

**Assessing the Implementation and Cost of High-Quality Early Care and Education (ECE-ICHQ)**

**Project Team:**

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**Project Description.**

The goal of the project is to create a technically sound, feasible, and useful set of instruments that will provide consistent and systematic measures of the implementation and costs of providing ECE services at centers for children ages 0 to 5. Ultimately, the measures may be used to examine how differences in what a center does and how resources are used influence quality.

Key project tasks include:

- **Developing a literature review and conceptual framework**
- **Consulting with experts in the field**
- **Conducting a comparative multi-case study.** Information from the study will guide the development and testing of the implementation and cost measures. The study sample includes centers that vary on characteristics such as ages of children served, size, and funding sources, and quality rating.
- **Developing measures and instruments.** The team will use information from the comparative multi-case study to produce measures that various stakeholders can use to examine what centers do to support quality and how much it costs. The team will field test the measures to ensure they are useful and relevant for research and practice uses.

- **Developing a user’s manual about the measures** so that a broad audience including practitioners, state administrators, and researchers can use them.

**Research Questions.**

- *What are the features of high quality ECE?*
- *What key implementation factors are needed to deliver high quality, center-based ECE services?*
- *What factors directly affect the cost of providing high quality center-based ECE services?*
- *What is the relationship between quality center-based ECE services and costs?*

**Sample.** The sample for the multi-case study included a total of 45 centers (15 centers in Phase 1 and 30 centers in Phase 2). The sample for an upcoming field test is under consideration.

**Methods.** The study team is using multiple methods tailored to the types of data required to develop and test the instruments and measures. For the comparative multi case study, implementation data were collected through interviews with center directors; data on staff time use were collected through web-based and paper surveys of staff; and cost data were collected using as spreadsheet-based workbook. Analysis methods have been tailored to each type of data.

**Progress Update.** The study team has completed two phases of the comparative multi-case study

and has analyzed implementation and cost data to support the specification of measures and refinement of instruments.

### **Implications for policy/practice**

The data collection tools and analysis will support policymakers and practitioners in understanding whether and how centers implement quality features, how they use the financial and other resources available to them, and how centers can efficiently allocate resources to deliver high-quality care and education.

### **Implications for research**

The project is developing new tools and methods for collecting and analyzing data on the implementation and costs of center-based ECE services, as well as the relationship between implementation and costs. These tools will support better understanding of patterns of implementation and cost within individual centers and across multiple centers.

### **For more information:**

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/assessing-the-implementation-and-cost-of-high-quality-early-care-and-education-project-ece-ichq>

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