**Quality Compendium**
2017 QRIS Fact Sheet

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Quality Assurance

Early Childhood
National Centers

# Continuous Quality Improvement in QRISs

Originally developed in the fields of business and health care, continuous quality improvement (CQI) is a framework to guide intentional quality improvement in systems and individual organizations. In early care and education (ECE), CQI practices are intended to create a culture in which program directors and staff regularly assess and make improvements to services for children and families. The collaboration of program leaders and staff is expected to build their capacity to identify areas of quality improvement and develop solutions that work for their unique settings and program cultures. The focus on intentional and systematic quality improvement activities aligns with the goals and structures of quality rating and improvement systems (QRISs) (Wiggins & Mathias, 2013). QRISs currently address CQI practices by including indicators and processes that ask programs to conduct self-assessments, set goals, and create action plans for quality improvement. Most QRISs are early in implementation of CQI frameworks and have not conducted evaluations to determine how well CQI processes are being implemented in ECE programs.

> This fact sheet is one of a series about the state of QRISs in the United States. As of 2017, there are 44 fully operational QRISs in the United States.[1] Data are from the Quality Compendium, a catalog of the QRISs operating in the United States as of December 31, 2017.

This fact sheet summarizes information from the Quality Compendium.[2] It describes the number of QRISs that are using CQI in their rating or quality improvement processes. It also summarizes different CQI strategies that are incorporated in QRISs, including the use of program self-assessments and quality improvement plans.

## Use of CQI in QRISs

The Quality Compendium reports on how CQI is incorporated in QRISs by using the following mutually exclusive options: (1) no CQI process, (2) CQI is included as an indicator for points or levels, or (3) CQI is not included in the indicators, only in the rating or improvement process (see Figure 1).

♦ Of 41 QRISs reporting on CQI in the Quality Compendium, the majority (27 QRISs; 66 percent) incorporate CQI by including it as an activity of the rating or quality improvement process but do not use it as an indicator in the rating tool. Typical activities include working with quality coaches, conducting self-assessments, and developing quality improvement plans.

♦ Nine QRISs (22 percent) include CQI in their quality indicators to determine QRIS points or levels.

♦ Five QRISs (12 percent) do not incorporate CQI in their systems. See Figure 1.

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[1] States with a QRIS: AK, AR, AZ, CA, CO, DC, DE, FL (three localities), GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KY, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MT, NC, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, TN, TX, UT, VA, VT, WA, WI. While most QRISs operate at the state level, three represent separate counties in Florida (Duval, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach). The California QRIS, while represented in the Quality Compendium as one system, is implemented at the county level and does not include all counties in the state.
[2] The "Quality Compendium" was previously named the "QRIS Compendium".

**Figure 1. Use of CQI in QRISs**
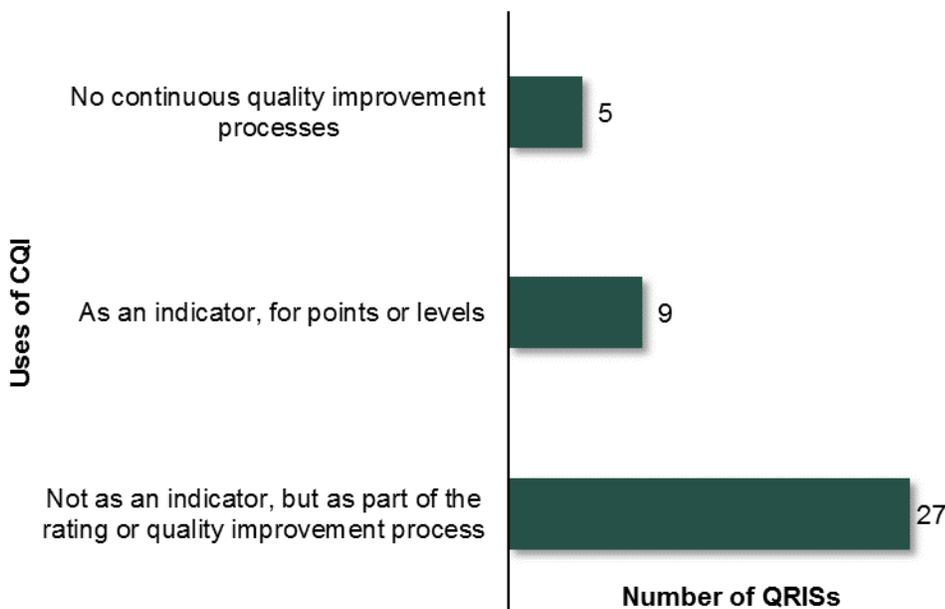


Source: Analysis of data retrieved from the Quality Compendium, 2017, https://qualitycompendium.org/

Note: N=41 QRISs

# Self-Assessment in QRISs

Self-assessments in QRISs are defined as tools program directors and/or staff use to assess quality features in their programs. Often, self-assessments are administered with the support of a coach or consultant who is helping the program develop a quality improvement plan. The tools typically assess current program practices against the QRIS rating indicators or the quality items included in observational measures of quality (e.g., the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Third Edition*[3] or the *Classroom Assessment Scoring System, Pre-K*[4]). The Quality Compendium reports on whether QRISs include self-assessments as part of rating processes.

Twenty-two QRISs (51 percent) formally include self-assessments as part of rating processes. As an example, a QRIS including a self-assessment tool in the rating process would review the results when monitoring compliance with QRIS indicators. In some QRISs, self-assessment tools may be developed by QRISs as checklists that align with the QRIS quality indicators. In other QRISs, the tools might be published observational assessments.

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[3] Harms, Clifford, & Cryer (2014)
[4] Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre (2008)

# Quality Improvement Plans in QRISs

Quality improvement plans help structure ECE programs' goals and actions for supporting and monitoring progress over time. Self-assessments in QRISs are often used to inform the development of quality improvement plans. Other tools such as coach observations or scores on observational assessments conducted by external staff may also be used in the planning process.

When providing additional details about CQI in the Quality Compendium, QRIS respondents focused primarily on describing the process for goal setting and quality improvement planning (23 QRISs provided details about quality improvement processes for centers, and 19 QRISs provided details about quality improvement processes for family child care homes). The descriptions indicate that quality improvement planning is taking place independently or with the support of quality coaches and is incorporated differently depending on the rating level (for example, a checklist at Level 1 versus an intensive goal setting process at Level 5).

# References

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