

QRIS Implementation Guidelines

This material was developed under a previous contract with the Office of Child Care. While these materials are up to date, the National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement plans to issue an Information Product later this year that will update and/or expand on these materials. The National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement does not endorse any non-Federal practice, organization, publication, or resource.

About QRIS

A quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs. Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, QRIS award quality ratings to early and school-age care and education programs that meet a set of defined program standards. By participating in their State's QRIS, early and school-age care and education providers embark on a path of continuous quality improvement. Even providers that have met the standards of the lowest QRIS levels have achieved levels of quality that are beyond the minimum requirements to operate.

QRIS are composed of five common elements: (1) standards; (2) accountability measures; (3) program and practitioner outreach and support; (4) financial incentives; and (5) parent/consumer education efforts.

QRIS Implementation Guidelines

The following is a sample of implementation guidelines that can be used as States are considering the options and issues in development (or improvement) of QRIS. The implementation guidelines are not listed in order of priority, and some tasks will need to occur simultaneously in the planning stage. In addition, some strategies can be considered when implementing the system (although they may be re-examined as the system evolves), and others will be ongoing. *Issues to Explore When Planning, Implementing, or Reviewing a QRIS*, a companion document, is available from the National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement.

Early Planning/Design

1. Identify implementing agency(ies).
 - (a) Address staffing issues, staff training, and continuous support for the implementing agency staff.
2. Include a plan for evaluating the impact of the system on the quality of care and child outcomes from the beginning of system implementation.
3. The following forms are needed to implement a QRIS:
 - (a) Application;
 - (b) Monitoring form; and
 - (c) Other forms specific to the developed quality criteria.
4. Develop policies and procedures to include the appeals process for a child care facility. The policies and procedures should address the following:

- (a) Clear instructions on how applications are handled if incomplete when submitted;
 - (b) If, and how, quality levels might be reduced if monitoring reveals that a program no longer meets criteria; and
 - (c) Appeals procedures on disputed decisions.
5. Train the subsidy/eligibility agency staff on the QRIS and its benefits for families. Staff are often the first contact families have when looking for financial assistance for child care. Staff in the subsidy office must be trained, particularly those working with families and their applications, even if they are not the implementing staff for the QRIS.
6. Develop and maintain a tracking system that reflects the participating number of facilities and children impacted.

Drafting Quality Levels or Steps

7. If education/training is part of the standards, the following must be addressed:
- (a) A professional development system must be in place and providers made aware of it;
 - (b) Educational/training entities need to be apprised of the effort and their potential involvement;
 - (c) If the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential is part of the quality criteria, the Council for Professional Recognition needs to be apprised, and the State must have enough trained CDA advisers; and
 - (d) Providers must be educated about the CDA, the Certified Childcare Professional (CCP), and other national and/or State early childhood credential requirements that will be included in the quality criteria.
8. Within the levels of standards, establish definitive compliance guidelines for meeting the standards. What are the requirements to meet at each designated level of the QRIS?
9. If accreditation will be part of the QRIS, which accrediting organizations will be recognized? What tool will be used for evaluating the national accreditation organizations applying for recognition in the State's system? What will be the appeals process for the accrediting organizations?

Monitoring for Compliance With QRIS Standards

10. If a classroom assessment will be part of the QRIS, what instrument(s) will be used? If classroom assessments (environment rating scales, *Arnett Measure of Teacher Sensitivity*, etc.) are part of the standards, who will do the assessments? How often? Who will train the evaluators? How often will the evaluators be trained? Where will the evaluators be housed?
11. Will there be a system for monitoring a child care program's compliance with the QRIS standards? For example, using a tool or form to monitor compliance with the identified standards, such as staff qualifications/training, administrative policies and procedures, parent/family involvement, etc. If yes, who will monitor it? How often?
12. If licensing compliance will be one of the standards, establish an acceptable licensing threshold (i.e., substantial compliance/good history with licensing).

Support for Programs and Practitioners

13. Inform and recruit the early childhood community to participate in the system.
14. Provide mentoring, and support early childhood providers in the application process and help them understand the QRIS.

15. Establish a formal link with the child care resource and referral agencies.

Sustainability and Public Awareness

16. Develop a public relations campaign to supply brochures, public service announcements, billboards, etc., to parents and the general public.
17. Provide awards and acknowledgements for providers such as certifications, signs, brochures, pins, etc.
18. Review, refine, and revise by listening to feedback from providers, implementing staff, parents, the public, etc.
19. Always remember your identified goals and keep focused!