

1. Descriptive Information

<p>Breakout Session B5</p> <p>Title: <i>Implications of New Research and Policy for Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Design, Implementation and Evaluation</i></p> <p>Recent research findings and policy changes have implications for QRIS design, implementation and evaluation. Key developments include new Head Start performance standards, increased focus on the connections between licensing and quality, findings from QRIS validation studies, Head Start program participation in QRIS, and design of quality improvement supports such as learning collaboratives and coaching. This session will engage participants in facilitated discussion about the implications of new research and policy for developing a QRIS that is inclusive of different programs types (including Head Start and prekindergarten programs) and ensures a rigorous yet efficient rating process, while also promoting meaningful quality improvement and consumer education. This session will be structured as a roundtable discussion with panelists responding to questions from the facilitator and audience.</p>	<p>Facilitator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kelly Maxwell, Child Trends <p>Presenters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rena Hallam, University of Delaware • Bridget Hatfield, Oregon State University • Peg Burchinal, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill • Marty Zaslow, Society for Research in Child Development and Child Trends • Kathryn Tout, Child Trends <p>Scribe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rowan Hilty, Child Trends
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2. Brief Summary of Topics and Discussion

Summary of Topic #1: What have we learned from recent research that could inform QRIS?

- Summary of Recent Research (Kathryn Tout)
 - Many states are still waiting on results from QRIS validation studies. Child Trends has been working on a synthesis of completed validation study findings. These studies are examining how the rating system is functioning as a tool to distinguish program quality and exploring relationships between ratings and measures of children’s development.
 - Summary of Findings from 7 States:
 - QRIS ratings consistently distinguish quality, though some studies group highly rated and lowly rated programs together for analyses. Findings related to child outcomes are less consistent and less robust. A few studies have found associations between ratings and executive function. A few states have found relationships between ratings and social-emotional skills, and a few have found relationships with language skills.
 - Overall, program quality tends to be in the medium to low range.
 - Bridget Hatfield: Future studies may want to consider whether children are engaging more in high-quality classrooms; we should go beyond traditional child outcomes and think about other outcomes, like engagement. Oregon is collecting engagement data as a child outcome in their current validation study.
- Issues with QRIS Research and Measurement (Peg Burchinal)
 - How do we determine inter-rater reliability on quality measures?
 - It’s hard to become reliable on many of the tools. When we’re looking at such small differences in our research, we have to consider whether reliability issues may account for some of those differences.
 - Why do we think our QRIS indicators are going to relate to child outcomes?
 - Executive function and socioemotional development are related to teacher interactions with students. Should we consider measuring things like math or literacy educational practices as the most important features of quality?
- QRIS and Child Outcomes (Marty Zaslow)

- QRIS were not developed specifically to improve child outcomes; they were developed to provide programs stair-step to higher quality. The literature on features of quality and which of these features are related to child outcomes is moving forward, and we will need to use this in future revisions of QRIS. If we look at child outcomes, what are the most important features of quality?
- Topics of Interest
 - Interaction-specific vs. domain-specific measures
 - What we're beginning to see is that domain-specific measures may take us to the 'next level' of QRIS.
 - One study found that more dosage of content-specific interactions was associated with higher quality, as was attendance.
 - Should we consider a child's exposure to a program? Who are the kids who stay in low-quality programs?
 - Thresholds
 - Maybe child outcomes only improve when you're already in a high-quality program. We may want to consider looking at more specific ranges of quality to determine if different strategies are more effective at those more specific, higher levels compared to baseline levels of quality. (See
- **Questions & Discussion**
 - *Are we ignoring the market-driven side of QRIS? Should we be paying more attention to parents' wants and/or needs?*
 - Delaware has tried to incorporate something like this, but measurement is difficult. Topics of interest include: family perceptions, teacher health, and stability of a child with primary caregiver.
 - *Is there any evidence that parents pay more for higher quality programs?*
 - There is tiered reimbursement in some states. In Minnesota, they implemented scholarships that were outside of the subsidy system but could only be used in high-quality programs. In Pennsylvania, they are examining prices across quality levels but have not published this work yet.
 - *Would we expect the elements that go into a QRIS to be related to child outcomes?*
 - "The few and the powerful" – there are limited resources and we can't measure everything so we need to focus on those that are the strongest indicators of quality.
 - There may be factors in the system that aren't related to child outcomes but are related to family outcomes or to provider outcomes. If that's the case, these might not be 'quality indicators' in terms of supporting child development, but rather indicators of programs' engagement in the system, which most of us would agree is also important.
 - Don't overburden variables by expecting them to predict everything.

Summary of Topic #2: Let's talk about the "I" in QRIS.

- Need for Process Evaluations (Rena Hallam)
 - We're differentiating quality with QRIS in many instances, but we aren't sure *how* because we haven't included a process evaluation.
 - Quality improvement, coaching, and technical assistance are relatively immature programs, but they are driving our QRIS efforts. We may want to step back and consider what we know more broadly so we can think about potential restructuring.
- Coaching
 - We've embraced coaching as a way to support practice, but there are still many questions about how well it's working and even how it is intended to work.
 - Are directors, teachers or all teaching staff intended to be the recipients of coaching?
 - Prescribed vs. responsive— coaching is currently very responsive
 - Often coaches only work with programs through the rating process and then move on; we need to build more capacity for continuous quality improvement that programs can sustain on their own

- OPRE is funding a new project called “Creating a Culture of Continuous Learning,” which Child Trends is working on with partners to better understand this issue of supporting continuous quality improvement.
 - There is a need for a more comprehensive/holistic approach to improving quality instead of working on each factor of quality individually.
- **Questions & Discussion**
 - *What is the reach of QRIS in various states? What about increasing rates of participation?*
 - It’s difficult to get high-quality information about participation rates, but there are some state-level data about participation rates in the [QRIS Compendium](#). Kathryn Tout noted that she thought center-based QRIS participation was generally around 60%, and family child care QRIS participation was roughly around 40%.
 - Potential Selection Effects
 - We have to think about both positive and negative selection effects. Often, programs that sign up for QRIS are assigned the bottom rating level by default and may have no incentive to undergo further evaluation. Some have no incentive to participate at all.
 - Some states think of this as a recruitment issue as opposed to a selection bias.
 - Minnesota used some RTT-ELC funds to send marketing people to connect with child care providers in rural areas and discuss what it would mean to participate in the QRIS system. Participation could be considered an outcome in itself until programs are solidly established.
 - *How do we focus on improvement if we don’t know what the desired outcomes are?*
 - Getting providers to ‘buy in’ to the system is easier if you can say that you want to help them improve x, y, and z.
 - Especially with limited resources, we have to think about what is most important to measure and also what providers need the most help with.
 - Indiana has very high participation rates (~95%), and their program is marketed as a way to help programs move from licensure to accreditation.

Summary of Topic #3: What are the implications of recent policy changes on QRIS?

- New Health and Safety Requirements as part of the Child Care Development Block Grant reauthorization
 - Are we facing an opportunity or a challenge with new health and safety requirements? Should we re-emphasize baseline levels of quality and say that health and safety are foundational?
- Relationship between QRIS and Licensure
 - State licensing requirements vary in terms of stringency and content; there has not been much research about the relationship between licensure and quality.
 - In Texas, anything in the QRIS rating that duplicated licensing requirements was removed. It would be interesting to discuss this with states in order to reconnect these two systems.
- **Questions & Discussion**
 - *What has been the relationship between RTT-ELC and states’ experience with QRIS? Did the policy intervention or the resources that went along with it produce important changes?*
 - BUILD interviewed states about the changes they made or are planning to make based on this initiative. One chapter in their e-book focuses on QRIS.
 - Anecdotally, it seems that the pace of QRIS in a RTT-ELC state accelerated in an exponential way. There was positive pressure to move at a new and faster pace and also to work more collaboratively across departments.

Summary of Topic #4: What are the major research gaps and what do we need to do about it in terms of QRIS?

- Is a major goal of QRIS to improve child outcomes?
- States have varied cultural and linguistic needs which could be better accommodated by QRIS.
- We may need to slow down and study the process of improvement more intentionally. What are the evidence-based outcomes we can incorporate into these systems?
- It may be helpful to study successful programs and consider how they gained their momentum.
- Examine cross-system connections
- How can we reframe family and provider experiences in child care and use those to think about meaningful indicators of quality?
- We can't expect states to implement these rigorous programs focusing on every possible aspect of quality without funding them to do so. We may need to consider a more 'streamlined' version of QRIS.

3. Summary of Key Issues & Questions Raised

- *What are the most important indicators of quality?*
 - There is some pressure to demonstrate that QRIS is improving child outcomes
 - Importance of considering the needs of families and also teachers in addition to children.
 - Focus on the "few and the powerful" when measuring quality; resources are limited and we can't measure everything or overburden variables with unrealistic expectations of predictive power.
- *How can states support programs to sustain quality improvement efforts outside of the rating process?*
 - Could coaching be a mechanism for this? How can states help programs build capacity?
- *OPRE is funding a project that will experimentally look at the threshold issue – more details will be coming soon.*