



Supporting Working Families with Access to High-Quality Early Care and Education



Introduction

Today, too many working Americans are living paycheck to paycheck, struggling to make ends meet while responding to the competing demands of work and family. These demands are especially challenging for families with young children. For working parents, nothing is more important than ensuring that their children are safe and in stimulating environments that support their learning and healthy development. Supportive learning environments are especially vital for our youngest children, whose brains develop more important connections in the first five years of life than at any other time.

High-quality early learning and development programs can make a tremendous difference in the lives of working families and their children. A high-quality

early learning and development program for a child gives parents the stability to be productive employees.

Families have peace of mind when they know that their child is in a safe place with caregivers and educators who are well qualified to support their child's early learning and set the child on a path to school success.



A child shows her puppet to U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Mathews Burwell.

“Working parents want to know that their children are being taken care of and learning in safe and healthy environments. Finding a high-quality early education program provides working families with greater stability and children with the strong start that they need to enter school prepared to thrive. In this way, the Early Learning Challenge is helping children, families, and whole communities reach their full potential.”

— U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Mathews Burwell

Since taking office, [President Obama has made it a top priority](#) to improve access to high-quality early care and education options for families, and to make it easier for parents to find high-quality programs in their community.

This report highlights actions, such as those listed below, that the Obama Administration has undertaken to support states and communities to help working families access high-quality early care and education, as well as some results of these investments to date. For more information on the Administration's early education agenda, please visit <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/13/fact-sheet-president-obama-s-plan-early-education-all-americans>.

- Through the [Child Care and Development Fund](#) (CCDF), the federal government provides assistance to states and tribes

to help pay for child care for 1.4 million children each month who live in low-income working families. In addition, states invest about \$1 billion each year to improve the quality of child care for all families through activities like teacher training and grants to child care providers for learning materials. In 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) invested \$2 billion in CCDF to provide child care assistance for an additional 300,000 children and families during the height of the recession.

- The Obama Administration has invested in comprehensive improvements to state early learning systems through the [Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge](#) (RTT-ELC), a competition that has challenged states to deliver better coordination across early care and education programs,

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan talks with children as they work on a project.



clearer learning standards, and meaningful education and training for early educators. Today, RTT-ELC supports 20 states as they focus on early learning and development systems and build systems that raise the quality of early learning and development programs, engage working families, and increase access to early care and education opportunities, so that all children can enter kindergarten ready to learn and succeed. Since 2011, \$1 billion has been awarded to support projects in the 20

supports voluntary, evidence-based home visiting programs for at-risk families during pregnancy and children's early years of life. Through these programs, families receive home visits from nurses, and social workers connect families to services and supports that improve maternal and child health, child development, school readiness, and economic self-sufficiency. In its first two years, the program provided 670,000 home visits in over 700 communities in all 50 states.

“High-quality early education can be a game-changer for the children and families who need the most support. Investing in our children during their critical early years of life is ultimately an investment in our collective future.”

— U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

grantee states across the country. States that have not received funding, inspired by this momentum, are also moving forward with early learning reforms.

- The President has also prioritized continuous improvement of the Head Start program, which serves nearly one million children from birth to 5 each year. The Administration has implemented new efforts to strengthen Head Start to focus on school readiness, promote accountability in programs, and improve outcomes for Head Start children, including launching a new process designed to ensure that only the most capable and highest quality programs receive Head Start grants. Through the ARRA, the Obama Administration took important steps to expand Early Head Start and Head Start to reach an additional 61,000 children.
- The Administration launched the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program, which

In 2014, the Administration will take new steps toward President Obama's plan for early education for all Americans:

- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced that \$500 million will go to support Early Head Start Expansion and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, which will provide tens of thousands of infants and toddlers access to high-quality early care and education.
- The Department of Education (ED) and HHS will jointly administer \$250 million in funds to states to build, develop, and expand voluntary, high-quality preschool programs in targeted communities that will serve as models for expanding preschool to 4-year-old children from low- and moderate-income families.

In addition to highlighting Federal investments in early care and education, this report will also highlight state progress on improving access to high-quality early childhood programs, providing information to parents, and investing in the early learning workforce.

Helping Working Families with Child Care

Child care is a necessity for low-income parents, but the cost of child care can be one of the biggest expenses for low-income families. The Child Care and Development Fund is a lifeline for many families. Over three-quarters of the families who use child care fee assistance are below 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (approximately \$29,700 for a family of three). Yet, child care for an infant can frequently cost more than \$10,000 per year in major metropolitan areas.

Too often, studies have shown that families who receive child care assistance have trouble keeping their child care subsidy due to complicated state policies or frequent job changes that are often a part of low-wage

occupations. When a parent loses a job and immediately loses child care assistance, as is the case in many states, it can be devastating for both the parent, who needs child care in order to find a new job, and for the child, who may lose her relationship with a loving child care teacher at the same time that unemployment is causing stress in the family.

It is essential that child care policies are family friendly and help families maintain and regain their footing at times when they need it most. The Administration's proposed child care rules would help by

- allowing families 12 months of child care assistance before they have to complete a full reapplication to receive subsidies; and



- requiring states to let families keep their subsidy for at least an interim, job-searching period if a parent loses his or her job while receiving child care assistance.

States are responding to the Administration’s focus on promoting family-friendly policies through this proposed rule and other federal guidance to states on these issues. In addition, states are already making policy changes:

- Seven states increased their eligibility and application periods from 6 to 12 months to allow low-income families to keep their child care assistance longer.

- Over half of the states line up their child care application periods with other programs, such as Head Start/Early Head Start and prekindergarten programs, to coordinate eligibility for families across multiple programs.
- Most families who receive child care assistance are required to pay a co-pay, which can be daunting for families working but earning poverty wages. Last year, 7 states implemented policies to waive copayments for families living below the Federal Poverty Level, bringing the total number of states with such policies to 21.

Ensuring the Health and Safety of Children in Child Care

The health and safety of their children is every parent’s paramount concern while they are at work. When asked in national surveys, parents say they support background checks for child care providers (96 percent), minimum training requirements to ensure that children are safe and in settings that promote healthy development (92 percent), and a requirement for inspections of child care providers (95 percent). Yet, four out of five parents are surprised to learn that these health and safety and learning requirements are not already in place across the country.

Increasing standards for child care is critical to ensuring that children are in safe environments that support their learning. Because of this, the Administration has proposed new rules to establish basic health, safety, and early learning standards for the Child Care and Development Fund.

The proposed rules would also ensure that parents have access to information about the health and safety track records of providers

in their community by requiring states to put child care licensing and inspection reports online. States are already working toward this goal, providing parents with better, clearer information about the child care choices in their communities.

- Thirty-two states now post licensing information on the Internet, with 17 posting full inspection reports.
- In 2008, only 21 states posted licensing information online, and only 11 of those states posted full reports.

When the Administration’s proposed child care rules are fully implemented, every parent in every state will have access to the health and safety records of child care providers. Under these new rules, states will establish hotlines for parents and conduct unannounced monitoring visits when complaints are received about a child care provider, creating greater accountability and swift action to keep children safe.

Investing in the Early Care and Education Workforce

The most critical ingredient in a high-quality early education program is the teacher or caregiver. The Obama Administration just completed the first nationally representative survey of early care and education teachers and caregivers in over two decades. The National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) provides information about caregivers and teachers who work in private center-based and family child care settings, Head Start and Early Head Start, as well as public and private preschool programs.

The NSECE results indicate that federal and state investments have improved the quality of the early education workforce.

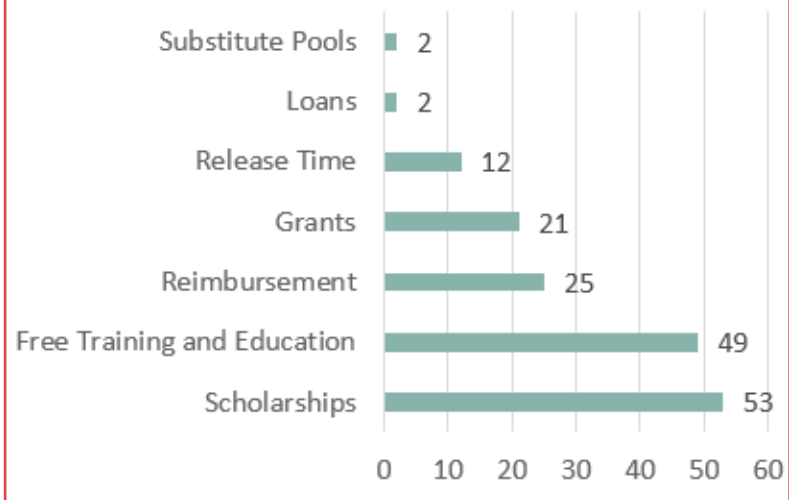
The early care and education workforce is large:

- Approximately two million early educators care for children from birth to age 5 and make up 45 percent of America’s teachers from birth through high school.
- One million of these are teachers in center-based programs, and another one million are family child care providers in home settings.

The workforce is more highly educated and more stable than ever before:

- Fifty-three percent of center-based providers have at least an associate’s

Number of States/Territories Offering Supports for Professional Development



degree. This is an increase from the 36 percent indicated in previous studies.

- Center-based teachers averaged 10 years and family child care providers averaged 13 years in the early care and education field.

Thanks to investments by the Obama Administration in the Child Care and Development Fund and RTT-ELC, states have made significant investments in training, technical assistance, scholarships, and higher salaries designed to retain and support the early education workforce, as shown in the figure above. Administration policies requiring or incentivizing teacher qualifications in Head Start, preschool, and QRIS systems have also influenced state activities to produce a highly qualified workforce. The state examples on the next page highlight this exciting work happening across the country.

California

As a result of the state's RTT-ELC grant, California has trained nearly 3,000 additional early childhood educators in child development to increase their knowledge and competency. The state also tripled the number of postsecondary institutions with programs to train the early care and education workforce. Across the state, 102 institutions (up from 31) are now increasing early educator knowledge and competency in practices that support child development.

North Carolina

In North Carolina, the RTT-ELC grant has helped the state to address high turnover rates through the WAGES program. The program provides an education-based salary supplement, designed to incentivize and reward teachers and keep them in the early childhood education workforce. These supplements are being offered in 17 counties designated "Transformation Zones". Five hundred thirty-six (536) teachers received

bonuses for staying in the early education field, and teacher turnover was reduced fivefold to 7 percent for participating teachers.

Minnesota

Minnesota exceeded its target for the number of new early childhood professionals that obtained a Child Development Associate credential (CDA) by 70 percent. Several RTT-ELC initiatives supporting CDA attainment contributed to this increase, including these: scholarships for non-credit-based CDA courses, delivery of free CDA courses for providers serving high needs children, and scholarships for credit-based CDA courses through Minnesota's T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood scholarship program.

Alaska

Early care and education teachers near Anchorage will receive a wage bonus this year through the Alaska SEED Retaining Our Outstanding Teachers (ROOTS) Awards program, designed to retain early educators in the field and improve the quality of programs. Supported by the Child Care and Development Fund, as well as funding from the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, the three-year pilot program will raise the wages of local early educators by \$740,000 through bonuses awarded to educators that meet professional development requirements. These bonuses will help to fill a wage gap in the early care and education workforce. Most early care and education teachers in Alaska earn an average of \$10.82 per hour or less (AK Department of Labor Statistics, 2012). Because their pay is low compared to other professions, the teacher turnover rate is approximately 46 percent (Market Rate Survey, 2003).



Identifying High-Quality Early Care and Education Programs

The majority of states now have a system to serve as a benchmark for quality in early care and education programs, providing essential information to parents and early learning providers about the quality and scope of services for children. This kind of a system is known as a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), or a tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS). A QRIS includes a set of standards that describe elements needed to achieve various levels, or “tiers,” of quality within an early learning program; a set of tools for measuring a program’s level of quality; training and funding to help programs improve quality; and symbols such as “star ratings” to help families identify good programs. Programs are given a quality rating, which can be made available publicly—much like star rating systems for movies, books, hotels, and restaurants. A QRIS is a family-friendly way to inform parents about child care options and help them make informed decisions about where to entrust their children while they are at work. Many states are working to enroll more programs in their QRIS.

To encourage states to create high-quality systems that both provide parents with the best information and incentivize child care programs to improve their quality, HHS and ED have identified seven components of effective QRIS systems (see the sidebar).

States have made significant progress in implementing systems that incorporate these components. In 2013, 27 states had a QRIS that met all seven benchmarks, surpassing HHS’s goal of 25 states. This represented an increase from only 17 states in 2011. The map

Components of an Effective Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

☆ **Statewide** ☆

A comprehensive system

☆ **Eligibility** ☆

Participation by programs, including by child care centers and family child care homes

☆ **Standards** ☆

The quality indicators that define increasingly higher levels of program quality

☆ **Monitoring and Accountability** ☆

Tools to measure the quality of a program

☆ **Program and Practitioner Supports** ☆

Training, coaching, and consultation to help programs meet higher standards

☆ **Incentives** ☆

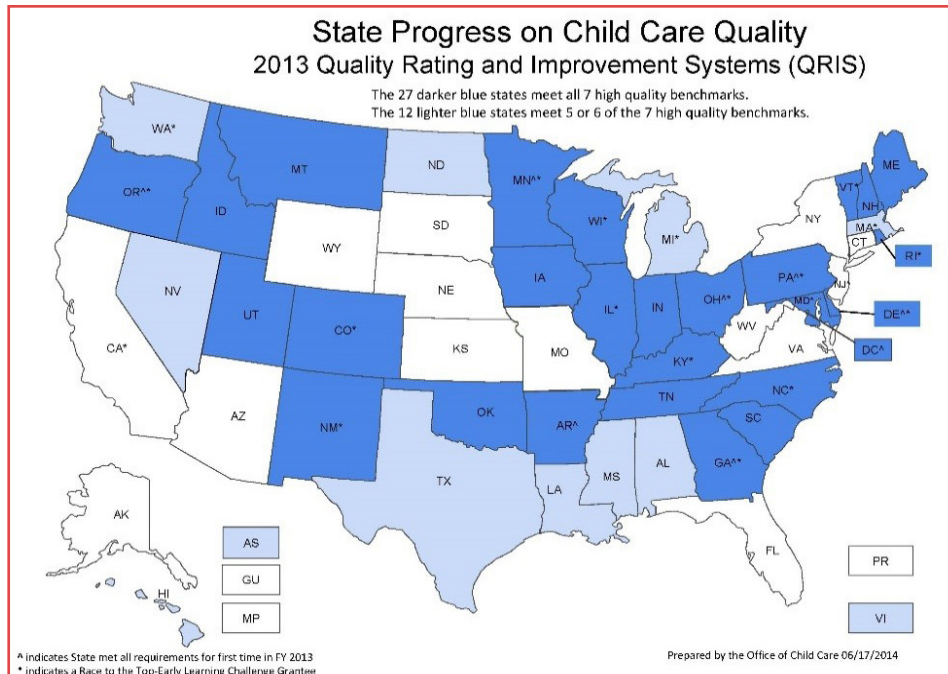
Grants, scholarships, and rewards to encourage and support meeting higher levels of quality

☆ **Family and Consumer Education** ☆

Using symbols and simple icons (like stars) to help parents and the public identify the quality of programs

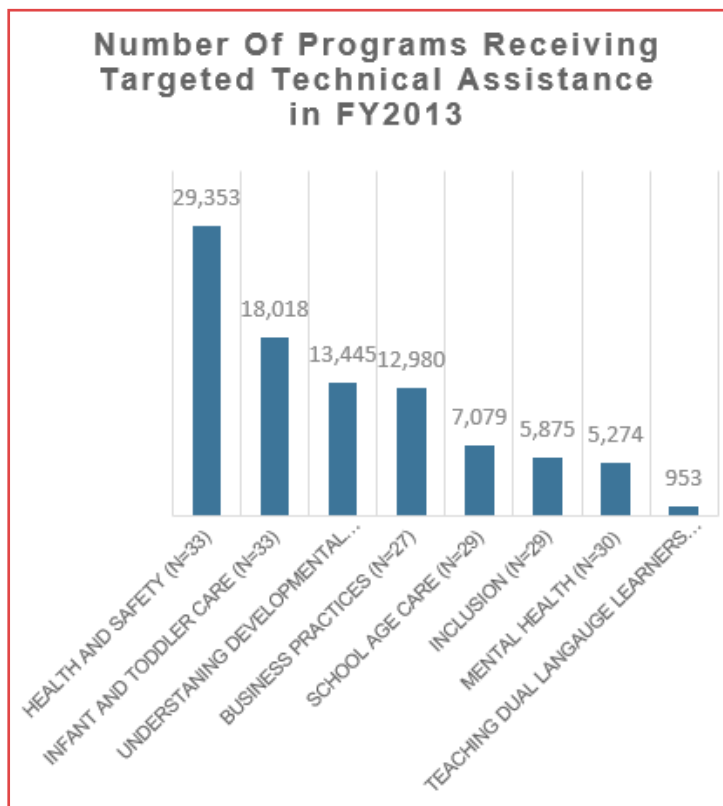
on the next page shows states that have led this charge.

More than 65,000 child care centers and family child care providers are now enrolled in their state’s QRIS. This number has increased since 2012 by approximately 5,000 programs, and the pace of enrollment is increasing as more Head Start, state-funded preschool, and private child care programs join their QRIS and stretch to reach higher “tiers” of quality.



“Participating in QRIS has enabled our program and staff to recognize our achievements and bolster our commitment to professionalism and continued improvement.”
—Child Care Center, Northern Illinois

“With all of the improvements that I have made, I have gained a new confidence in my ability to provide the very best care for every child that comes to my program. I am the best I have ever been because of QRIS.”
—Family Child Care Provider, North Central Illinois



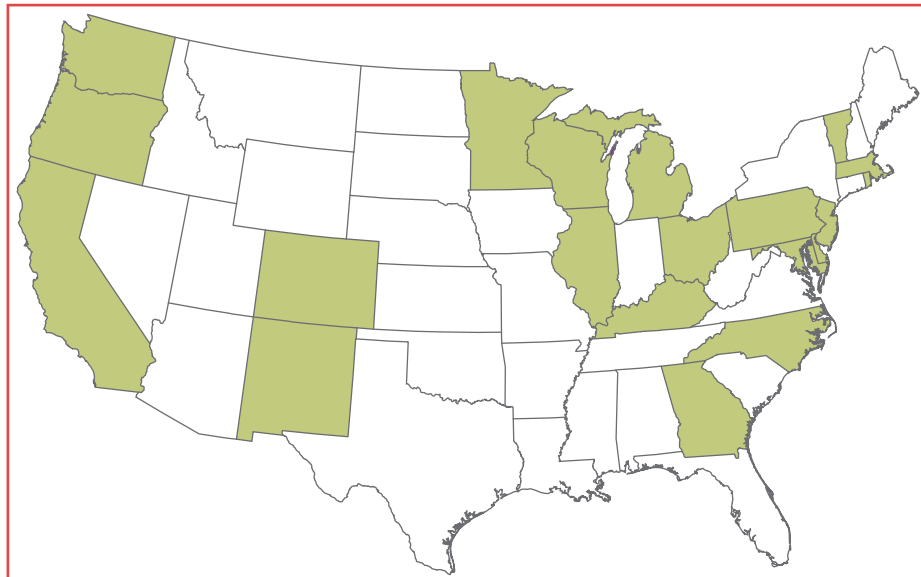
More and more states are now incentivizing programs to meet higher quality standards by paying higher rates for higher quality programs through the child care subsidy system.

- 36 states now use tiered reimbursement for higher quality care, up from 32 states in FY2012-2013.
- More than 40,000 child care centers and family child care homes received financial incentives to improve program quality.

Additionally, 36 states offered targeted technical assistance to more than 90,000 programs to help them meet higher standards. The graph to the left shows program types receiving TA.

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grantee States

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge states are required to implement a tiered quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). These states particularly have seen dramatic improvements in QRIS-related activities since receiving their grants one or two years ago. Several examples are described below.



Delaware

As part of its RTT-ELC grant, Delaware established a goal to increase the number of early care and education programs earning ratings in the top tiers of the state’s QRIS. The state increased the number of programs rated high in quality from 36 programs to more than five times that by 2013.

Delaware also aimed to increase the number of children at risk who were enrolled in the highest quality programs, and it far exceeded its goals in an increase from approximately two hundred at-risk children prior to receiving their RTT-ELC grant, to more than 2,500 at-risk children within two years.

Maryland

Maryland’s QRIS—Maryland EXCELS—opened to statewide participation on July 1, 2013. Within three months, a total of 938 programs were participating, an increase of more than

600 programs in the first 13 weeks. During FY2013, Maryland conducted a field test of the QRIS that included all regions of the state and all program types. Quality assurance specialists were hired to recruit, offer technical assistance, and conduct on-site visits for verification of quality measures. Marketing materials were created and disseminated online, in print, and by video to target family child care, center-based care, public PreK, and school-age child care providers. As of April 2014, more than 2,300 programs are participating in the QRIS—approximately 30 percent of all child care programs.

Georgia

Georgia set a goal to increase quality in child care by 10 percent and supported 34 programs to attain accreditation, professional development, and mini-grants for quality activities. As a result of these CCDF-funded supports, Georgia exceeded their goal and had a 50 percent increase in the number of programs rated as high in quality.

Helping Families Find Quality Programs

Many families struggle to find early care and education that is affordable and high-quality, and meets the needs of the family. The Obama Administration has encouraged states to provide more information and resources to help working families make well-informed child care decisions. The proposed CCDF rules would require states to provide a hotline for parental complaints about child care providers, as well as a consumer-friendly website with information on licensing and program quality. With resources from the RTT-ELC, and in response to federal encouragement, states have developed new strategies and approaches to inform parents of the availability of high-quality early education programs in their communities. State examples are offered below and on the next few pages.

“There is so much to know when looking for and choosing child care. The QRIS website was the best tool for me in choosing high-quality programs in my area. I was just two clicks away from finding high-quality care.”

—A parent looking for child care in Indiana

Delaware

The Delaware Office of Early Learning and its partners wanted to increase public awareness about the importance of high-quality early learning for young children. They also wanted to inform people about the state’s QRIS, Delaware Stars, and about how it can help guide families who are seeking early childhood programs for their young children. To help accomplish these goals, they created a website called GreatStarts Delaware.

GreatStarts Delaware has many useful features for families with young children. The Early Learning at Home page features low-

and no-cost activities that can help young children develop new skills. The Delaware Stars program page offers family-friendly information about the QRIS. From this page, parents can download a brochure that promotes the Delaware Stars center-based and family-based programs and helps walk them through the steps needed to find high-quality care for their child.

The website also includes useful features for child care providers. For example, providers can visit the Program Community Outreach Calendar, which offers 12 months of simple

activities they can use to engage families. Also from the About Us page, programs can download the Stars Program Promotion Guide, which contains a wealth of tips for advertising their program and its Stars rating to the community.

GreatStarts Delaware is a colorful website that provides resources for families and child care providers.



Georgia

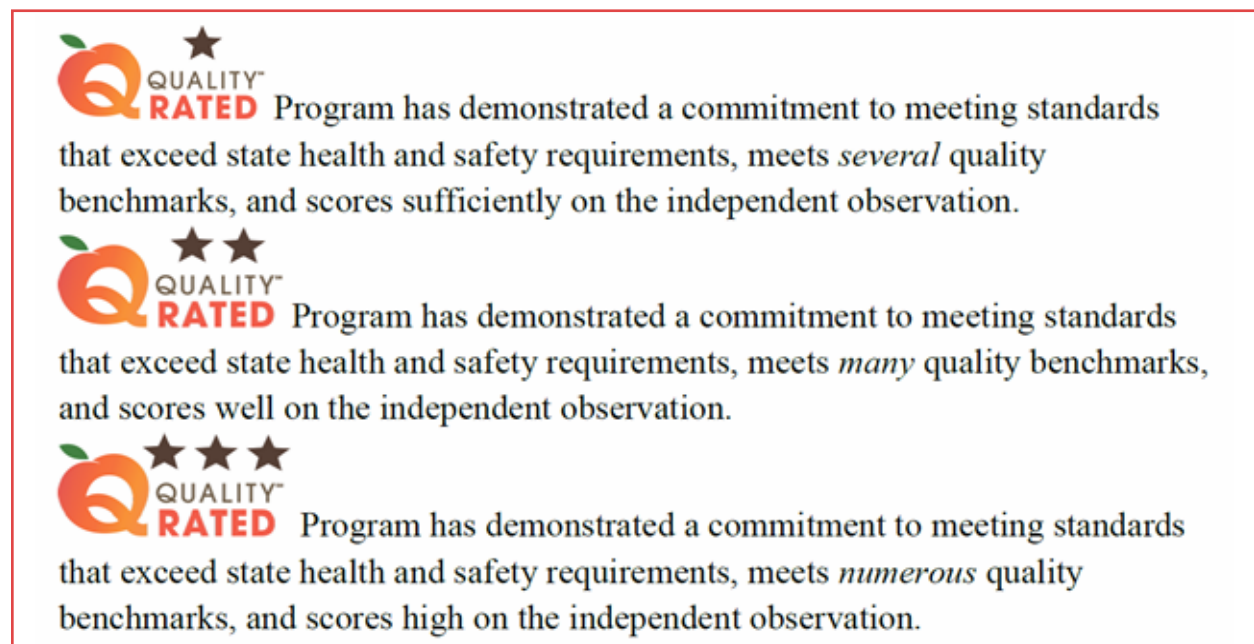
Georgia's voluntary QRIS is called Quality Rated. It includes three rating levels, also called "star levels," that help families get a better sense of the quality of the programs they are considering. This QRIS is an initiative of Bright from the Start, an agency within the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.

The Quality Rated website affirms that all programs participating in the QRIS provide

- an atmosphere in which children feel nurtured and supported;
- opportunities for families to be involved with their child's early education and care;

- intentionally planned activities and instruction that support child development and help prepare the child for a lifetime of learning; and
- efforts to ensure that all of Georgia's children receive meaningful early learning experiences.

The star rating system key allows parents and guardians to identify how child care programs score on independent observation, as well as how many quality benchmarks the program meets. The star rating system key for Quality Rated is shown in the graphic below.



The graphic shows three levels of the Quality Rated star rating system. Each level features the 'Quality Rated' logo (an orange 'Q' with a green leaf) and a specific number of stars. The text for each level describes the program's commitment to meeting standards and performing on independent observations.

- 1 Star:** Program has demonstrated a commitment to meeting standards that exceed state health and safety requirements, meets *several* quality benchmarks, and scores sufficiently on the independent observation.
- 2 Stars:** Program has demonstrated a commitment to meeting standards that exceed state health and safety requirements, meets *many* quality benchmarks, and scores well on the independent observation.
- 3 Stars:** Program has demonstrated a commitment to meeting standards that exceed state health and safety requirements, meets *numerous* quality benchmarks, and scores high on the independent observation.

Georgia's QRIS, Quality Rated, has three star levels, as explained in this excerpt from a guide for families.

Maryland

Maryland EXCELS is a voluntary QRIS with three goals: recognizing high-quality child care programs, encouraging providers to increase the quality of care, and providing parents with information and choices about care for a young child. The excerpt from the Maryland EXCELS website, to the right, highlights the focus on quality and information that is offered to parents and caregivers about what to look for in a high-quality program.

In addition to providing families with more information about programs through the child care rating system, the Maryland State Department of Education is engaging families in other ways through their RTT-ELC program.

For example, the Maryland Family Network, in partnership with Be Strong Families in Illinois, identified five protective factors that keep families strong and established a series of events called Strengthening Families Parent Cafes. These cafes provided parents with opportunities to meet and talk with other parents about topics related to the Five Protective Factors (see the box below). This allowed them to obtain increased

Strengthening Families' Five Protective Factors

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Child Care Quality

There are lots of factors to look at when choosing child care for your child or family. Research shows that most people choose child care based on location, convenience, and cost. Maryland EXCELS, a Quality Rating and Improvement System, is intended to help parents look at the quality of care when making a child care decision.

Child care quality is more than just providing a safe and healthy environment (although that's very important!). Quality comes in lots of different varieties; in center-based programs, family providers, school age before and after school programs, Head Start, or public pre-K programs. What works for one family may not work for another, but one thing remains the same; the need for high quality care.

What does high quality child care look like?

- Responsive to the needs of each child
- Open, supportive, engaging experiences
- Positive staff/child interactions
- Learning opportunities
- Health, safety, and welfare is a priority

Why is quality important?

Quality is important because the early years are critical when it comes to building social, emotional, and cognitive skills needed to be ready to enter school. Children who spend time in high quality care can be more prepared with the foundational skills for life and learning.

The Maryland EXCELS program includes useful information for parents, such as this description of what quality care looks like and why quality is important.

knowledge of their important role in child development, as well as the critical support that all parents need through social connections.



The Maryland EXCELS website contains resources for programs, families, staff, and community partners.

Minnesota

Minnesota's QRIS, Parent Aware, is a voluntary system with four tiered levels. All enrolled programs that receive a star rating have gone above and beyond the state's basic licensing requirements. Parents who choose a child care program with a star rating can rest assured that the provider cares enough about early learning to use best practices and to strive to maintain and improve their quality of care. At each of the four star levels, programs are rated in four areas: physical health and well-being, teaching and relationships, assessment of child progress, and teacher training and education. All rated providers volunteer for extra training,

adopt the latest approaches for effective child care, and commit to serving children through providing caring relationships, learning activities and routines, and a safe and healthy environment.

Minnesota Parent Aware's family-friendly website offers important information about the QRIS and allows parents to search for quality-rated early learning programs in their area. The site also contains links to family resources, such as an interactive tool called *Is Your Child Ready?* that helps parents learn more about the school readiness of their child.

Parent Aware
A Rating Tool for Selecting High Quality Child Care and Early Education

[FIND RATED PROGRAMS](#) [ABOUT](#) [PARENT RESOURCES](#)

ENGLISH
Español

Welcome to a new and rapidly expanding free service for Minnesota parents searching for high quality child care providers.

[FIND RATED PROGRAMS](#)

GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND

Darlene Reutenkrantz, owner of Lottie Lovin' Daycare, was the first Nobles County child care provider to enroll in Parent Aware. Her program has a Five-Star Rating and was recently featured in the Worthington Daily Globe. [Read More](#)

EARN A RATING

[Child care and non-public school programs](#) | [Public School and Head Start Programs](#)

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The Parent Aware website helps parents in Minnesota find rated child care programs and access resources related to children's learning and development.

Oregon

Oregon began statewide implementation of their voluntary quality rating and improvement system in March 2014. The state's participating early learning programs receive a Commitment to Quality (C2Q) rating, after which they are given incentives to move up to a 3-, 4-, or 5-star rating. Family involvement is an important indicator of quality, and a Family Survey was developed to help child care providers measure and report the level of family involvement in their program.

Through their RTT-ELC grant, Oregon recently began forming Early Learning Hubs throughout the state that bring together local resources such as public schools and providers of child care, health care, and social services—resources that were formerly siloed. Bringing together a variety of agencies in centralized hubs serves to avoid duplication of services and helps families readily gain access to available resources that meet their unique needs.

The Early Learning Hubs in Oregon are entrusted with five responsibilities: to cooperate across sectors

for collective community accountability, to find the children who need the most help, to identify families' specific needs, to link families with needed resources, and to account for outcomes and costs. This model's great strength is that it builds on existing resources and assets in local regions to foster community cooperation in serving families, and to identify and link families with at-risk children to the services they need.

1. The program solicits input and suggestions from me on an ongoing basis.
2. The program is interested in our family and asks for information to better meet the needs of my child.
3. I am consulted about my child's interests and preferences and informed about their progress.
4. I have received program forms and essential program information in a way that is accessible to me.
5. I feel welcome to observe and participate in activities at any time.
6. The program is interested in and encourages our family to share our culture, traditions, beliefs, home language, and interests.
7. The program encourages families to assist or lead in planning and conducting special activities to share their cultural backgrounds, traditions, beliefs, home language, interests and abilities.
8. The program provides basic information about resources in the community and is easily accessible.
9. The program provides current information about educational opportunities available in the community for families.
10. The program's philosophy has been made available to me.

These Family Survey questions were developed to help programs measure and report how well they are involving families.

Washington

The Washington State Department of Early Learning offers many resources for families on its website. Brochures, available in English and Spanish, inform parents that they have a choice when seeking child care and provides information that helps them identify indicators of high quality so they can make the right choice for their family. The website also includes a brochure for families on the Early Achievers QRIS program. One unique aspect of Early Achievers is that programs with exemplary family engagement practices can be awarded an Area of Specialization if they acquire an exemplary number of points in one of the following areas: child outcomes, interactions and environment, curriculum and staff supports, professional development, and family engagement and partnerships. This serves to recognize high-quality programs that excel in one or more areas, and to provide this useful information to families as well as to other programs that may want to build expertise in that area.



Washington's QRIS, called Early Achievers, awards child care programs with not just a rating, but also, in exemplary cases, an area of specialization.

What does high quality look like?

Quality child care and early learning programs help children enter school ready to succeed.

These programs have:

- ▶ Nurturing and supportive relationships between adults and children.
- ▶ Care and education that meets each student's individual needs.
- ▶ Facilities that are safe, well-organized and have age-appropriate resources.
- ▶ Programs that support the development of the whole child.
- ▶ Open communications and genuine engagement with families.
- ▶ Meaningful efforts to embrace diversity.

This excerpt from a Washington Early Achievers brochure for families offers information on what features they might look for in a child care provider.

State QRIS Program Information

RTT-ELC grantee states are highlighted:

For more detailed state information, visit <https://ocqrisguide.icfwebsiteservices.com/index.cfm?do=qrisstate>.

State	Program Information
Alabama	The QRIS, Alabama Quality STARS , is being piloted. Programs are rated on a five-level system. http://dhr.alabama.gov/services/Child_Care_Services/Child_Care_Services_Division.aspx
Alaska	The state does not have a QRIS. http://www.threadalaska.org/
Arizona	The QRIS, Quality First! , rates programs in a five-level system. http://www.qualityfirstaz.com/
Arkansas	The QRIS, Better Beginnings , rates programs in a three-level system. www.arbetterbeginnings.com
California	The state operates a regional QRIS. There are three common levels across regions; each region may have up to two additional levels. www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/rt/ The state maintains a list of the regional leadership consortia. http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/rt/rttelccontactlist.asp
Colorado	The QRIS, Qualistar Colorado , rates programs in a five-level system; the lowest rating given is "Provisional." http://www.qualistar.org/home.html
Connecticut	The state does not have a QRIS. http://www.ct.gov/oec/site/default.asp
Delaware	The QRIS, Delaware Stars for Early Success , rates programs in a five-level system. http://www.delawarestars.udel.edu/
District of Columbia	The QRIS, Going for the Gold , rates programs in a three-level system. http://www.learnDC.org/
Florida	The state operates regional QRISs: Guiding Stars of Duval — http://www.elcofduval.org/g sod_families.asp Hillsborough County - Quality Counts — http://www.elchc.org/quality_counts.html Miami Dade - Quality Counts — http://www.thechildrenstrust.org/quality-counts-qris Palm Beach County - Quality Counts — http://families.cscpbcc.org/qc Sarasota County - Look for the Stars — http://www.earlylearningcoalitionsarasota.org/look_for_the_stars.htm http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/

State	Program Information
Georgia	<p>The QRIS, Quality Rated, rates programs in a three-level system. https://qualityrated.decal.ga.gov/</p> <p>Quality Rated www.qualityrated.org</p> <p>A Family Guide To Understanding Quality Rated Stars http://qualityrated.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Family-Guide-to-Quality-Rated-Final-6-29-13.pdf</p>
Hawaii	<p>A QRIS is being piloted. http://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/child-care-program/qris/</p>
Idaho	<p>The QRIS, Idaho STARS, rates programs in a five-level system. http://www.idahostars.org/</p>
Illinois	<p>Rating levels in the QRIS, ExceleRate Illinois, vary based on program type. http://www.excelerateillinois.com/</p>
Indiana	<p>The QRIS, Paths to QUALITY, rates programs in a four-level system. http://www.in.gov/fssa/2554.htm</p>
Iowa	<p>Iowa's Quality Rating System rates programs in a five-level system. http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/iqrs/</p>
Kansas	<p>The Kansas Quality Rating and Improvement System rates programs in a five-level system. http://www.ks.childcareaware.org/provider_kqris.html</p>
Kentucky	<p>The QRIS, Kentucky STARS for KIDS NOW, rates programs in a four-level system. http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dcc/stars/starsproviderinfo.htm</p>
Louisiana	<p>The QRIS, Quality Start School Readiness Rating System, rates programs in a five-level system. http://www.qrsloisiana.org/</p>
Maine	<p>The QRIS, Quality for ME, rates programs in a four-level system. http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/ec/occhs/qualityforme.htm</p>
Maryland	<p>The QRIS, Maryland EXCELS, rates programs in a five-level system. http://www.marylandexcels.org/</p> <p>Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families/2014/SFoverview.pdf</p>
Massachusetts	<p>The MA Quality Rating and Improvement System rates programs in a four-level system. http://www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/qris/qris.html</p>
Michigan	<p>The QRIS, Great Start to Quality, rates programs in a five-level system. http://www.greatstarttoquality.org/</p>
Minnesota	<p>The QRIS, Parent Aware, rates programs in a four-level system. http://www.parentawareratings.org/</p>

State	Program Information
Mississippi	The QRIS, Quality Stars , rates programs in a five-level system. http://earlychildhood.msstate.edu/programs/qualitystars/
Missouri	Missouri legislation prohibits a QRIS. http://dss.mo.gov/cd/childcare/
Montana	The QRIS, Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program , rates programs in a five-level system. http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/childcare/bestbeginnings/bestbeginningsstarstoquality.shtml#about
Nebraska	The QRIS, Step Up To Quality , is being planned. Programs will be rated in a five-level system. http://www.education.ne.gov/OEC/index.html
Nevada	The Nevada Silver State Stars QRIS rates programs in a five-level system. http://www.nvsilverstatestars.org/
New Hampshire	The New Hampshire QRIS rates programs in a three-level system. http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf/licensedplus/index.htm
New Jersey	The QRIS, GrowNJ Kids , is being piloted. www.state.nj.us/education/ece/njcyc
New Mexico	The QRIS, FOCUS , is being piloted. https://www.newmexicokids.org/
New York	The QRIS, QUALITYstarsNY , rates programs in a five-level system. http://www.qualitystarsny.org/
North Carolina	The QRIS, Star Rated License , rates programs in a five-level system. http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/providers/pv_sn2_ov_sr.asp
North Dakota	The QRIS, Bright & Early North Dakota , is being piloted. Programs will be rated in a four-level system. http://www.brightnd.org/
Ohio	The QRIS, Step Up To Quality , rates programs in a five-level system. http://www.earlychildhoodohio.org/
Oklahoma	The QRIS, Reaching for the Stars , rates programs in a four-level system. http://www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/cc/stars
Oregon	Oregon's Quality Rating and Improvement System is being piloted. www.wou.edu/qris Oregon's Early Learning System: Early Learning Hubs http://oregonearlylearning.com/other-priorities/community-based-coordinators-of-early-learning-services-hubs/
Pennsylvania	The QRIS, Keystone STARS , rates programs in a four-level system. http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Programs_STARS
Puerto Rico	The QRIS, Pasitos , is being piloted. http://www.consejodelaninez.pr/html/proyecto_pasitos.shtml
Rhode Island	The QRIS, BrightStars , rates programs in a five-level system. http://www.brightstars.org/

State	Program Information
South Carolina	The QRIS, ABC Quality , rates programs in a five-level system. www.scchildcare.org
South Dakota	A QRIS is being planned. http://dss.sd.gov/childcare/
Tennessee	The QRIS, Tennessee Star-Quality Child Care Program , rates programs in a four-level system. http://www.tnstarquality.org/default.htm
Texas	Quality levels in the QRIS, Texas Rising Star Provider Certification , vary based on program type. http://www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/childcare/provcert.html
Utah	The QRIS, Care About Childcare , does not assign quality levels. http://careaboutchildcare.utah.gov/ and https://ccpdi.usu.edu/hm/
Vermont	The QRIS, STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS) , rates programs in a five-level system. http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/stars
Virginia	The QRIS, Virginia Star Quality Initiative , rates programs in a five-level system. http://www.smartbeginnings.org/home/star-quality-initiative/about-star-quality.aspx
Washington	The QRIS, Early Achievers , rates programs in a five-level system. http://www.del.wa.gov/care/qrisc/ You Have a Choice! A Guide to Finding Quality Child Care in Washington State http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/development/docs/You_have_a_choice_eng.pdf ¡Usted tiene una opción! Una guía para encontrar cuidado de niños de calidad en el Estado de Washington http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/development/docs/You_have_a_choice_brochure_spanish.pdf
West Virginia	A QRIS is being planned. http://www.wvdhhr.org/bcf/ece/earlycare/tiered_reimb.asp
Wisconsin	The QRIS, YoungStar , rates programs in a five-level system. http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/
Wyoming	A QRIS is being planned. http://wyqualitycounts.org/

“Having greater access to high-quality preschool and child care can help workers stay in their jobs while also helping children achieve in school.”

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