QRIS Validation Studies in Early Learning Challenge States
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INQUIRE
Quality Initiatives Research and Evaluation Consortium

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“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
Four approaches have been identified

1. Examine key underlying concepts
2. Examine the items/measures used to assess quality and how well they function
3. Assess the ratings and how well they work
4. Relate ratings to expected child outcomes
• Requires QRIS Validation to address 2 questions:
  1. Do the ratings meaningfully differentiate higher-quality programs from lower-quality programs?
  2. Are children’s development and learning greater in higher-rated programs compared to children who attend lower-rated programs?

• 20 ELC states
  — Round 2 (2012): CO, IL, NM, OR, WI
  — Round 3 (2013): GA, KY, MI, NJ, PA, VT

  Blue=report released
Context of Validation Studies

- Anne Mitchell: QRIS often intended to be a “stair step” to higher quality
- Several pieces of information are rolled up into a single program rating
- Studies happened at a time of rapid QRIS change
  - E.g., becoming mandatory, revising the system
• Small number of programs at certain levels restricted analyses
  – Eg., 1 & 2 stars vs. 3, 4 & 5 stars
• Some challenges in recruiting providers
• Some, but not all, studies include
  – Family child care homes
  – Child development measures for toddlers

Measures used in Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) Validation Studies
• Karoly (2014) summary of research suggests
  – Consistent evidence of small, significant relationships between ratings and independent measures of quality
    • Ratings seem to be differentiating higher-quality from lower-quality programs (e.g., 4 & 5 star > 1, 2, & 3 star)
  – Mixed findings related to children’s outcomes
    • Not always find relationships
    • No clear patterns about which domains of development are most related to ratings
Voluntary; began in 2012

Hybrid rating system with 4 rating levels

Ratings cover 4 areas:
- Physical health and well-being, Teaching and relationships, Assessment of child progress, Teacher training and education

Two rating pathways: Full-rating and Accelerated Pathway to Rating process
- Accredited centers and homes; Head Start/Early Head Start; and school-based pre-k and early childhood special education

Program website
California QRIS

- Administered locally in 27 counties
- Voluntary; began in 2013
- Hybrid rating system with 5 rating levels
- Ratings cover 7 areas
  - Child observation, developmental and health screenings, minimum qualifications for teachers/providers, effective teacher-child interactions, ratios and group size, program environment rating scales, and director qualifications

Program website
• Voluntary; began in 2011
• Block rating system with 4 rating levels
• Ratings cover 4 areas:
  – Curriculum and learning; safe, healthy indoor and outdoor environments; workforce qualifications and professional development; family and community engagement; leadership, administration and management

Program website
State Validation Reports
Questions for Consideration

• Should there be one or multiple ratings?

• Which QRIS components are most closely related to which areas of children’s development?
  – And what level of quality is needed to influence children’s learning?

• How can programs best be supported to improve quality?

• How can states apply these lessons in their next QRIS revisions?

*Coming Soon!*  

*Best Practices in Creating and Adapting Quality Rating and Improvement Systems Rating Scales*
Questions and Discussion
If you have any questions about INQUIRE please contact the Project Officer:

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