Issues in Studying Child Outcomes in Quality Improvement Initiatives

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CCPRC Session B4:
Challenges and Options for
Studying Child Outcomes
in the Context of QI/QRIS
Overview

- The QRIS evaluation logic model and definitions.
- QRIS assumptions about quality and child outcomes.
- Examples of QRIS evaluations with child outcomes; synthesis findings.
- The next generation of QRIS/QI outcome evaluations.
QRIS Evaluation Logic Model

IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION

How does the QRIS work?
Measuring whether and to what extent the QRIS inputs and activities were used as intended

OUTCOME AND EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATIONS

Does the QRIS meet its goals?
Monitoring progress and testing effectiveness in achieving outcomes

ENVIRONMENT AND GOAL STATEMENT

INPUTS

ACTIVITIES

OUTPUTS

OUTCOMES

Short-term
Medium-term
Long-term

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES, OTHER PROGRAMS
Definition of Evaluation Types

- **Implementation evaluation**
  - Descriptive study designed to determine whether the QI inputs and activities were implemented as intended, with fidelity to the model.
  - Informs decisions about how to change or adapt inputs and activities to improve system functioning.

- **Outcome and effectiveness evaluation**
  - Measures progress toward meeting the QRIS’s desired outcomes.
  - The level of evaluation design rigor determines whether it is an outcome evaluation or an effectiveness evaluation.
  - Validation studies tend to be outcome evaluations.
A validation study assesses the degree to which the quality standards component of the QRIS reflects meaningful quality levels that are linked to desired outcomes.

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<th>What is this approach?</th>
<th>It is a way to ask critical questions about the tools used in a QRIS and how they are functioning</th>
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<td>What can be learned with this approach?</td>
<td>Whether the quality ratings actually mean something important to programs, parents, and children</td>
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| What research questions can be answered with this approach? | • Do the quality standards reflect the current research base?  
• Do the quality standards represent distinct areas that do not overlap with other standards in the QRIS?  
• Can improvement be detected in the quality levels?  
• Are the quality levels related to children’s functioning? |
| What are the key factors to consider when using this approach? | • The timing of the validation study and how findings can inform QRIS design and implementation  
• The degree to which the QRIS includes a representative sample of providers from the communities served by the QRIS |
QI/QRIS Assumptions about Quality and Child Outcomes

- Settings with higher ratings provide care that fosters better outcomes.
  - Research demonstrates minimal association, mostly at the high end of quality.

- Moving a setting up one or more rating levels should be associated with better outcomes.
  - Evaluation designs generally cannot assess this.

- Children's exposure is relatively similar across and within settings.
  - Attendance rates vary widely and quality-quantity studies are rare but increasing.
Examples of QI/QRIS Evaluations That Include Child Outcomes

- **Outcome evaluation (correlational/descriptive)**
  - Descriptive approach (CO, IN, KY, MN, NC, OH, OK, PA, VA)

- **Effectiveness evaluation (experiment or quasi-experiment)**
  - None
Recent Synthesis

- Identified 10 studies that included child outcomes.
- Included direct assessments and teacher reports of children’s development.
- No strong evidence of developmental outcomes consistently linked to QRIS rating levels.
- Methodological issues make studies of child outcomes challenging to conduct.
Next Generation QRIS Child Outcome Evaluations

- Aligned research questions, evaluation logic model, evaluation design, expected outcomes, and outcome measures.

- Evaluation begins after the early stage of QRIS implementation.

- Inclusion of fine-grained child-level and teacher-level attendance and continuity data.

- Revisit implementation and quality dimensions examined as mediators/moderators.
For More Information

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- QRIS Assessment toolkit and products:

- INQUIRE products:
