

Issues to Explore When Planning, Implementing, or Reviewing a QRIS

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.

Development of a new statewide QRIS system requires detailed and thoughtful analysis of all aspects of the current early and school-age care system to ensure that it is responsive to the unique aspects of a State and its child care providers. Many States have created steering committees or task forces to guide the work and which include representatives from a wide range of agencies: professional development system, child care resource and referral, licensing, and subsidy. These committees or task forces also often include providers, prekindergarten staff, Head Start staff, early childhood initiative staff, advocates, funders, policymakers, researchers, child development experts, and parents.

Issues to Explore

States may wish to explore some or all of the following issues when considering QRIS development or review.

Planning

- Mapping the early care and education environment (e.g., key agencies, organizations, systems, services, and people);
- Mapping the early care and education workforce (e.g., capacity and needs);
- Examining licensing (e.g., agencies, standards, and data collected); and/or
- Establishing QRIS goals.

Design

- Examining authority to design QRIS;
- Participating programs (e.g., determining types of programs that will participate);
- Developing standards (e.g., criteria, number of levels, and licensing); and/or

- Providing program and practitioner outreach and support (e.g., existing services, alignment with new criteria, and new services).

Implementation

- Conducting a pilot (e.g., developing a rationale and planning for a pilot);
- Documenting compliance (e.g., developing a method for programs to demonstrate that criteria were met);
- Determining the rating level (e.g., who will determine, frequency, appeals, and costs);
- Monitoring the rating (e.g., who will monitor, the monitoring frequency, and monitoring consequences);
- Providing program and practitioner outreach and support (e.g., recruitment, orientation, improvement plans, financial aid, and technical assistance support);
- Offering financial incentives (e.g., realigning existing supports, new supports, and costs); and/or
- Reaching parents and consumers through education efforts.

Data Collection and Evaluation

- Data collection (e.g., data needed, source of data [new and existing], and use of data); and/or
- Evaluation (e.g., what to evaluate, who will design and implement it, and use of results).