

Validating Standards in Child Care QRIS: Multi-State Case Study

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Purpose of the Brief:

1. Describe four state efforts at validating the Standards components of their QRIS.
 - INDIANA, MAINE, MINNESOTA AND VIRGINIA
2. Apply four component QRIS validation framework (Zellman & Fiene) to categorize state level approaches to validation studies.
 - **C**oncepts, **M**easures, **O**utputs/**S**cores, and **O**utcomes
3. Identify ongoing challenges or threats to validity and present recommendations.

Methods of Case Study...

1. Review of the *Compendium* to identify how each state approaches evaluating their QRIS.
2. State level evaluators are meeting to discuss approaches, identify commonalities and differences across states.
3. Identify common QRIS Standard areas across states and collect data from each state on efforts to date (as of April 2011).
4. Apply four component analytic framework (Zellman/Fiene) for cross-case analysis.
5. Validate results of cross-case analysis with state evaluators and state agency staff (as necessary).
6. Report on ongoing threats to assessing the validity of the QRIS Standards – develop recommendations.

TABLE – CASE STUDY SITES QRIS RESEARCH QUESTIONS

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS DRIVING THE QRIS
EVALUATION**

**INDIANA
(2007)**

- **Does Paths to Quality (PTQ) actually increase the quality of licensed child care centers, registered child care ministries, and licensed family child care homes?**
- **Are children in higher level PTQ homes or centers learning more or developing more rapidly?**

MAINE (2008)

- **What are the differences between Quality for ME step levels by type of program?**

**MINNESOTA
(PILOT 2011)**

- **How well does the Parent Aware Rating Tool distinguish meaningful differences in program quality?**

**VIRGINIA
(PILOT 2011)**

- **Does the rating structure in the Virginia Star Quality Initiative (VSQI) relate to child's concurrent functioning?**
- **Does the rating structure in the VSQI relate to a child's growth across pre-kindergarten and kindergarten?**
- **How does the VSQI operate within a policy context?**

STANDARDS	LICENSING	RATIO/GRP. SIZ.	HEALTH / SAFETY	CURRICULUM	ENVIRONMENT	CHILD ASSESSMENT	STAFF QUALIFICATIONS
INDIANA	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y
MAINE	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
MINNESOTA	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
VIRGINIA	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y
ALL STATES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES

UN - Common Standard Areas...

– **Licensing Requirements Category:**

- State QRIS enrollment rules result in different types of programs allowed to enroll in a QRIS.
- Different licensing standards effect ability to do cross case analyses.

– **Environment Category:**

- Difficult to identify how each state QRIS defines this category.

UN- Common Standard Areas...

- **Staff Qualifications Category:**
 - Evaluators do have access to this type of information
 - although data elements are not similar across states.
- **Accreditation Category:**
 - Problem: Accreditation is part of program quality standards used for rating in most states.

Result – Unable to focus on a set of standards without additional amounts of data collection, data transformation.

Decision – Examine the validation tasks as categorized by Zellman and Fiene (2011)

Examine the Concepts of Quality...

- Three of four states partnered with evaluators to empirically examine the concepts that influenced selection of quality standards. (Literature Reviews, Expert Panels, Concept Mapping, Focus Groups).
- Challenges:
 - Interpreting research literature; “science” vs. “best practice”.
 - Including key stakeholders; parents, program staff, specialists.
 - Alignment with other ECE system components, e.g. licensing.

Examine Measures Used to Assess Quality...

- Analysis of Program Documentation (Teacher training/education, description of program components, self-assessment of quality of components, record of accreditation, etc.)
- Interview protocols with program staff and or parents. (In-person, telephone and self-report questionnaires)
- Observation – ERS / CLASS / Other
- Child Level Assessments

Examine Measures Used to Assess Quality...

Challenges:

- Accuracy of Administrative Data
- Reliability of Secondary Data Analysis Protocols
- Validity of Self-Reports; e.g., How to best measure application of “Authentic Assessment”?
- Use of ERS / CLASS to Measure Quality and Establish a Cut – Point, Differentiate Tier Levels
- Costs of On-site Data Collection at Program and Child Level
- Appropriateness of Measure – intended for use in accountability / monitoring contexts?

Examine Outputs or Scores of Rating Process...

- Three of four states report on ERS mean scores by QRIS tier.
- ME – Tier level correlated with ERS score on ECERS-R, FCCERS-R and not for ITER-S-R. Differences significant on the FCCERS-R comparing tiers.
- MN – Finding differences by tier level on all three ERSs.
- IN – Most significant differences at highest tier levels, strongest correlations on the FCCERS-R.

Examine Outputs or Scores of Rating Process...

Challenges:

- Approaches to sampling and timing of observations create limitations to explaining tier level differences with ERS results.
- Observational measures like ERS/CLASS may insufficiently detect - estimate range of practices across all standard areas.
- Mis-interpretation of results by stakeholders (state and local program staff, training specialists).

Examine if Ratings are Related to Appropriate Outcomes...

- Three of four sites pursued investigating relationships between program tier levels and child outcomes.
- MN – some evidence found, no systematic conclusions.
- IN – Report finding “early” evidence of relationships.
- VA – Found some associations with higher rated programs and pre-literacy skills.

Examine if Ratings are Related to Appropriate Outcomes...

Challenges:

- Costs associated with conducting child level outcome assessments.
- Tentative nature of findings and pressure to find causal relationships.

Challenges – Validity Threats

Examining the Concepts of Quality

Stakeholder lack of buy in to definition of concept and / or concepts defined in Standards in ways that are hard to measure.

Examine the Measures Used to Assess Quality

Different types of measures are used from different data sources. May have limited control over how administrative data is collected for its primary use, with secondary use in QRIS. Significant costs associated with some types of data collection; e.g., classroom observations, child level assessments.

Examine the Outputs or Scores of the Rating Process

Validating to a global measure of program quality has benefits and limitations that need to be considered in program design. QRIS Standards are multi-faceted and can change over time. Program enrollment effects ability to assess multiple tiers of a QRIS.

Examine if the Ratings are Related to Appropriate Outcomes

Significant costs and challenges to data collection and analytical strategies. Limited current research to guide design and few examples of large program effects.