Evaluating Implementation in a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Pilot
A multi-level initiative that:
- Assesses and rates the quality of care in early childhood and school-age care settings
- Provides quality improvement services
- Provides information about the quality ratings to parents and the public

The goals of a QRIS vary by state/site but include quality improvement and positive child outcomes for children participating in rated programs.
Basic QRIS Logic Model

QRIS activities increase awareness of quality and its role in supporting child outcomes and provide support for achieving higher quality:

- Outreach/marketing
- Rating process
- Prof. development
- TA on quality improvement

Increase parent demand for higher quality

Increase use of higher quality

Increased provider investments in quality

Improved quality of ECE/SAC

Increased stakeholder buy-in

Increased system of support for parents and providers

Improved children’s outcomes

Improved children’s outcomes
Overview of Parent Aware – MN’s pilot QRIS

- Open to licensed child care centers and family child care, Head Start and state pre-K programs
- Two rating options
  - Full rating 1 to 4 star rating
  - Automatic 4-star rating for accredited programs, Head Start and School Readiness programs
- Points are earned and stars are awarded in four categories
  - Family Partnerships
  - Teaching Materials and Strategies
  - Tracking Learning
  - Teacher Training and Education
Unique Features of Parent Aware

- Focus on school readiness
- Focus on parents
- Focus on cultural sensitivity and diversity
- Involvement of business community as a key stakeholder
Role of Process Evaluation

- Document implementation successes and challenges
- Document degree to which components of the initiative are implemented as planned
- Use information to make changes
- Plan for possible statewide implementation
Implementation Issues

- Stakeholder buy-in
- Recruitment and enrollment
- Integrity of rating process
  - Technical assistance
  - On-site observations
  - Data management
- Integrity of quality improvement services
  - Provision of financial supports
  - Provision of consultation on ERS and curriculum
- Outreach and marketing to parents
Measurement Strategies

- Stakeholder interviews
- Implementation team interviews
- Review and analysis of program data
- Review and analysis of community-level data
Stakeholder Buy-In – Shifting to a focus on quality

- Perceptions of the impact of Parent Aware
  - Brought the issue of quality to the forefront
  - Parent Aware has “sparked conversation” and “gotten people talking about quality” and “what the next stage is for early education”.
  - Provides common standards for quality
  - Has gotten the attention of legislators

- Perceptions of ongoing challenges
  - Recruitment
  - Provision of incentives and quality improvement support
  - Increasing diversity of participants
  - Supporting parents to access high quality
Perceptions of Providers in Parent Aware-Rated Programs

- Overall impression of Parent Aware
  - Directors in center-based – over 90% of survey respondents have a positive impression
  - Family child care providers – about 50% report positive impressions

- The majority of respondents say that Parent Aware has been beneficial for their program
  - Programs appreciate the feedback, assistance and resources
  - “It has put my childcare on a totally different level. The way I feel about my program, the way the children are learning… it helped me figure out where I needed to improve.” Family child care provider
Respondents had positive impressions of the Resource Specialists

“She was always open to questions and got right back to me with answers. She was very knowledgeable and helpful. I felt she went above and beyond to help my specific situation.” Center director

Respondents had mixed impressions about the observation conducted in their program

“Absolutely loved them. OK – I didn’t actually love having them here and maybe I was a little nervous. But, I loved the feedback and seeing where I was doing what needs to be done…I had no problem at all being critiqued.” Family child care provider

Some concerns about the fairness of the rating process

“I do not believe the rating is reflective of the quality program that I offer for families and children.”
All survey respondents had suggestions for improving Parent Aware

- Increase flexibility of Parent Aware to accommodate different program philosophies, cultures, and family child care
  - Would like “more tolerance in the rating system… [the standards] are too black and white and in child care, there are many grey areas” Center director

- Provide more time to complete the requirements
- Provide more supports
Recruitment and Enrollment

Number of Programs


- Accredited
- Head Start
- Center/Preschool
- Family Child Care
- Provisional
- School Readiness

Accredited: 152
Head Start: 66
Center/Preschool: 49
Family Child Care: 43
Provisional: 23
School Readiness: 9
Enrollment Targets

- The majority of rated programs (over 85%) are currently caring for children who receive CCAP (child care subsidies).
- Another 12% are willing to care for children who receive CCAP.
- Over 12% of programs that are rated or in process are programs with providers who speak languages other than English.
Across the four pilot areas, approximately 11% of eligible programs have a Parent Aware rating.

82% of accredited programs in the 7-county metropolitan area and Blue Earth/Nicollet have a Parent Aware rating.

Note: All School Readiness programs in the pilot areas have Parent Aware ratings.
How is recruitment going?

- Stakeholders perceive that the programs that could be easily recruited have now enrolled in Parent Aware.
  - Automatic rating processes were successful tools to build a base of programs in Parent Aware
- Parent-driven financial incentives for choosing a Parent Aware program have ended (the Allowances) or will end next year (Scholarships)
  - Will pose challenges to recruitment
- A workgroup is addressing recruitment issues related to culturally specific providers/programs
- Programs may need specific help to address Parent Aware indicators. Offering this help may improve recruitment
Provider resource (TA) specialists assist with enrollment and rating

- No requirements to document contact hours and content
- Interviews reveal variation in provision of support which is tailored to the needs of the provider
- Difficult to tease apart influence of TA specialist and actual needs of the provider
- Better data collection is needed
Integrity of Rating Process

- On-site observations
  - Reliability has been maintained
  - Challenges with observations of providers who don’t speak English
- Data management
  - Need to build data protocol and reliability checks
  - Difficulty maintaining process for accurate, real time data on number of programs in Parent Aware at various levels of participation
Integrity of Quality Improvement Supports

- Financial supports
  - Being used to purchase equipment and materials to boost ERS scores
  - Other supports are free (training, curriculum materials)
- Provision of consultation (ERS, curriculum)
  - Inconsistent data collection about consultation received
  - Learning that the ERS scores are not having a large impact on overall star rating
  - Need better alignment between resources provided and potential impact on quality rating/star level
Among a sample of 153 parents in Parent Aware-rated programs, 20% had heard of Parent Aware.

New household survey will have data on awareness among all parents.

A radio campaign resulted in a 300% increase in traffic to the Parent Aware website. Traffic returned to pre-ad levels once the ad campaign ended.
Implications

- Implementation data have been critical for shaping:
  - Recruitment strategies
  - Development of data management processes
  - Planning for the role of TA and financial supports
- Results of the process evaluation will play a central role in discussions about statewide implementation