

## **B2: Defining and Aligning Workforce Development and Quality Improvement Efforts: Supporting Equitable Child Care and Early Education Workforce Outcomes**

Wednesday, June 28, 2023

2:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. | *Potomac*

### **1. Descriptive Information**

#### **B2: Defining and Aligning Workforce Development and Quality Improvement Efforts: Supporting Equitable Child Care and Early Education Workforce Outcomes**

Workforce development (WD) and quality improvement (QI) are words we see and hear everywhere. WD is multifaceted, referring to various activities supporting worker knowledge, skills, competencies, and career advancement. QI is applied to various activities that support and strengthen the early childhood system, workforce, and services provided to children and families. But how do WD and QI work together? How can we strengthen the coordination and alignment of WD and QI activities to support more equitable workforce outcomes? And what factors support and constrain our WD and QI efforts? In this two-part session, we will share a framework that unpacks and sharpens our definition of QI as a workforce development strategy. Then, we will dive into interactive feedback and discuss applying QI in research, policy, and practice. This session is part of a series focused on supporting equitable outcomes for the child care and early education workforce. Participants are welcome to engage in a single session in the series (Session 1 of 3).

#### **Presenters**

**April Crawford**, Children’s Learning Institute

**Wendy Robeson**, Wellesley Centers for Women

**Kathryn Tout**, Child Trends

#### **Scribe**

**Lindsay Bell**, ICF

**Number of Attendees: 28**

### **2. Documents/Presentations Shared**

CCEEPRC B2 - RC3 Session 1

Hand out

Discussion questions

### **3. Brief Summary of Presentations**

#### **Working session with small group discussions**

- **Summary of Presentation #1: April Crawford**

- RC3: Research collaborative focused on quality improvement in workforce development
- At first, didn’t have clear definitions on the subject, so started with drafting definitions of workforce development (WD) and quality improvement (QI)
- Workforce development (WD): activities that support the knowledge, skills, competencies, and career advancement opportunities of diverse members of the early childhood workforce

- Build members' specific skills and knowledge through training, job-embedded learning, certification, and/or degree attainment
  - Strong workforce development programs have specific goals and expected outcomes, including how activities results in QI
  - Supported by content resources, trained personnel, data management technology, and monitoring and evaluation tools
  - Should lead to positive impacts for individual workforce members (career development), early learning programs (stronger marketability and workforce retention), families (better care and education services), and societies (strong workforce pipeline, greater access to quality, better child outcomes)
- Quality improvement (QI): initiatives that broadly refer to activities that aim to improve the quality of care and learning experiences provided to children and families
  - Include workforce development (improving leadership skills and teacher behaviors), attention to learning environments (stimulating materials and experiences), installation of specific programs and routines (family engagement), and collaborations among service providers
  - What are methodologies used in quality improvement programs?
  - How implementers, researchers, policymakers, etc. are using QI methodologies to strengthen and improve the QI we deliver
- Refer to slide 4 for Venn diagram of activities that fall under recruitment & retention, early learning program quality, and where they overlap in workforce knowledge & skills
  - Don't always have strong alignment across these three areas
  - Viability and success of workforce development and QI initiatives are influenced by economic, societal, and policy factors specific to the local context – must account for these drivers for effective design
- Continuous quality improvement intervention models and CQI-based performance monitoring can be embedded in any workforce development or QI initiatives as methods to improve the quality of the initiative's design and delivery
- Think more about intentional connections between the time and energy we ask the workforce to put in QI and the recognition and reward we provide for it. We ask providers to put a lot of time and energy into QI and WD – often only explicit benefit is improving the program, no explicit benefit at workforce level
- Turnover will continue to limit the impact of QI that does not account for the needs of individual workforce members
- Initiatives designed for QI and WD funded with federal dollars are often not well coordinated – what are opportunities to enhance coordination?
- Contextual factors that influence success of initiative
  - What is the maturity of evidence base?
  - What is the actual implementation capacity and capability in the environment you are implementing in?
  - What are the state and local economic, societal, and political factors?
  - At high level of maturity, considering sub-populations in design, analysis, and dissemination; design interventions tailored to meet needs of individual workforce members; systems acknowledge a need to address systemic inequities and working toward more positive perceptions of childcare workforce
  - Refer to slide 14 for signals of readiness for alignment and success of QI/WD initiatives
- **Summary of Presentation #2: Wendy Robeson**
  - Workforce important to everything we want to do – without workforce we can't do anything
  - Goal of better definitions of workforce development and quality improvement: make connections between certain activities, objectives, and outcomes much more transparent, and lead to more impactful designs
  - Case 1: refer to slide 7
    - Supplemental curriculum and coaching in instructional strategies involve workforce development and QI
    - Teacher retention missing
    - Doesn't specify what credentials are of staff being trained and what credentials they can earn
  - Case 2: refer to slide 9
    - Missing: QI

- Focused on retention and recruitment through alternative career pathways and credentialing with a workforce knowledge & skills component to support ability to attain competency-based credentials
    - Indirectly supports program quality, but are not focused on programs
    - Newly credentialed teachers may move to programs that can support higher wages
  - Case 3: refer to slide 11
    - Objectives in all three areas
    - Recruitment and retention – wage supplements
    - Workforce knowledge and skills – training and coaching
    - Early learning program quality – improved interactions and workplace environment
- **Small Group Discussion**
  - Focus areas: recruitment & retention, workforce knowledge & skills, early learning program quality
  - Discuss initiatives you've been involved in related to the focus area of your group and how they align with other focus areas. Identify focus areas we may have missed in the definitions and activities Venn diagram
  - Use worksheet for discussion
  - **Recruitment and Retention group share out:**
    - Appreciate the structure, can be improved – missing individual factors of why people stay, maybe add circle between recruitment & retention and workforce knowledge & skills - emphasizes attachment and motivations
    - Positive workplace culture, positive interactions, leadership, accessibility (example, staying in your community, language), healthy and safe work environments
    - Another framework concept: pyramid – individual elements -> recruitment and retention -> workforce knowledge & skills -> QI
    - Not a lot of research on the team aspect of providers
  - **Workforce Knowledge and Skills group share out:**
    - Where to put workforce psychological wellbeing efforts? Workforce knowledge? Program quality?
    - Highlight equitable wages and benefits instead of wage supplementation
    - Where to put network and social support?
    - Continuous development & innovation, and sustainability of funding
    - Job-embedded learning not offered to everyone in a program – need to make it clear that we need to ask who gets to participate
    - Access to those opportunities varies due to number of factors – stipulations in funding, knowledge of opportunities, time to engage
  - **Early Learning Program Quality share out:**
    - Workforce mental health conspicuously absent in retention and recruitment
    - Some pathways privileged over others – how to be intentional in supporting each pathway, how they work for both programs and workers, focus on equity
    - General program quality concepts missing – is it only QI related to recruitment & retention, or more general? (ex. Leadership not in program quality)
    - Maybe not adequate consideration of compensation as a factor
    - Leadership structures and roles as indicators of program quality is important to recruitment and retention
    - Differences in recognition of micro-credentials as equal pathway by accreditation bodies

**4. Summary of Key issues raised** (facilitators are encouraged to spend the last 3-5 minutes of sessions summarizing the key issues raised during the session; bullets below are prompts for capturing the kinds of issues we're looking for)

- Our current workforce development and quality improvement interventions do not have a clear definition of workforce development or quality improvement and are often not coordinated. This can cause interventions to work against each other.
- When designing workforce development or quality improvement initiatives, it's important to include efforts to improve early learning program quality, recruitment & retention, and workforce knowledge & skills. Initiatives will be most successful when they take local political, social, and economic context into account.

- WD and QI initiatives need to recognize and reward the work required from educators, it is an issue of equity and retention.
- WD and QI initiatives do not serve all educators equally. Need to focus efforts on equity—especially in access to these initiatives, recognition of alternative career pathways, and compensation.
- Need to include more about the work environment and individual factors in this model, including the safety of the workplace, accessibility, leadership, networks and social supports, motivation, and attachment.