Goals of this session

- To describe the NM FOCUS TQRIS, its emphasis on CQI, use of WELS, and role of evaluation to inform the system

- To facilitate a discussion with the audience about how lessons learned/insights from NM could help inform conversations in their own states
History of New Mexico’s QRIS

1997 - 1999 Gold - Silver - Bronze
- Three Levels
- No financial Incentives
- No onsite consultation
- Did not support low income children

1999 - 2011 Aim High
- Differential subsidy
- Onsite Consultation
- Low income children had access to high quality programs
- 5 Quality Levels
Lessons Learned

- Programs had a difficult time to maintain quality after “graduating” from AIM HIGH.

- Consultation has focused on working in classrooms with teachers rather than directors. High turnover rate of teachers.

- It has been difficult to base 5 STAR recognition on multiple independent external accrediting entities.
  - (e.g. NAEYC significantly increased their accreditation standards in 2005 increasingly creating an “uneven playing field”)

- System encouraged programs to focus more on the criteria of the Environmental Rating Scales and accreditation than on WHY the criteria is important for children’s positive outcomes.

- Gold, Silver, Bronze was the foundation for Aim High.

- Aim High was the foundation for FOCUS.
So...What is FOCUS?

*The mission of FOCUS, New Mexico’s newly revised Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) is to support positive outcomes for all young children and their families.

*With the *New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten* (ELGs) at its core, NM FOCUS utilizes the New Mexico Authentic Curriculum and Assessment Process in order to meet individual children at their developmental level on the learning continuum and scaffold their learning.

*The NM FOCUS on-site consultation approach serves as the foundation for building relationships among administrators, teachers, and consultants that foster respect, reflection, and Developmentally Appropriate Practice.

*Families, educators, practitioners, administrators, FOCUS and state staff collaborate to create a robust early education system in New Mexico designed for the full participation of each child, each family, each program.
FOCUS Implementation Across New Mexico’s Early Childhood System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Prenatal</th>
<th>Birth to One</th>
<th>One</th>
<th>Two</th>
<th>Three</th>
<th>Four to Kindergarten Entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home Visiting</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDEA Part C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Intervention – NM FIT PROGRAM</td>
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<td>IDEA Part B</td>
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<td>EC Special Education</td>
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<td>Child Care</td>
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<td>Head Start</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Head Start</td>
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<td>Head Start</td>
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<td>NM PreK</td>
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New Mexico’s Early Learning System of Systems
New Mexico FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality for Center-Based Child Care Programs
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FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT I:
Foundations of Quality

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT II:
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ESSENTIAL ELEMENT I: Foundations of Quality

A. Full Participation of Each Child

- Family Engagement
- Inclusive Practices for Children with Developmental Delays or Disabilities
- Culture and Language Including the Support of Dual Language Learners (DLL)
- Promoting Social Relationships

DEFINITION – Full participation refers to the range of practices that promote engagement in play, learning, development, and a sense of belonging for each child.

RATIONALE – Research indicates that human development is the result of an interaction of nature (biological factors) and nurture (experience factors), with culture affecting caregiving practices (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Every child in New Mexico has diverse strengths rooted in his or her family’s unique culture, heritage, language, beliefs, and circumstances. Early learning programs that support the full participation of every child build on these strengths by promoting a sense of belonging, supporting positive social relationships, and enabling families and professionals to gain advocacy skills that positively impact the life of every child (State of New Mexico Children Youth and Families Department, 2010). In FOCUS, full participation is addressed in four areas: 1) how families are engaged in the development and learning of their children (family engagement); 2) how inclusive practices are implemented for young children with developmental delays and disabilities; 3) how the cultures and languages of each child, including young dual language learners (DLLs), are reflected and supported (culture and language including Dual Language Learners (DLLs)); and 4) how focused attention is paid to promoting social relationships.
Full Participation of Each Child

Family Engagement

Definition: Family engagement is essential for enhancing children’s learning and family well-being. Family engagement occurs when there is an ongoing, reciprocal, strengths-based partnership between families and their children’s early childhood education programs (Haugen et al., 2009).

Rationale: Positive family-program connections have been linked to greater academic motivation, grade promotion, and socioemotional skills across all young children, including those from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds (Christenson, 2000; Mantziopoulos, 2003; McWayne et al., 2004).

The following continuum of examples is provided as a reference or guide to be used in the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Process. Programs are encouraged to use other recommended self-assessment tools for this purpose as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Intermediate to Advanced</th>
<th>High Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The center and classrooms reflect a welcoming environment for families. Greeting families as they drop off and pick up their children, displaying family and child photographs throughout the classroom at child and families’ eye level, and ensuring that posters and signs are clear and in families’ home language.</td>
<td>There is evidence in the Lesson Plan and assessment information that the program encourages and validates family knowledge and participation in decision-making related to their child’s education by obtaining crucial background information and setting up learning goals for their child. Lesson Plans reflect how staff and families collaborate in establishing goals for children both at home and at school. The Family Engagement materials have been shared with families.</td>
<td>There is evidence in the Lesson Plans and center logs that center staff encourage family members to share cultural heritage and practices, stories, activities, and language in the daily classroom activities. Program Policies and Philosophy reflect a comprehensive system for promoting family engagement at all levels of the program, including fatherhood engagement. There is evidence that parents participate in the program Self-Assessment as part of the Continuous Quality Improvement Process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Foundations of Quality**

### Full Participation of Each Child

#### Culture and Language Including the Support of Dual Language Learners

**Definition:** Culture refers to the thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group. Dual language learners (DLLs) are children learning two (or more) languages at the same time, as well as those learning a second language while continuing to develop their first (or home) language. (Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center).

**Rationale:** Every child in New Mexico has diverse strengths rooted in his or her family's unique culture, heritage, language, beliefs, and circumstances (State of New Mexico, Children's Youth and Families Department, 2010). In particular, children whose home language is other than English have many similarities to other children. Yet, their development may also be different in many ways. Information about how to support DLLs is essential for teachers to know so that they can provide the best learning opportunities to ensure their future success in school and in life. Through their home language and culture, families share a sense of identity and belonging (McCluskey & Pradhan, 2013).

The following continuum of examples is provided as a reference or guide to be used in the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Process. Programs are encouraged to use other recommended self-assessment tools for this purpose as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Intermediate to Advanced</th>
<th>High Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture and Language</strong></td>
<td>The program is designed to plan activities that support each child's family's participation in classroom and center activities, including holidays.</td>
<td><strong>Culture and Language</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting Dual Language Learners</strong></td>
<td>There is intentionality in the lesson plan to foster the relationship of children who speak languages other than English with English-speaking children. Implement a program policy describing how the program promotes children's home language while supporting English language development, and includes practices to communicate with families in their preferred language.</td>
<td><strong>Supporting Dual Language Learners</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Promoting Social Relationships

**Definition:** Social skills that have been identified as essential for school success include getting along with others, following directions, identifying and regulating one's emotions and behavior, thinking of appropriate solutions to conflicts, persisting on tasks, engaging in social conversation and cooperative play, correctly interpreting others' behaviors and emotions, and feeling good about oneself and others (Fox & Smith, 2007).

**Rationale:** Research has established a compelling link between social-emotional development and school success (Raver, 2002; Smith, 2006). The following continuum of examples is provided as a reference or guide to be used in the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Process. Programs are encouraged to use other recommended self-assessment tools for this purpose as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Intermediate to Advanced</th>
<th>High Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building Positive Relations</strong></td>
<td>Classroom and program staff promote a positive environment by greeting children and families on arrival, using proper names, and verbally interacting with each child. Interactions are supportive and adults engage children at eye level.</td>
<td><strong>Implementing Targeted Social-Emotional Supports</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting Dual Language Learners</strong></td>
<td>Program staff gather information from families regarding the languages that are spoken at home, documented in the enrollment information located in the child's file. Print-rich labeling is visible and represents all home languages.</td>
<td><strong>Addressing Concerning Behaviors</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Infants and young children in the New Mexico are exposed to a wide range of traumatic stressors.

- they represent the majority of children who die from child abuse and neglect
- Are more likely to live in a home with domestic violence
- They have an increased risk of negative outcomes related to trauma because of their limited ability to cope with challenging experiences

Our challenge is to find effective ways to integrate new discoveries into direct service so that both families and practitioners feel that the field is moving forward.
ESSENTIAL ELEMENT II:
Quality Practices that Support Children’s Growth, Development, and Learning

A. Intentional Teaching: Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process

DEFINITION – New Mexico has created a comprehensive system for utilizing the New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten as the framework and criteria for an authentic assessment process and curriculum planning.

RATIONALE – Research and best practice in early childhood care and education emphasize the importance of carefully observing and assessing children within the context of their daily activities - and using those observations for curriculum planning and the ongoing monitoring of each child’s growth, development, and learning. These criteria-based observations are the best way to plan developmentally appropriate curriculum that acknowledges each child’s culture, language, and ability (Gao, & Grisham-Brown, 2011; NAEYC, 2005; New Mexico PreK, 2012; Zaslow et al, 2010; Riley Ayers et al, 2010; RAND Corporation, 2012).

B. Intentional Leadership: Continuous Quality Improvement

DEFINITION – Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is a proven strategy to increase and sustain efforts to improve a program’s quality. CQI is considered to be an appropriate approach for a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) because it provides a clear framework for programs that are moving from one level of quality to the next. CQI uses data to inform and guide a program’s efforts to improve their quality, thereby influencing positive outcomes for children. CQI is a four-step cycle:

- PLAN – establishing a plan of action by identifying, describing, and analyzing strengths and needs;
- DO – implementing the plan of action and making programmatic changes;
- STUDY – reflecting on the actions taken and learning from what has been done; and
- ACT – implementing successful changes into daily practice and determining what needs to be done next.

CQI relies on an organizational culture that is proactive, supports continuous learning, and is firmly grounded in the overall mission, vision, and values of a program. Perhaps most importantly, it is dependent upon the active inclusion and participation of everyone involved with the program - director, educators, board members, families, and FOCUS quality partners.
Vision Statement

Together, New Mexico’s Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten and the Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process provide a cross-systems approach to building upon the strengths of each young child to facilitate their growth, development, and learning within the context of their family so that New Mexico’s children are happy, healthy, and successful.

Acknowledgments:

Gaye Grondal and hundreds of early educators, national experts, and others who provided countless thoughtful hours developing New Mexico’s Early Learning Guidelines and the New Mexico Authentic Observation Documentation Curriculum Planning Process.

The New Mexico Family Infant Toddler Program for the use of children’s photos.
FOCUS
Continuous Quality Improvement
How WELS Supports FOCUS

- Trainer Registry and Training Calendar
- Educator Registry

Provider Portal
- Application
- CQI Self-Assessment
- Self-Study
- Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP)
- Knowledge Center - Resources

WELS
- FOCUS Essential Elements Verification
- Rating
- CQIP
- Quality Partners Documentation and Reporting
- Knowledge Center - Resources
- Site, Cross Sector, Regional Quarterly Progress Reports
FOCUS CQI is an ongoing, authentic process of recognizing strengths and making improvements that appropriately supports the growth, development, and learning of each young child within their family.

FOCUS CQI emphasizes the power of learning through doing and ongoing reflective leadership within the classroom as well as in the program as a whole.

FOCUS CQI supports programs to identify and access appropriate resources that are available to them to and address goals.
FOCUS CQI Process

- Guided by program’s mission and vision
- Based on 10 Essential Elements of Program Quality
- Process begins with at least one classroom at Star 2
  - all classrooms with Star 3
- Progress reports submitted quarterly
- Verified each year
FOCUS CQI - 2 Star

10 Essential Elements of Program Quality

1. Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning
2. Family Engagement
3. Inclusive Practices for Children with Developmental Delays or Disabilities
4. Culture and Language Including the Support of Dual Language Learners
5. Promoting Social Relationships
6. Health Promotion and Developmental Screenings
7. Professional Qualifications
8. Ratios and Group Size
9. Environments
10. Program Administration and Leadership
FOCUS CQI- 3 Star

10 Essential Elements of Program Quality

1. Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning
2. Family Engagement
3. Inclusive Practices for Children with Developmental Delays or Disabilities
4. Culture and Language Including the Support of Dual Language Learners
5. Promoting Social Relationships
6. Health Promotion and Developmental Screenings
7. Professional Qualifications
8. Ratios and Group Size
9. Environments
10. Program Administration and Leadership
FOCUS CQI - 4 Star

1. Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning
2. Family Engagement
3. Inclusive Practices for Children with Developmental Delays or Disabilities
4. Culture and Language Including the Support of Dual Language Learners
5. Promoting Social Relationships
6. Health Promotion and Developmental Screenings
7. Professional Qualifications
8. Ratios and Group Size
9. Environments
10. Program Administration and Leadership
FOCUS CQI- 5 Star

10 Essential Elements of Program Quality

1. Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning
2. Family Engagement
3. Inclusive Practices for Children with Developmental Delays or Disabilities
4. Culture and Language Including the Support of Dual Language Learners
5. Promoting Social Relationships
6. Health Promotion and Developmental Screenings
7. Professional Qualifications
8. Ratios and Group Size
9. Environments
10. Program Administration and Leadership
FOCUS CQI Process for Programs

Plan

Do

Act

Study
Administrators and Educators

- Gather information
- Determine goals, action plan and assign tasks
- Determine how success will be measured

WELS Portal

- CQI Survey online completed by families, educators and administrators (bilingual)
- Survey results generate Strengths
Programs...

- Put the plan into action
- Build staff knowledge and capacity
- Meet regularly to reflect and document progress

Provider Portal and WELS

- CQIP created from survey results
- Professional Development Plans progress
- Administrators, Educators and Consultants document progress on assigned tasks
- Document library
Programs...

- Share and review data
- Identify what is working, needs more improvement
- Celebrate successes

Provider Portal and WELS

- Progress reports generated for program staff showing progress over time.
- Program staff review what worked well and what still needs improvement.
Integrate successful practices
Determine what more needs to be learned and do
Revise, modify and add to plan

Program begins to “Plan” again, either revising and/or creating new tasks and actions
FOCUS CQI Support
The Leadership Academy series focus:

- CQI - Getting started and moving forward with staff
- Leadership for today and for tomorrow through a program leadership lens
- Using data to inform and guide CQI efforts
- Keeping quality efforts going - how to keep staff moving forward
Consultancy

- help programs review survey data results to identify goals that are both measureable and achievable
- provide on-site coaching or consultation
- assist program leadership with reflecting on and monitoring progress
- provide feedback on plans to sustain progress and new or revised CQI goals.
WELS On-Line Resources

Knowledge Center - searchable data base with resources developed by FOCUS Quality Partners and from Shared Resources, Child Care Exchange
FOCUS - CQI Validation Study
Child Trends: Our Mission

To improve the lives of children and youth by conducting high-quality research and sharing it with the people and institutions whose decisions and actions affect children:

- Programs that serve children and families
- Policy makers
- Foundations and philanthropists
- The media
Acknowledgements

• Quality Initiatives Research and Evaluation Consortium (INQUIRE), funded by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families (OPRE)

• BUILD, the QRIS National Learning Network and the Early Learning Challenge Collaborative

• The National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement
QRIS Validation

“Validation is a multi-step process that assesses the degree to which design decisions about program quality standards and measurement strategies are resulting in accurate and meaningful ratings.”

Zellman & Fiene, 2012
The Role of Validation

- Validation is one piece of an ongoing plan for QRIS/QI evaluation.

- Validation activities tell us whether the “tools” developed for and being used in the QRIS are right for the job of creating meaningful ratings.

- Evaluation activities answer questions about whether the QRIS is achieving its goals.
  - E.g., What TA is supporting quality improvement?
  - E.g., What recruitment strategies are most effective?
Goals of our Partnership

To support the transition to the new FOCUS system by exploring the following questions:

1. What is the evidence base for the new FOCUS criteria and underlying key concepts?
2. To what extent are FOCUS activities and supports being implemented as expected?
3. What is the validity and reliability of the FOCUS verification process?
4. Do the FOCUS criteria sort programs along meaningful differences of quality?
5. Do children who attend higher-rated programs have greater gains in skills than children who attend lower-quality programs?
6. What is the validity and reliability of the tools and processes used in the CQI process?
What is the validity and reliability of the tools and processes used in the CQI process?

To what extent are:

1. FOCUS CQI process/tools/supports being implemented as expected?
2. Programs developing and pursuing meaningful CQI goals?
3. Programs engaged in CQI in a meaningful way?
4. There discernible differences between the meaningfulness of goals and engagement among higher/lower quality programs.
Data Collection & Use

- Multi-method:
  - Document review
  - Interviews with Program directors/staff,
  - FOCUS Staff, FOCUS Consultants
  - Online surveys
  - Onsite visits

- Uses:
  - For continuous quality improvement
Validation is a Process

- Validation is not a destination.
- Validation does not produce a “yes/no” answer. Information is used to inform system refinements and improvements.
- Validation activities can be done on their own or as part of a research and evaluation agenda.
- It is never too late to prepare and implement a validation plan.
Table Discussion

- How does your state QRIS ensure or support programs in setting CQI goals that are meaningful for children and families?

- How are programs collecting and using data to inform their CQI plans?

- How have you examined the validity of the CQI tools, processes, or supports in use in your state?
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