

# Child Care & Early Education RESEARCH CONNECTIONS

*A partnership of the National Center for Children in Poverty, the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, the Child Care Bureau, and the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation*

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## Quality Rating Systems A Key Topic Resource List July 2008

*Research Connections* conducted a comprehensive search of its collection for resources focused on child care **quality rating systems**. This Key Topic Resource List includes an overview and listing of selected resources from the literature.

While research on this topic is still emerging, resources of various types- including reports and papers, fact sheets and briefs, summaries, and reviews are included. Selection criteria included policy relevance and relatively recent publication (from the years 2000 to 2008). Based on the search results, resources were grouped into the following categories:

- Recommendations for designing child care quality rating systems:  
Planning and Implementation, Financing, Administration, Workforce Improvement, Accreditation, and Informing Parents
- Evaluating quality rating systems
- Quality rating systems for after school programs

Within each category, resources are organized according to publisher type and publication date. *Research Connections'* one-sentence descriptions are included for each resource. For complete citations, which include abstracts and full text for some resources, click on the titles.

### Overview:

In response to research linking high quality child care and education to positive child outcomes a number of states have implemented, are piloting, or are in the process of creating **quality rating systems** (QRS) or sometimes referred to as "quality rating and improvement systems" (QRIS). These quality initiatives are a method to measure and improve the quality in early care and education settings through a uniform approach that is available throughout a state or locality. Early care and education programs are generally awarded "stars" representing their quality (similar to hotel and restaurant ratings) for meeting set program standards and accountability measures. Financial incentives, such as tiered subsidy reimbursement, are in some cases used to encourage program participation and quality. Additionally, QRS can also help parents understand quality and make informed child care decisions.

The literature on quality rating systems is beginning to grow. Much of the literature to date is prescriptive on how to develop QRS, particularly how to finance and administer QRS, and expanding QRS for after school programs. New evaluation research however, is emerging on the extent to which QRS improves the quality of care. Other emerging research issues on QRS include:

- How do quality rating systems affect parents' child care choices? What are parents' perceptions of quality as rated by QRS? How might quality rating systems affect parents' access to arrangements of different types and levels of quality?
- How can quality rating systems be inclusive of children across age groups (i.e. infants and toddlers, preschool, and school-age), as well as across cultural and ethnic groups?
- How are state professional development systems responding to QRS?
- How is the supply and demand of care affected by QRS (across types of care)?

### **Acknowledgements:**

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## **Recommendations for Designing Child Care Quality Rating Systems**

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### ***Planning and Implementation*** *Government*

**Washington (State), Department of Early Learning. (2007). [Child care Quality Rating and Improvement System: Considerations for development in Washington State](#) Olympia, WA: Washington (State), Department of Early Learning**

*A presentation of background information regarding the phasing in of Washington State's Quality Rating System (QRS) to assess, improve, and communicate the quality of individual child care sites through tiered ranking and reimbursement*

**Wisconsin. Office of the Governor. (2004). [Quality rating system for early childhood care: Report of the Quality Counts Task Force to Governor Jim Doyle](#) Madison, WI: Office of the Governor**

*Recommendations from the KidsFirst: Quality Counts for Kids task force for quality rating, tiered reimbursement, and professional development systems for licensed and/or certified child care providers in Wisconsin*

*Journal*

**Herrerias, Catalina, Harnden, Angela, Bond, Stephanie. (2001). [Child care in Oklahoma: The Reaching for the Stars Program](#) Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology, 29(1), 47-64**

*A history and discussion of child care affordability, accessibility, and quality in Oklahoma, with a description of the Reaching for the Stars Program, a child care quality and accessibility initiative.*

*University and Research Organizations*

**Elicker, James. (2007). [Paths to QUALITY: A child care quality rating system for Indiana: What is its scientific basis?](#) West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University, Center for Families**

*An analysis of the potential for quality standards in Paths to QUALITY, a proposed child care quality rating system for Indiana, to increase child care quality and improve child development outcomes, based on results from pilot sites and a review of research literature related to quality indicators in the standards*

**Edie, David. (2005). [Developing a child care quality rating system: Wisconsin's approach](#) (Public Policy Series on Alternative Policy Options Report No. 5). Madison: University of Wisconsin--Extension**

*A paper describing how the Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership and a state Task Force developed recommendations for a child care quality rating system that was tied to tiered reimbursement*

**Edie, David. (2005). [How would a quality rating system be likely to work in Wisconsin?](#) (Brief & to the Point Issue Brief No. 14). Madison: University of Wisconsin--Extension**

*A discussion of the implications of implementing a child care quality rating scale in the state of Wisconsin*

*Other*

**Mitchell, Anne W. (2007). [Improving and rating the quality of early care and education in Florida](#) Policy Brief#2007-Q001. Auburndale, FL: The Policy Group for Florida's Families and Children**

*An identification of issues regarding the State of Florida's efforts to implement a statewide Quality Rating System (QRS) to improve and communicate the quality of individual child care sites, based on a survey of stakeholders*

**National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force. (2007). [Taking stock: Assessing and improving early childhood learning and program quality](#) Philadelphia: Pew Charitable Trusts**

*Recommendations for developing a system of state standards-based child and program assessments to be used for informing early childhood program policy and to be linked to standards-based assessments in the early elementary grades*

**Mitchell, Anne W. (2005). [Stair steps to quality: A guide for states and communities developing quality rating systems for early care and education](#) Alexandria, VA: United Way of America, Success by 6**

*A guide for implementing a community-wide or statewide Quality Rating System (QRS), including guidance for the early planning stage, the development and assessment of standards, the use of incentives to encourage quality improvement, the financing of the system, and the outreach to promote parental awareness of the system*

**Voices for Virginia's Children. (2005). [Improving quality in early childhood education: Tiered reimbursement, quality ratings, and rated licenses](#)**

**(Issue Brief in Early Childhood). Richmond: Voices for Virginia's Children**

*Definitions of Tiered Reimbursement Systems (TRS), Quality Rating Systems (QRS), and Rated License Systems (RLS), and recommendations for their use in efforts to improve child care quality in Virginia*

### **Financing**

*University and Research Organizations*

**Porter, Toni, Habeeb, Sulaifa, Mabon, Sally, Robertson, Anne, Kreader, J. Lee, Collins, Ann. (2002). [Assessing Child Care Development Fund \(CCDF\) investments in child care quality](#) New York: Bank Street College of Education.**

*A catalog, directory, and report on the evaluations of 104 local and state child care quality improvement initiatives funded through the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF)*

Other

**Mitchell, Anne W. (2007).** [Florida's Quality Rating System: A conceptual model for estimating cost assumptions, explanations and supporting data](#) Policy Brief#2007-Q001a. Auburndale, FL: The Policy Group for Florida's Families and Children

*A cost estimate for a statewide Quality Rating System (QRS) for child care centers in Florida, broken down into the following categories: quality monitoring, professional development, technical assistance, facility improvements, financial incentives, communication, and evaluation*

**Stoney, Louise. (2004).** [Financing quality rating systems: Lessons learned](#) United Way of America.

*A description of the processes and financing strategies states used to develop quality rating systems used to establish quality standards for early childhood care programs and evaluate existing programs*

**Smart Start National Technical Assistance Center. (2005).** [Linking finance to program & practitioner standards: Financing quality rating systems](#)

*A description of and approach to financing a Quality Rating System (QRS), a tool used to improve the quality of child care*

**Administration**

*University and Research Organizations*

**National-Louis University. McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership, Summer. (2007).** [State efforts to integrate measures of leadership and management in quality rating systems](#) (Research Notes Summer 2007). Wheeling, IL: National-Louis University, McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership

*Findings from a survey of states' methods for measuring leadership and management practices in quality rating systems*

**Workforce Improvement**

*University and Research Organizations*

**Brandon, Richard N., Scarpa, Juliet P. (2006).** [Supply, demand and accountability: Effective strategies to enhance the quality of early learning experiences through workforce improvement](#) Seattle: University of Washington, Human Services Policy Center

*A discussion of strategies to be used for improving the quality of teaching and caregiving by early care and education staff, both nationally and for Washington State*

**Accreditation**

*Other*

**McDonald, Davida. (2007).** [Elevating the field: Using NAEYC early childhood program accreditation to support and reach higher quality in early childhood programs](#) Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children

*An overview of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) early childhood education program accreditation process and the ways in which the accreditation process can support improvements in child care and early education quality*

**Informing parents**  
*University and Research Organizations*

**Weber, Roberta B., Wolfe, Jerri. (2003).** [Improving child care: Providing comparative information on child care facilities to parents and the community](#) **Corvallis: Oregon State University, Family Policy Program.**

*A guide to developing, implementing, and evaluating a child care quality initiative involving the collection and dissemination of child care quality indicator information to parents*

**Shlay, Anne B., Weinraub, Marsha, Harmon, Michelle. (2007).** [Racial and ethnic differences in welfare leavers' child care preferences: A factorial survey analysis](#) **Philadelphia: Temple University, Family and Children's Policy Collaborative**

*A study of differences by race and ethnicity in welfare leavers' preferences for various characteristics of child care settings, including the role of Pennsylvania's Quality Rating System in informing parents' child care choices*

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**Evaluating Child Care Quality Rating Systems**

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*Government*

**Kentucky Department of Education. (2006).** [Kids Now evaluation project executive summary 2006](#) **Frankfort, KY: Kentucky, Department of Education**

*A summary of a 2005-06 evaluation of Kentucky's statewide Quality Rating System (QRS) for center-based child care*

*Journals*

**Riley, Dave A., Roach, Mary A., Adams, Diane B., Edie, David. (2005).** [From research to policy: In search of an affordable statewide system for rating child care quality](#) **Early Education and Development, 16(4), 493-504**

*An outline of rationales for promoting statewide child care quality rating systems, with a focus on the range of quality measures used in states' rating systems and research-based planning for a quality rating system in Wisconsin*

*University and Research Organizations*

**Zellman, Gail L., Perlman, Michal, Le, Vi-Nhuan, Setodji, Claude M. (2008).** [Assessing the validity of the Qualistar Early Learning quality rating and improvement system as a tool for improving child-care quality](#). (MG-650-QEL). **Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.**

*An evaluation of the Colorado Qualistar Early Learning quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), including: an assessment of system components and the relationships between them; a comparison of Qualistar measures to other established quality measures; and an examination of the association between quality improvements as measured by Qualistar components and children's socioemotional and cognitive outcomes.*

**Zellman, Gail L., & Perlman, Michal (2008).** [Child-care quality rating and improvement systems in five pioneer states: Implementation issues and lessons learned](#) (MG-795-AECF/SPF/UWA). **Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation**

*A study of the quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) in five early QRIS-adopting states, including descriptions of: the theory of action underlying QRISs; each state's system, including the aspects of quality included in the system; the development of each state's system; and challenges facing system designers and lessons learned from these states, all based on in-depth interviews with 4 key stakeholders in each state*

**University of Pittsburgh. School of Education. Office of Child Development. (2006). [Evaluation of Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS Quality Rating System in child care settings](#) Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, School of Education, Office of Child Development.**

*An observational study examining the effects of Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS Quality Rating System on child care quality in participating child care centers, group child care homes, and family child care homes*

**Norris, Deborah J., and Dunn, Loraine. (2004). ["Reaching for the stars": Family child care home validation study: Final report](#) Norman, OK: Early Childhood Collaborative of Oklahoma**

*A study of Oklahoma's Reaching for the Stars program, a child care quality improvement initiative, examining quality differences between family child care homes representing the various levels of the Reaching for the Stars program's quality rating system*

**Cassidy, Deborah J., Hestenes, Linda L., Mims, Sharon, Hestenes, Stephen. (2003). [North Carolina Rated License Assessment Project: An executive summary 1999-2002](#) . Greensboro, NC: University of North Carolina at Greensboro, North Carolina Rated License Assessment Project.**

*A summary of an assessment of the quality of child care facilities voluntarily seeking the highest ratings in the North Carolina Rated License program*

**Bryant, Donna M. (2001). [Validating North Carolina's 5-Star child care licensing system](#) Chapel Hill, NC: Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center**

*An analysis of the validity of North Carolina's 5-star child care licensing system, based on data collected from 84 child care centers.*

**Norris, Deborah J., Dunn, Loraine, Eckert, Lisa. (2003). ["Reaching for the stars": Center validation study final report](#). Norman, OK: Early Childhood Collaborative of Oklahoma**

*An examination of quality differences between child care centers in the various levels of the "Reaching for the Stars" Quality Rating System (QRS) in Oklahoma*

*Coming soon...*

- An evaluation conducted by Cornell University of the Child Care Programs of Excellence project, a quality rating system in New York, is also in process. The evaluation aims to: collect and communicate information about the quality of child care providers in the counties using well-established rating systems; and evaluate the impact of the program on choices made by parents and on the structure of the child care market in terms of quality, cost, and availability of child care.

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### **Quality rating systems for after-school programs**

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*University and Research Organizations*

**Spielberger, Julie, Lockaby, Tracey. (2008). [Palm Beach County's Prime Time Initiative: Improving the quality of after-school programs](#) Chicago: University of Chicago, Chapin Hall Center for Children**

*A study of the implementation of a Quality Improvement System (QIS) in 37 after school programs for elementary- and middle-school-age children in Palm Beach County, Florida, during the third year of the system's implementation*

**Afterschool Investments Project. (2007). [Using a state child care quality rating system to promote quality in afterschool programs](#) Washington, DC: Finance Project**

*A discussion of a strategy to promote school-age caregiving quality by adapting states' tiered quality rating systems, which were designed primarily for early care providers, for providers serving school age children*

**Afterschool Investments Project. (2007). [Promoting quality in afterschool programs through state child care quality rating systems](#). Washington, DC: Finance Project**

*A summary of an examination of a strategy to promote school-age caregiving quality by adapting states' tiered quality rating systems, which were designed primarily for early care providers, for providers serving school age children*

**Afterschool Investments Project. (2006). [Promoting quality in afterschool programs through state child care regulations](#) Washington, DC: Finance Project**

*A description of the challenges facing after school child care programs' attempts to comply with state child care licensing regulations, as well as ways in which licensing regulations can be used to promote program quality*

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**Other Resources:**

National Child Care Information Center resources on state quality rating and improvement systems: <http://www.nccic.org/topics/topic/index.cfm?topicId=44>

Roundtable on Measuring Quality in Early Childhood and School-Age Settings: At the Junction of Research, Policy and Practice: Meeting summary <http://researchconnections.org/location/12621>

Quality in early childhood care and education settings: A compendium of measures <http://researchconnections.org/location/13403>

*Coming Soon...*

Materials from the Meeting on Evaluation of State Quality Rating Systems organized by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation will be available on *Research Connections* <http://researchconnections.org/Discover?displayPage=collaboration.jsp>

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To suggest additions to this Key Topic Resource List, please email us at [contact@researchconnections.org](mailto:contact@researchconnections.org).

To view and sort the full search results from which these resources were selected, including any resources added to the collection since selection of the Resource List, use the Create Updated Search Results function. The full results came from a search on— quality rating system\* *exact phrase*, or quality improvement *all of the words*.