

2010 CCPRC Annual Meeting
Workshop Session B3
October 21, 2010, 2:30 p.m.

Supporting High Quality Family-Provider Relationships through QRIS

Description

This breakout session highlighted research on measurement of family-provider relationships within the context of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) and focused on potential directions for State QRIS to operationalize the concepts of family sensitive-care/family engagement (FSC/FE) based on a review of current indicators. In this session, possible strategies to support providers were discussed.

Facilitator

Michel Lahti, University of Southern Maine

Discussant

Gail Zellman, RAND Corporation

Presenters

Toni Porter, Bank Street College of Education
Juliet Bromer, Erikson Institute
Sheryl Peavey, Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Dan Haggard, State of New Mexico

Scribe

Rae Anderson, National Child Care Information Center

1. Documents in Session Folder

- “Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) and Family-Sensitive Caregiving in Early Care and Education Arrangements: Promising Directions and Challenges,” Toni Porter and Juliet Bromer
- “Parent Engagement through Strengthening Families: A pilot approach with child care centers in Maine,” Sheryl Peavey

2. Summary of Presentations

- **Summary of Presentation #1:** Toni Porter and Juliet Bromer
 - Issues for QRIS were outlined including: what kinds of standards and indicators can QRIS develop for family partnerships? What are the expectations for ways in which programs and providers should interact with families to meet their needs? What constitutes higher quality in this area and how can it be measured?
 - Research questions and a conceptual model were presented (see PPT presentation). Study methods were described: a review of family partnership indicators in existing QRIS using the new QRIS Compendium; review of specific QRIS language for four indicators including written communication, parent surveys, activities with families and community resource lists; independent coding for promising indicators and

- selected examples; and interviews with selected QRIS administrators. Examples of indicators and common elements are summarized in the PPT.
- Directions for future research and measurement challenges include the need for research on provider/programs views of family-sensitive practices and the development of realistic approaches for measuring the exchange of information, sensitivity to families, and family engagement.
 - **Summary of Presentation #2: Sheryl Peavey**
 - Sheryl discussed a pilot approach with child care centers in Maine (ME) that began as a family support approach to child abuse prevention. The initiative built on existing programs and strategies—and ways parts of the system could be linked (child welfare, family support, early care, and education).
 - A brief overview of the Strengthening Families approach was provided (research based, focused on strengths not risks, for all families, start where families already are, and build on existing programs/strategies). Outcomes expected included: provider change in practice/attitude, parent involvement/leadership, and policy changes. The model moves from the protective factors that are used to prevent abuse and neglect to strategies that can be used in ECE settings. Self assessment provides a baseline measure for family support.
 - In ME, the decision was made to connect the QRIS measure of family engagement to the Strengthening Families indicators
 - Many States are now using the Strengthening Families language in their family engagement/support standards.
 - **Summary of Presentation #3: Dan Haggard, QRIS in New Mexico (NM)**
 - QRIS in NM grew out of the desire to deregulate child care. It was sold as providing differentiated payment rates for vouchers at different levels of quality. The notion was that parents “vote with their feet” about the type of quality they wanted.
 - However, parents didn’t choose quality programs, they chose based on convenience. This led to concerns about improving the quality of the environments where low income children were. The administration wanted to make sure low-income/at-risk children were in the highest quality care--how could they make sure children receiving subsidy get the highest quality care?
 - A family handbook was included as part of licensing to serve as Level 1 QRIS.
 - State is working on Pathways to Cultural Competence with NAEYC to make sure cultural competence is accomplished in QRIS
 - **Discussant: Gail Zellman**
 - It’s important to deal with family engagement as part of QRIS, but it is complicated. How much of this could be communicated but not rated? We need ratings that are reliable and valid predictors of quality, but this may not be one of them at this point. We also want providers to focus clearly on what is going on in the classroom, and promoting school readiness, social competence, etc., rather than diluting their efforts with family support. Programs need their scarce resources for direct services to children.

- If we decide to measure some/all family engagement/support, how do we do it? If we look only at success rates and uptake, we risk penalizing providers who work with more difficult parents. What do parents want from their providers, and is it different by setting? We need to match what parents want/need with what is provided rather than assuming all parents value a parent newsletter.
- The definition of “family” is still debatable. Who are we trying to work with (for example, dads, grandparents, or other adults in the child’s life?).
- QRIS was/is a political boon for our field, and it caused money to flow, but we know that the money is far from adequate to take these to scale. Thus, we shouldn’t keep putting more “things” into the ratings if we aren’t sure they really matter or belong there. We will keep working on it, but we’ll be thinking about whether it can be done well.

3. Summary of Discussion with Presenters and Participants

- *As you looked at the family/provider engagement, did you also look at whether the provider was serving as a resource/referral source for families?*
 - Toni: We didn’t find a lot of evidence of support for families connecting with other families. It’s a valid concern because some parents, under certain circumstances, would want their provider to connect parents with each other.
 - Juliet: Emerging research indicates this is something that is happening in programs. Providers are supporting social interactions with families so they can extend their support network.
- *Tension is created when we measure parental preferences that we don’t know much about. However, providers have made great efforts in family-centered care and are scoring well on MN QRIS. It boosts provider confidence, so to exclude it from the rating system would hurt the provider’s sense of efficacy.*
 - Gail: We had the same challenge in Colorado. Providers were scoring at the top in family responsiveness in their QRIS. Leaving these standards in the QRIS forces providers to pay attention to these things, and we worried that family responsiveness would be put on the back burner if these standards were taken out. However, when you are measuring something as part of a rating, the measurement should really matter, and if everyone is scoring at the top, the measurement is useless for measurement purposes. It costs a lot to implement and measure family-centered care. What is the goal for measuring this?
 - Marty: The conceptual model for family engagement needs to be reciprocal, not just looking at what the provider does and not just what the parent wants/needs/gives.
- We need a national consensus between researchers and States on what quality is and how we validate and measure it so we know whether family engagement/participation is part of that.
- Toni: By virtue of having standards, it made providers aware of the need to be more responsive to families.