QRIS 101: Everything You Want to Know About QRIS but Are Afraid to Ask

QRIS National Conference
July 16, 2018
Welcome and Introductions
Objectives

- Increase understanding of QRIS at the national and state levels
- Explore common QRIS elements and gain knowledge about state approaches
- Discuss QRIS trends and innovations
Myth Busters!
What Is a QRIS?

- Is a **systematic framework** for evaluating, improving, and communicating the level of quality in early and school-age care settings
- Builds on a foundation of licensing
- Has multiple steps or levels of increasing standards
- Offers support and incentives for reaching higher levels
- Provides easily recognizable symbols for consumer education
System Alignment

QRIS System Linkages

Child Care
Prekindergarten
Head Start
Professional Development System
Grants to Providers
Early Learning Guidelines
Child Care Resource and Referral
Subsidy
Licensing
Scholarships

QRIS
Why Develop a QRIS?

- Creates **alignment**: between licensing, subsidy, and quality; and across child care, prekindergarten, and Head Start.

- Links **supports and initiatives** to a specific quality framework.

- Provides an **accountability measure** for funding and quality initiatives.
Highly functioning integration channels include...

- Communication
- Alignment
- Data Systems
- Streamlined Funding

Why Develop a QRIS?

- The overall goal is to increase the quality of programs through system-wide improvements.
- A QRIS has the opportunity to do the following:
  - Increase quality of care for children;
  - Increase parents’ understanding of and demand for higher-quality care; and
  - Increase professional development for child care providers.
QRIS Growth Over the Past 19 Years

Participation Density

Mission and Goals of QRIS

WHAT ARE THE MISSION AND GOALS OF QRIS?

Foundation of Licensing

**HOW DOES LICENSING DIFFER BY CENTERS AND HOMES?**

Licensing data for Centers and Homes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Licensing indicators</th>
<th>Centers</th>
<th>Homes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Licensing required for enrollment</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for license-exempt programs</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensing equivalent to the first QRIS level</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QRIS Compendium

http://qriscatalog.org
QRIS Resource Guide

What is QRIS?
The Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs.

QRIS Resource Guide
A tool for States and communities to explore key issues and decision points during the planning and implementation of a quality and improvement system (QRIS).

https://qrisguide.acf.hhs.gov/
QRIS Structure and Participation

◆ The QRIS structure determines the participation pathway.
  ▪ The QRIS standards are what is measured or assessed.

◆ QRIS participation refers to who is eligible.

◆ Determined by the following:
  ▪ Pilots and field tests;
  ▪ Stakeholder feedback;
  ▪ Legislative priorities;
  ▪ Research; and
  ▪ System capacity and infrastructure.
Approaches to QRIS Structure

- **Building block approach**: All standards in each level must be met for programs to move to the next level.

- **Point system**: Every standard is assigned a number of points, and a combined score is used to determine the quality rating.

- **Hybrid/combination approach**: Combination of the two approaches above, often with building blocks for lower levels and points for higher levels.
Advantages and Disadvantages

**Building Block**
- Easy to see what standards a program has met
- Consistent standards for all
- May have fewer indicators
- If indicators at lower levels are difficult to reach, this can halt program movement up the levels

**Point System**
- Not as transparent; rating level alone doesn’t reveal which indicators are met
- Programs may attain points with standards not as critical to program quality
- More flexibility for programs
- Often there are many indicators to verify

**Combination/Hybrid**
Combines advantages and disadvantages of both
State Approaches

- **Building block** = 19 systems
- **Point system** = 7 systems
- **Combination/hybrid approach** = 18 systems

Block Structure

All standards in each level must be met for programs to move to the next level.

- Arkansas
- Alaska
- Florida – Miami Dade
- Florida – Palm Beach
- Idaho
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Kentucky
- Maine
- Maryland
- Massachusetts
- Montana
- New Hampshire
- New Mexico
- North Dakota
- Oklahoma
- Oregon
- Rhode Island
- Virginia
## Example of a Block Structure: Maine

### Center Based Child Care Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
<th>Step 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To Attain and Maintain Step One</td>
<td>To Attain and Maintain Step Two</td>
<td>To Attain and Maintain Step Three</td>
<td>To Attain and Maintain Step Four</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Source:
Point Structure

Every standard is assigned a number of points, and a combined score is used to determine the quality rating.

- Georgia
- Louisiana
- Michigan
- New York
- North Carolina
- Vermont
- DC
Example of a Point Structure: New York

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Documentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CE-1</td>
<td>Program administrative staff attends training on the Environment Rating Scales (ERS).</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Evidence in Aspire that at least 1 administrator has attended the relevant training within the previous 15 months, verified with Training Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE-2</td>
<td>Program completes an ERS self-assessment using the appropriate scale(s) and writes an improvement plan to address subscale scores below 3.25.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Completed ERS self-assessment report stating overall score and subscale scores. If applicable, include improvement plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE-3</td>
<td>Program has an independent ERS assessment and achieves an overall score of 4.25 - 4.99. Written improvement plan for subscale scores below 3.50.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Completed ERS report(s) is automatically sent to QUALITYstarsNY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE-4</td>
<td>Program has an independent ERS assessment using the appropriate scale(s) and achieves an overall score of 5.00 - 5.49. Written improvement plan for subscale scores below 4.50.</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Completed ERS report(s) is automatically sent to QUALITYstarsNY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE-5</td>
<td>Program has an independent ERS assessment using the appropriate scale(s) and achieves an overall score of 5.50 or higher. Written improvement plan for subscale scores below 4.50.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Completed ERS report(s) is automatically sent to QUALITYstarsNY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hybrid/Combination Structure

Combination of the two approaches, often with building blocks for lower levels and points for higher levels. Some States have mandatory standards and standards with point values.

- Arizona
- California
- Colorado
- Delaware
- Florida – Duval
- Iowa
- Minnesota
- Nebraska
- Nevada
- New Hampshire
- New Jersey
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- South Carolina
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Utah
- Washington
- Wisconsin
Example of a Hybrid Structure: Washington

**Washington’s Quality Standards: An Overview**

**“Hybrid” Model**
- **Levels 1-2:** All facilities meet the same foundational quality based on licensing/certification and Early Achievers readiness activities.
- **Levels 3-5:** Facilities achieve points through evaluation; facilities have flexibility in how they earn points based on program strengths and philosophy.

**Levels 3-5 achieved through:**
- Completion of Level 2 requirements.
- On-site evaluation based on Quality Standards which includes:
  - Environment Rating Scales (ERS)
  - Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
  - Review of documentation & records
- Minimum threshold to achieve Level 3:
  - Minimum requirements for ERS and CLASS scores
  - Facilities must earn at least 30 points

Number of Levels in QRIS

- 6 QRIS have 3 levels
- 11 QRIS have 4 levels
- 25 QRIS have 5 levels
- 2 QRIS have 6 levels

Voluntary vs. Mandatory Participation

- Most systems are voluntary.
- Mandatory participation is becoming more common:
  - By funding stream;
  - By law; and
  - By regulation.
Element 1: Quality Standards

Standards should be:

* achievable;
* measurable;
* evidence based; and
* understandable.
Standards Criteria: Achievable

Expense

Time
Standards Criteria: Feasible to Measure and Manage

- Monitoring
- Technical assistance
- Financial supports
- Other supports
Standards Criteria: Other Considerations

- Be flexible and honor multiple approaches and pedagogies
- Measure universal elements of quality
- Align with other standards
- Align with state investments and priorities
Quality Standards: A National Picture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Center-Based ECE</th>
<th>Home-Based ECE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff qualifications and training</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program administration, management, and leadership</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family partnerships and engagement</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child assessment</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio and group size</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community involvement</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisions for children with special needs</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff compensation and benefits</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

National Observation Tools

- Environment rating scales
- Classroom Assessment Scoring System
- Program Administration Scale/Business Administration Scale
- Program Quality Assessment
- Others
Most Commonly Used Observation Tools

WHAT WERE THE MOST COMMONLY USED TOOLS TO OBSERVE PROGRAM QUALITY?

Observation Tools: Key Considerations

- What does it measure and how well?
- Does it address cultural considerations?
- Does it align or enhance QRIS standards?
- Can the tool be used for self-assessment?
- What kind of training will participants need? Coaches? Technical assistance staff?
- What is the cost?
- What data are needed?
Trends in Quality Standards

- More frequent revisions
- Cross-walking standards
- Research basis for selected standards; data-driven changes to standards
- Fewer QRIS standards: “The few and the powerful.”
- Raising the bar on expectations (States melding lower levels into licensing and raising top levels)
- Hybrid or combination approaches
Operationalizing Quality Standards

- Providers need time to meet requirements
- QRIS partners and stakeholders need in-depth understanding of the standards
- It is important to establish and maintain consistent interpretation of the standards
- Standards will change and evolve—This is OK!
- Communication is key
Financing and Financial Supports
Let’s talk about financing.
It costs a lot to implement a QRIS. But what exactly are we paying for?
Accountability and monitoring  
Provider support  
Data collection and evaluation  
Public awareness
What kind of funding can support the system?
Provider support
What motivates you to understand the cost to provide child care?

And what do we know about the costs to run a child care program?
What can child care providers do to improve the financial health of their programs?
What can policymakers do to improve the financial health of child care programs?
What are your next steps?
Quality Assurance and Monitoring
Quality Assurance and Monitoring

- Objectively assessing program quality and assigning quality levels
- Using data to track program progress and children’s participation by quality level
- Conducting classroom assessments
- Evaluating supports for effectiveness
- External reviewing and revising of standards and levels
Quality Assurance: Valid and Reliable Standards and Rating

- **Valid**: The standard measures what you are trying to measure
- **Reliable**: The standard gives the same result on a successive trial
Quality Assurance and Monitoring: Data Collectors and Raters

- Initially assessing program quality and assigning quality levels
- Conducting classroom assessments and program-level assessments
- Providing training and technical assistance
- Clarifying and communicating about how to apply standards
- Others
Efficiency in Monitoring

- Determining how many criteria or standards are needed
  - How are standards documented
- Determining how many onsite assessment tools will be used
  - At all levels or only higher levels
  - In all classrooms or some classrooms
  - In all settings or some settings
- Determining the length of rating
- Accepting status of programs from other systems or that have achieved accreditation
Efficiency in Monitoring

◆ For each QRIS standard or indicator, what is the source(s) of evidence?
  ▪ Self-report
  ▪ Self-assessment
  ▪ Imported data from another system
  ▪ Document submission (online or hard copy portfolio)
  ▪ Observation
Trends in Quality Assurance and Monitoring

- Linkages with licensing
- Differential monitoring
- Coordinated monitoring
- Moving from ‘rating’ to ‘recognition’
- Readiness tools or assistance
- Increased reliance on data systems
- Careful consideration of efficiencies
  - Staffing, number of criteria and assessments, reporting, automation

For more information see QRIS Resource Guide: Chapter 5
https://qrisguide.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm?do=section&sid=4
Key Consideration

- Even a QRIS that appears simple can become complex and expensive to administer unless steps are taken to streamline documentation policies and onsite observation expectations for QRIS standards.
Continuous Quality Improvement
Continuous Quality Improvement

“One major purpose of a QRIS [quality rating and improvement system] is to recognize quality and promote a culture of continuous improvement among providers. ... The rating is not a destination; it is a set of benchmarks along a pathway of ongoing improvement.”

Anne Mitchell
Definition: CQI Is …

- **Continuous:** Part of the job; no end point
- Owned by the team in a program
- Proactive, not reactive
- A **reflective, cyclical, and data-informed** process
Basically

- The process of
  - identifying, describing, and analyzing strengths and weaknesses (via multiple sources of evidence);
  - establishing a plan with benchmarks, timelines, assigned tasks, and responsibilities to improve;
  - testing and implementing solutions; and
  - evaluating the results and revising the plan
Why CQI

- It helps create compliance and a culture of improvement
- Not quality for a day
- It helps create a sustainable approach that raises the bar for early learning quality
Based on a shared vision of quality:
• Identify general goals and select team
• Analyze current condition using data
• Propose experiment; make plan
• Decide on measures of success

• Adopt, modify, or abandon these practices
• Determine what more needs to be done and learned
• Set up next round

• Build staff capacity and carry out the plan
• Collect documentation and data

• Share and analyze impact, track results
• Consider adjustments
• Celebrate learning & successes
CQI in Existing QRIS

- Specific standards/criteria
- Part of technical assistance (TA) and program support
- Part of annual reporting/monitoring
Continuous Quality Improvement

- CQI applies to three levels and different strategies are used at each level.
  - **Program level** - program staff and leadership
  - **Implementing partner level** - professional development and technical assistance practitioners
  - **The state system level** - state agencies, statewide organizations, policymakers, private funders, and contracting entities
QRIS: Three 3 Levels of Work

- State/Systems Level
- Implementing Partner Level
- Program Level

CQI Focus:
- Own Level
- System
CQI as a Standard in QRIS

- Program conducts a self-assessment or is assessed
- Quality improvement plans developed after an assessment
- Other sources of evidence and data are used to inform the QIP
- Quality improvement plans are used at all levels to track progress
How to Live CQI

– Use the continuous quality improvement model to make small, incremental changes
– CQI is most effective when it becomes a natural part of the way everyday work is done

“Change that lasts is slow and gradual.” - Kaizen

改善

Kai=Change  Zen=Good
Why Is Readiness for Change Important?

“A one-size-fits-all approach that ignores differences in readiness to change may result in a waste of resources, lower program retention, and worse outcomes for educators and children.”

Peterson & Cairns  2012 p..2
What Are the Stages of Change?

- Stage 1: Precontemplation
- Stage 2: Contemplation
- Stage 3: Preparation
- Stage 4: Action
- Stage 5: Maintenance

Peterson & Cairns  2012 p..3
What Strategies Can Be Used at Each Stage of Change?

- Stage 1: Raise awareness
- Stage 2: Raise confidence and identify obstacles
- Stage 3: Set goals and gain commitment
- Stage 4: Assist with problem solving and resource identification
- Stage 5: Support integration of changes and team building
Five Essential Supports Framework for Continuous Learning and Improvement

This is an excellent slide and am interested in how you align/connect the 5 essential supports framework with the components/processes of CQI.
Changing the Dynamic

- Externally driven and delivered professional development

- Internally driven and embedded continuous professional learning and improvement

- Focus on individual’s knowledge and capacity

- Facilitate learning and build organizational capacity for effective teaching through inquiry-based approaches and reflective practice
Indicators of a Culture of Continuous Improvement

- Curiosity
- Reflection
- Tolerance
- Feedback
- Systems thinking
Designing Professional Development and Technical Assistance that Builds Capacity of Continuous Learning and Improvement
Building a Learning Organization

“The organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization.”

Senge, P. M. (2006). p.4
Measuring CQI

- What does the research tell us?
- How can we measure the success of a CQI approach?
- What data are we collecting?