduct awareness raising activities on behalf of QRIS.

- Programs with Star 1 rating retain that rating for one year, and are required to renew their rating at the end of that 12-month period. Programs with Star 2 or 3 ratings retain their rating for two years. Programs with Star 4 or 5 ratings retain their rating for three years.

**Supports to Meet Progressive Standards**

- Ohio offers supports to professional development.

  - Staff are required to take 20 hours of professional development training every two years from approved professional development providers.

  - Ohio offers a range of professional development, first in a face-to-face format and later in an online format so as to reduce the cost of access.

- Ohio offers supports to quality improvement consultations.

- School age providers in Ohio can receive specific technical assistance from consultants with a specialty in afterschool.

  - Technical assistance is available to all programs; large-scale overview programs and one-on-one training sessions to achieve a particular rating are available.

  - Physical and mental health consultants are made available to programs to provide technical assistance on early childhood health and mental health.

- Ohio does support progressive standards with financial incentives.

  - There is no incentive to participate.

  - Programs that become Step Up to Quality rated and maintain their star rating requirements are eligible to receive an annual quality achievement award. The amount of the award is based on a program's star rating, total enrollment, and number of subsidized children served at the program. Awards are typically between $600 and $36,000.

  - Ohio has tiered subsidy reimbursement bonuses of 5 percent to programs at the top two levels of the QRIS;

  - T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Ohio is available.

- Ohio has a formal credential process for administration; however, they do not have a credential for teachers.

**Operating System**

- QRIS has an online application system; no paper submission application is allowed.

- Ohio has not yet conducted a validation using recently updated program standards and is currently in the process of finalizing a request for proposal in support of that aim.

- The process of reviewing submission documents includes a registration, desk review of documents, and an onsite visit. Ohio aims to build an online licensing platform that is integrated into the same operating system as QRIS.

**Funding**

Funding for the monitoring, professional development, and the system all come from Early Learning Challenge Grants. Additional and supporting funds are sourced from Child and Family Services and the systems budget at the state level.

# Oklahoma State Profile

**July 31, 2014**

**Interviewed Jennifer Towell, QRIS Program Manager, Oklahoma Child Care Services**

## System Models

- QRIS is a block system that includes family child care homes, large family child care homes, child care centers, Head Start, part-day programs, and school age programs.
  - "School age" is defined as a program in which the majority of participants are kindergarten and up. Programs generally serve children and youth through elementary school; however, there is no formal age at which "school age" ends.
  - School age programs do not include out-of-school time activities that are drop-in, single-purpose programs, such as tutoring services, or programs operating fewer than 15 hours per week.
- All programs that participate in QRIS must be licensed.
- QRIS is linked to the child care subsidy. Programs, including school age programs, have to be Star 1 plus or higher to receive a child care subsidy.

## Tiered Program Standards

- Categories include compliance with licensing, professional development, education qualifications, learning environment, family engagement, and program evaluation.
- The same program standards are used for all programs in the QRIS; however, there are special criteria for school age programs.
  - For example, school age programs have different requirements for the number of master teachers in a program and whether the director can count as one.
- The scoring is all or nothing—either the program meets all qualification within a certain category to achieve that status or they are dropped to the status below. The four levels are as follows:
  - Star 1: Minimal licensing requirements
  - Star 1 plus: Additional criteria including training, reading to children daily, parent involvement, and program assessment
  - Star 2: Additional criteria including an education criteria for staff *or* are nationally accredited
  - Star 3: Meets additional quality criteria and is nationally accredited

## Monitoring

- A checklist is used to determine whether a program meets all qualifications for their rating level.

- There are approximately 130 licensing monitors who visit programs three times each year. At least one of these visits will relate to the QRIS rating to make sure the pieces are in place.
- Assessors must have a bachelor's degree in a related field.
  - Oklahoma started doing behavioral interviewing and has observed positive results in the quality of staff.
- Assessors conduct their regular licensing visits three times each year and one of the visits can count toward the QRIS visit.

**Public Availability of Quality Ratings**

- Oklahoma has a website for families to search for child care; the ratings are included on the website.
- Oklahoma's resource and referral has an app for the iPhone that lists the ratings.
- When a facility is awarded higher than Star 1, they get a certificate to display next to their license, as well as decals to put on the window of their facility and/or their vehicles.
- Because there are ongoing monitoring visits by licensing staff, ratings last as long as the facility meets the criteria.

**Supports to Meet Progressive Standards**

- The training to find out about the QRIS is more of a one on one consultation provided by the stars outreach specialists (there are two for the state).
- The stars outreach specialists also offer training on early learning guidelines and the professional development registry in the state.
- There is a reward supplement for each level of the system, as well as tiered reimbursement. In addition, there are scholarships for education and vouchers to attend conferences.

**Operating System**

- There is paper or electronic (e-mail) submission but not an online system.
- Applications are submitted to the stars outreach specialists, who have 30 days to review the documents and the application. They can then make a recommendation for the program to be part of the system at a certain level and someone from the state office approves it.

**Funding**

Funding for the monitoring, professional development, and the system all come from Child Care and Development Fund and some from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funding.

# Pennsylvania State Profile

**July 29, 2014**

**Interviewed Leslie A. Roesler, Community Initiatives Project Manager, Pennsylvania Key**

## System Models

- QRIS is a block system that includes prekindergarten, Head Start, family child care, infant-toddler, and school age programs.

  - "School age" is defined as kindergarten and up. Specifically, for licensing purposes, school age includes kindergarten.

- All programs that participate in QRIS must be licensed.

  - Licensing entities in Pennsylvania cover programs serving ages 0–15.

  - Most school age children in care are up to third or fourth grade, so they are mostly younger than 12 years old.

  - Pennsylvania does not currently rate school age programs if they are not licensed.

  - Pennsylvania Afterschool Youth Development Network is exploring options for applying QRIS principles to nonlicensed afterschool programs.

  - Pennsylvania is exploring additional program assessment tools that might be more applicable to older school age children.

- QRIS is linked to child care subsidy in Pennsylvania.

  - Child care providers participating in Keystone STARS at the Star 2 level or above receive a subsidy bonus for every child or youth attending their program that is enrolled in the subsidy program.

  - The subsidy add on is applicable to family child care homes, group child care homes, and centers at the Star 2 level or higher, and it increases with each star level.

## Tiered Program Standards

- Pennsylvania uses the Keystone STARS QRIS model, which has four levels or tiers, each with its own research-based performance standards.

- Categories include staff qualifications and professional development, learning program, partnership with family and community, and leadership and management.

- There are common program standards used for all programs in the QRIS; however, there are special criteria for pre-K, Head Start, family child care, infant-toddler, and school age programs. These specific criteria are presented in the individual worksheets provided depending on the user's program type.

- The QRIS model is explicitly aligned with state learning standards; the QRIS model is implicitly aligned with national standards (e.g., NAA standards). However, explicit alignment is anticipated in 2015 with a crosswalk currently in process.

- The QRIS model also allows for accreditation to be used to meet rating criteria. Specifically, for a program to meet criteria for the Star 4 level, they are required to meet all stars performance standards or as an alternative be accredited and meet Star 4 accreditation standards. In this model, accreditation by an accepted body replaces the block requirement to meet Stars 1–4.

- Pennsylvania accepts accreditation from the following bodies: Council on Accreditation, After School Programs; National Association for the Education of Young Children, Academy for Early Childhood Program; Accreditation; and National Association for Family Child Care.

▪ The scoring is all or nothing—either the program meets all qualification within a certain category to achieve that status or they are dropped to the status below.

## Monitoring

▪ Pennsylvania has a formal rating process.

- Keystone STARS includes a required ERS assessment.

- At the Star 1 level, providers complete a learning environment checklist.

- At the Star 2 level, providers complete an ERS self-assessment and develop a plan to improve any scores below 3.0.

- Specific ERS subscale scores are required at the Star 3 and 4 levels.

▪ QRIS for school age uses the SACERS measurement tool.

- The overall QRIS uses a variety of measures or tools to assess programs: ECERS-R, ITERS-R, FCCERS-R, and SACERS.

- The QRIS also offers programs the option of voluntarily using additional tools for continuous improvement. These include PAS and CLASS.

▪ Assessors are checked for reliability on SACERS and other measures or tools used in assessment.

## Public Availability of Quality Ratings

▪ Pennsylvania has a website for families to search for child care; the ratings are included on the website.

## Supports to Meet Progressive Standards

▪ Pennsylvania offers supports to professional development.

- Pennsylvania has worked with the National Institute of Out of School Time to develop Links to Learning, which looks at theoretical frameworks, curriculum planning basics, benchmark standards, project-based learning, and a variety of content-specific (mathematics, literature, and science) topics.

- Annual professional development plan is developed based on needs identified in the professional development record. It is developed for each staff member at a given

center and documented on the Professional Development plan in the professional development record.

- Pennsylvania works with a distance learning provider for on-demand modules; there are four to six modules at two hours each.

▪ Pennsylvania offers supports to quality improvement consultations.

- Pennsylvania has a specific model, the Afterschool Quality Process Improvement Model, which includes professional development and technical assistance supports. This model guides providers through the improvement process, collecting data, identifying strengths, and creating action plans.

- Quality improvement consultations must support provider moving up star level, can access 40 hours over six months, averages about 20 hours across months.

▪ School age providers in Pennsylvania can receive specific technical assistance from consultants with a specialty in afterschool programs.

▪ Pennsylvania reports supporting progressive standards with financial incentives.

- Programs receive tiered subsidy reimbursement.

- Programs can access funds according to the size of the program and the star level achieved by the program, described as an annual merit award.

- Individuals can also access education retention awards offered for achieving certain credentials, or levels on the career lattice (e.g., school age credential or equivalent).

- Individuals who are attending school that meet certain requirements (e.g., time in employment, salary, and time in course) can also access financial supports in the form of the Rising STARS Tuition Cost program, which can compensate them for up to 95 percent of tuition costs per student.

▪ Pennsylvania has a formal credential process for Star 3 and above; moreover, there is a credential process for lower star levels.

## Operating System

▪ There is paper submission but not an online system.

▪ The validation process is hardcopy.

- Pennsylvania uses an online data system that collects information on star-rated providers; this system allows them to track grants and awards, technical assistance, and other information.

- However, the application submission process and validation and assessment process is still conducted in hardcopy.

## Funding

Funding for the monitoring, professional development, and the system all come from Child Care and Development Fund.

# Wisconsin State Profile

**August 8, 2014**

**Interviewed Bridget Cullen, Child Care Program and Policy Analyst-YoungStar Program**

**System Models**

- QRIS is a points-based system that includes family child care, group child care, public school exempt programs, standalone school age programs, as well as day camp programs (a recent addition).

  - "School age" is defined as serving children between the ages of 5 and 12 years old.

  - When there is a school-age program in a school building, Wisconsin licensing rules allow for 4-year olds who are enrolled in a 4-year-old kindergarten as part of a program offered by a local school district to be considered as school age.

  - All participating programs must be licensed.

  - If a program is licensed and in good standing, then they can proceed past a rating of two stars on the raging scale.

  - If a program has their licensed revoked or suspended, then the program reverts back to a Star 1 rating; after a failed appeal process, the program is assigned a rating of Star 2 regardless of their original rating.

  - Schools are exempt from the licensing oversight must still follow licensing rules if they are to receive public funding for child care purposes.

  - In Wisconsin, licensing covers programs serving ages 0–12.

  - There are some cases in which programs serving 13-year olds are included in licensing.

  - In Wisconsin, the QRIS does not rate programs serving children and youth between the ages of 13 and 18; there are no such programs that exist in the context of the QRIS.

  - In Wisconsin, there is not a separate rating component where licensing is not required.

  - If a program chooses to participate in the QRIS, then the program must be regulated or have the "exempt" status and still follow licensing rules.

  - In Wisconsin, regulation includes licensing and certification. Licensing requires that persons operating child care centers that provide care and supervision for four or more children under the age of seven years be licensed.

  - Certification of child care programs is available when there is a request from parents for public funding for child care. This covers programs that provide care to between one and three children under the age of seven.

- QRIS is linked to child care subsidy in Wisconsin;

- Wisconsin Shares subsidy reimbursement levels are based on the child care provider's star rating; Wisconsin has a tiered reimbursement system. YoungStar participation is required for providers who accept Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy payments (sometimes called "county subsidy") except licensed day camps. licensed day camps are required to participate in YoungStar as of March 1, 2014.

- If a program is not required to participate in the QRIS, then they can voluntarily do so; in these cases, it is common for the applicant to be expecting to accept subsidy payments in the future.

**Tiered Program Standards**

- Wisconsin uses the YoungStar QRIS model, which has five stars or tiers, each with its own research-based performance standards.

- Categories include: regulatory compliance, education qualifications and training, learning environment and curriculum, professional and business practices, and child health and well-being practices.

- Common program standards are used for all programs in the QRIS; Wisconsin defines the program types as "tracks," and the standards align across all tracks.

- The QRIS model is explicitly aligned with state learning standards.

- The QRIS model is implicitly aligned with national standards including academic standards and common core.

    - The curriculum framework is modeled on NAA standards.

    - Programs are not pressured on academic standards; rather, day camp, community service, literacy, environmental learning, and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics topics inform standards.

- The scoring is points based.

    - Licensing plays a "block" role of sorts in that failure to be in compliance with licensing results in a program being dropped down to a rating of Star 1.

Monitoring

- Wisconsin's overall QRIS makes use of the following ERS tools: ECERS-R, ITERS-R, FCCERS-R, and SACERS.

- Wisconsin employs 12–15 formal raters and 85–90 technical consultants.

- Wisconsin has a formal process of assessment.

    - YoungStar uses ERS, specifically the SACERS.

    - To achieve the Star 4 level, programs must have an ERS average score of 4. To achieve the Star 5 level, programs must have an average score of 5.

    - Ratings are renewed annually, so their stars can rise as the quality of care provided rises.

    - A document review checklist is provided to programs.

- Ratings are valid for one year, and a rerating can be triggered at any time, most likely by the loss of a qualified staff person. After the reassessment is triggered, the program has a 14-day allowance period to appeal.
- Wisconsin has minimum requirements for the qualifications of assessors.
  - Requirements are set up by consortium members; WICA association's standards (this is normally a requirement that staff have associates degree in early childhood, or a level 12 internally).
- Reliability checks are conducted on the staff using SACERS.

## Public Availability of Quality Ratings

- Wisconsin has a website for families to search for child care; the ratings are included on the website. YoungStar also offers parents access to resources through this portal.
- YoungStar has also conducted a marketing campaign, linked subsidy and share dollars to participation, and provided programs with window clings to advertise their ratings.

## Supports to Meet Progressive Standards

- Wisconsin offers supports to professional development.
  - YoungStar offers Positive Behavior Intervention Supports training.
  - YoungStar offers TRIBES training.
  - Programs are required to create a program profile in the professional development registry.
  - YoungStar offers T.E.A.C.H. Credit for Prior Learning Information.
  - YoungStar collaborates with the Early Childhood Education Wisconsin Technical Colleges.
  - WICA also makes available two hours of professional development to each program participating in QRIS.
  - YoungStar collaborates with Wisconsin State Afterschool Network, which also offers professional development opportunities.
- Wisconsin offers supports to quality improvement consultations.
  - Each program participating in QRIS has six to eight hours of technical consultation made available by WICA.
- School age providers in Wisconsin can receive specific technical assistance from consultants with a specialty in afterschool programs.
  - Providers can choose to have a YoungStar Technical Consultant come to their program and help them achieve their goals for higher quality and higher star ratings.
  - When providers agree to participate in technical consultation and receive a YoungStar Micro-Grant, they must agree to the terms of the YoungStar Technical Consultation and Micro-Grant Participation Agreement.

- Wisconsin reports supporting progressive standards with financial incentives.

  - Participating programs are awarded microgrants that can be used to finance professional development. These awards vary across program types: licensed group child care programs can earn $1,000; licensed family child care programs can earn $500; and certified family child care programs can earn $250.

  - Tiered subsidy reimbursement.

  - T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Wisconsin.

  - R.E.W.A.R.D. Wisconsin Stipend Program.

- Wisconsin has a formal school-age credential process: This credential system is offered through University of Wisconsin-Platteville; individual courses and seminars are offered through technical colleges.

- There is not a requirement for participation in 21st CCLC.

## Operating System

- Wisconsin requires that applications to participate in YoungStar be submitted on paper to a local YoungStar office or online.

- Wisconsin maintains an online system to store data relating to star assessment.

  - Programs can store information about education and training on the registry program profile (sometimes called an organization profile). The information entered into these program profiles is automatically used to determine programs' star rating in YoungStar and reimbursement amounts in Wisconsin Shares.

  - Wisconsin has completed a contract with Brana to provide an online validation and assessment system; once this is implemented, the ERS will be completed through Brana.

## Funding

Funding for the monitoring, professional development, and the system come from general state revenue, Celebrate Children Foundation (consortium) private investment, purchasing alliances, and training and development.

# National Trends Overview

**August 13, 2014**

**Interviewed Susan O'Connor, Zero to Three Policy Network; Susan Rohrbough, State Technical Assistance Specialist, Region V, National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center; and Darlene Hamilton, Technical Assistance Specialist, National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement**

## System Models

- There is a disconnect between school age program participation in QRIS models and early care program participation.

- School age programs are often incorporated into a state's QRIS model; however, this characteristic is qualified by the proportion of school age programs that are participating (relative to the total number of school age programs in the state). This proportion is often much lower than the proportion for early care programs.

- School age programs often report that they do not understand the benefits of participation in the QRIS, or that there are not sufficient incentives (financial or other) to encourage them to participate.

## Tiered Program Standards

- Often program standards are aligned across program types; in other cases, school age programs are included in the general QRIS model.

  - QRIS models that align standards across program types but offer exceptions or program-specific components are more facilitative of school age programming in particular. School age programs can be discouraged from participation if the QRIS model is not customized to their needs.

## Supports to Meet Progressive Standards

- Often, school age programming and networks or groups are not involved in strategic decision making at the state level. As a counterexample of best practice, the National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center is working with Indiana to help them produce a strategic plan. School age groups and programs have been included in this strategic planning process. Involving all program types in these strategic processes is key to the successful integration of school age programming into QRIS.

- School age programs often lack knowledge or expertise that would facilitate them implementing tiered reimbursement systems that integrate the child care subsidy with programming.

- Complicated criteria across financial incentive options deter wider implementation and expansion to school age programming. For example, in Illinois and Indiana, state administrators had invested in the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program but have recently moved away from wider implementation and adoption for school age programming.

- The historical development of school age programming has had the unintended result of isolating the field from the wider child care community with respect to QRIS.

  o The National School Age Care Alliance were only recently implemented when the federal government introduce the 21st CCLC program, housed under the U.S. Department of Education.

  o To some extent, this isolated the field, as school-based 21st CCLC programs developed. Separately, community-based child care programs are drawing upon CCDF funds.

  o Three states within the statewide network structure have formally merged CCDF and 21st CCLC funding threads: Connecticut, Oregon, and New Jersey.

  o In addition, New Hampshire is in the process of formally merging the two funding threads but has otherwise good connections and communication between the two fields.

  o Even in these cases, it should be noted that New Jersey did not include school age programs in the QRIS pilot, and Connecticut is developing a QIS not a QRIS.

- There is potential to braid, or formally merge, funding between child care and 21st CCLC funds, and yet the conversation around this has not yet gained momentum. Several challenges undermine such potential, as follows:

  o 21st CCLC has a history of running free, fully subsidized programming; CCDF can be a fee-for-service program.

  o Licensing requirements can be difficult to acquire for school age programming. In particular, the indoor environment and outdoor environment requirements are often more stringent than programs can realistically achieve.

  o There is a lack of coordination between 21st CCLC and state agencies that run CCDF; in particular, there is a need to break down the bureaucratic barriers between the two fields.

  o Philosophical differences between 21st CCLC and community-based child care fields.

- There is a lack of knowledge and expertise among program administrators as to how to apply for various funding sources and then balance these grants in a sustainable manner.

  - Training should focus on business skills and knowledge to facilitate this type of financial coordination.

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