

Evaluating Implementation in a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Pilot



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Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

- 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

Increased provider investments in quality

Increased stakeholder buy-in

Increase use of higher quality

Improved quality of ECE/SAC

Increased system of supports for parents and providers

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

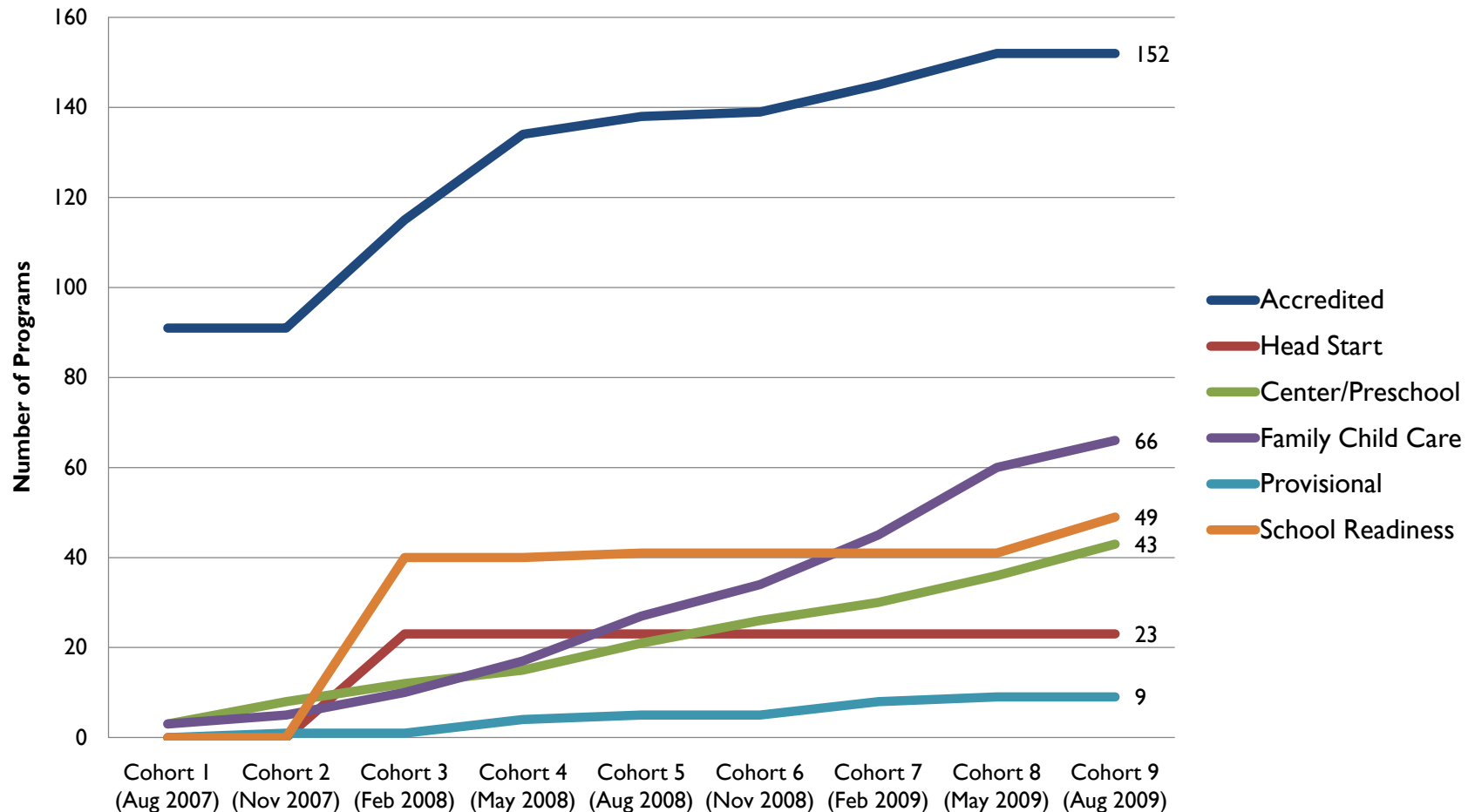
Perceptions of Providers in Parent Aware-Rated Programs

- 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.”*

Perceptions of Providers in Parent Aware-Rated Programs

- 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

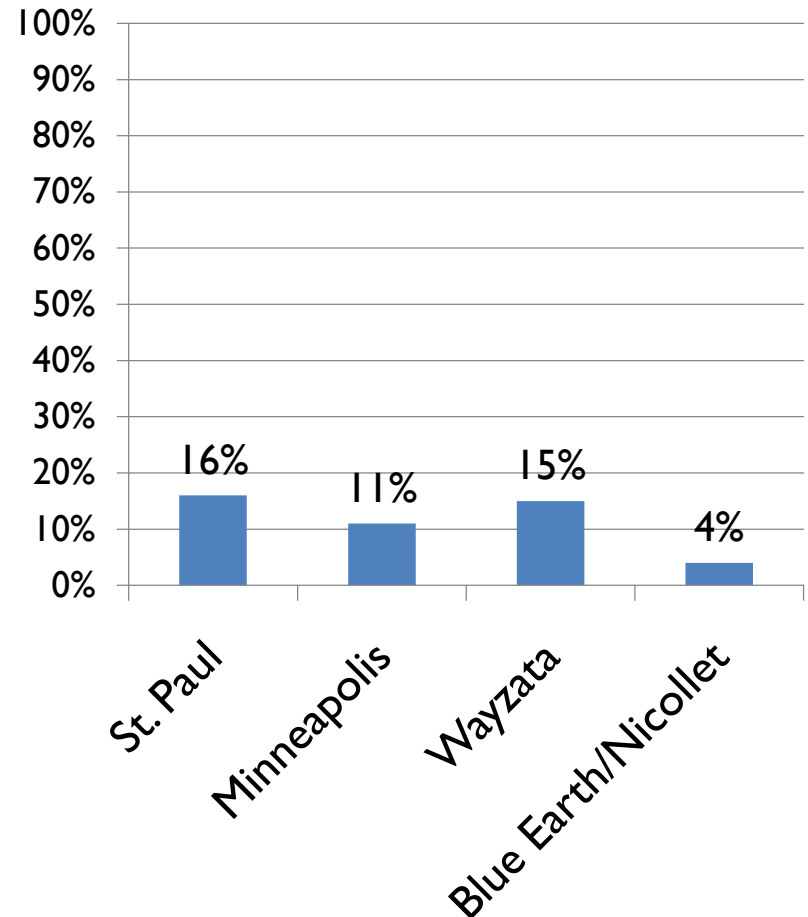


Enrollment Targets

- 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

Proportion of Eligible Programs with a Parent Aware Rating as of Dec. 2009

- 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

Integrity of Rating Process

- 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

Outreach and Marketing

- 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