An Approach to Measuring Implementation from the ECE-ICHQ Project

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Gretchen Kirby, Kimberly Boller, and Pia Caronongan
Assessing the Implementation and Cost of High Quality Early Care and Education (ECE-ICHQ)

• Project overview

• Focus of this presentation is on one of the project’s research questions
  – What are the key implementation factors necessary to deliver high quality center-based ECE services?
ECE-ICHQ Project Overview

• Launched with OPRE support in October 2014

• Premise
  – Centers vary in their investments in and capacities to implement quality features and practices
  – Need for measures to target resources to support quality

• Project goals
  – Develop measures of implementation and cost of education and care within centers serving children 0-5
  – Produce and disseminate an instrument to guide the collection, development, and reporting of the measures for a broad range of users
ECE-ICHQ Task Overview

Technical Expert Panel (TEP)

- Literature review
- Comparative multi-case study
- Conceptual framework

Develop measures of implementation and cost of quality

Develop instrument to collect, construct, and report measures

Field test

User’s manual

Dissemination to practitioners, administrators, researchers
What ECE-ICHQ Will Measure

• *What* a center does to support quality
  – How features are defined (teacher-child ratios, group size, staff qualifications)
  – What practices are in place (curriculum use, child assessment)

• *How* quality features and practices are supported and implemented within a center

• *How much* the ECE services cost and how resources are allocated within the center
ECE Quality and ECE-ICHQ Measures

QUALITY MEASURE
What ECE quality is achieved by a center?

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES
What does a center do to provide quality ECE and how?

COST MEASURES
What does it cost in total? How are resources used across key functions of a center?
Goals in Assessing Implementation

• Measure variations in organizational capacity to support implementation

• Measure variations in implementation activities that can make quality happen

• Examine the relationship between implementation and costs
Organizational Capacity Factors that Support Implementation

• Openness to change
  – Ability to adjust or develop policies and procedures
  – Use of staff input

• Work climate
  – Shared goals and decision making
  – Frequent and open communication

• Supports and infrastructure
  – Leadership
  – Accountability
  – Commitment of resources
What Do We Know About Organizational Capacity Factors?

• Unique contribution of any one factor over another is not known

• No specific insight into the level or potential thresholds at which factors may be most influential or in what combination to support positive outcomes

• The combination of organizational factors necessary for successful implementation may vary based on context
Implementation Activities that Can Make Quality Happen

• Staff selection
• Selection and use of tools (such as, standardized assessments, curriculum, performance appraisal forms)
• Training
• Coaching and technical assistance
• Quality assurance/quality improvement
  – Activities include supervision, staff performance, organization performance, feedback mechanisms, data-based decision making
What to Measure to Capture Implementation Variation?

- Intentionality and consistency of implementation activities
- Prevalence of activities within a center
  - Targeted to specific staff
  - Targeted to specific classrooms or age groups
  - Comprehensive throughout the entire center
- Stage of implementation
  - Preparation or initial implementation, steady-state implementation
Implementation Data Collection Approach

• Data collection tools structured around elements of the conceptual framework

• Data collection methods and tools
  – Document review
  – Self-administered questionnaire
  – Interviews with center director and education manager

• No plan for observational tools
Considerations for ECE-ICHQ

• Different combinations of organizational capacity factors and implementation activities can affect successful implementation
  – Need to start broad and refine
  – Concern about burden on programs and staff

• Can measure “how” but limited in ability to measure “how well”

• Composition of or thresholds for factors key to successful implementation are not known
  – What type of measure(s) to produce?
ECE-ICHQ Project Contacts

• OPRE
  – Ivelisse Martinez-Beck: ivelisse.martinezbeck@acf.hhs.gov
  – Meryl Barofsky: meryl.barofsky@acf.hhs.gov

• Mathematica
  – Gretchen Kirby, project director: gkirby@mathematica-mpr.com
  – Kim Boller, principal investigator: kboller@mathematica-mpr.com
  – Pia Caronongan, deputy project director: pcaronongan@mathematica-mpr.com