



Department of

Human Services

QRIS Town Hall

March 14, 2023

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Overview of QRIS Redesign- Changing the Frame from Quality Assessment to Quality Improvement
- Tool Development Overview
- Modifications to the Tool
- Focus Group Questions/Feedback
- Q&A
- Wrap-Up





Department of
Human Services

In January 2019, the Child Care Services Director convened approximately 300 stakeholders to discuss the Child Care Certificate Program and subsidy rates.

JANUARY 2019



In August and September 2019, TDHS staff, providers, and partners were included in focus groups to give specific feedback about the big ideas for redesign of the QRIS

AUGUST 2019



FEBRUARY 2019

In February 2019, the Assessment Director convened a town hall meeting to discuss strengths and opportunities within the current quality assessment and rating program. A survey was also issued to child care providers and partners about their interest in small business training.



Current Tennessee Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS)

WHAT IS IT?

- State's primary mechanism for recognizing the quality of child care providers that exceed minimum approval/licensing standards.
- Voluntary program that provides a one-, two-, or three-star rating to programs based on specific quality characteristics.
- Launched in 2001 as one of the first QRIS in the country

WHAT ARE THE GOALS?

1. Improve quality of child care in Tennessee
2. Incentivize and support providers' participation and quality improvement efforts
3. Provide support and information to parents as they seek to quality child care

Fundamental Issues to be Addressed

PROCESS

Burdensome, redundant, and inefficient

CONTENT

Lacks focus on quality elements that matter most for children

PURPOSE

Emphasis on compliance and measurement

Redesign of Tennessee's QRIS

METHODOLOGY TO INFORM RECOMMENDATIONS

Literature review on ECE quality

National scan of best practices

Focus groups of Tennessee stakeholders

Major Findings

PROCESS

Problem 1: Quality measurement process is redundant, inefficient, and lacks coordination.

CONTENT

Problem 2: Quality indicators do not focus on what matters most for children and fail to capture variations in quality.

PURPOSE

Problem 3: Inadequate resources and focus on quality improvement to support meaningful changes.

Problem 4: Quality incentives reach only a sub-set of providers and inequitably benefit more well-resourced programs.

Problem 5: Quality information presented to families is unclear and difficult to navigate.

Big Ideas for Recommendations

PROCESS

Big Idea 1: Streamlined process and ongoing engagement support more accurate picture of quality.

CONTENT

Big Idea 2: Program quality defined by the strongest predictors of child outcomes.

PURPOSE

Big Idea 3: Programs receive targeted, relationship-based quality improvement coaching.

Big Idea 4: Financial supports reinvest in quality for all programs.

Big Idea 5: Families can find child care that is the best fit for their family through a clear, simple process.



Big Ideas Recommendations and Actions

Big Idea #1

- **Recommendation:** Merge licensing and quality assessment roles and provide ongoing engagement in all licensed programs to gain a more accurate picture of program quality
- **Action Completed:** The Department implemented a staff reorganization in Winter/Spring 2021 and created the role of Licensing Consultant. The Licensing Consultant will serve as monitor/evaluator/supporter.

Big Idea #2

- **Recommendation:** Identify “Essential Quality Indicators” that include teacher–child interactions and health and safety practices as markers of program quality.
- **Actions Completed:** Indicators most reflective of successful child outcomes and best practices in Tennessee based on Tennessee Early Learning Standards, Caring for Our Children, and Reflective Practice are used as key elements in tool development.

Big Idea #3

- **Recommendation:** Offer relationship-based quality improvement supports that vary in type, content, and intensity based on a program's needs and strengths.
- **Actions:** DHS uses a relationship-based approach to support providers in meeting basic licensing expectations and in continuous quality improvement

Through our ongoing visits and observations, DHS staff provide regular feedback to all agencies about how to strengthen quality across the essential quality indicators

Based upon monitoring and evaluation results, agencies will be connected with resources to strengthen program quality, consistent with level of need.

Big Idea #4

- **Recommendation:** Provide financial supports that reinvest in quality through improvement grants and progress-based incentives.
- **Actions:** Financial supports have been invested using deliberate strategies to support quality improvement.

Specific consideration will be given for how to incentivize quality improvement in programs serving low-income children.

Specific consideration will be given for how to incentivize quality improvement for all programs regardless of the ranking at which they start.

Big Idea #5

- **Recommendation:** Structure the Quality Rating to help families identify programs that meet their child's needs.
- **Actions:** The overall program score will be presented in a way that is easily recognizable and understandable to parents.

Parents will be able to see the scoring components that contribute to an overall program rating.

This will allow parents to look more specifically at the program aspects that are most important to their family.

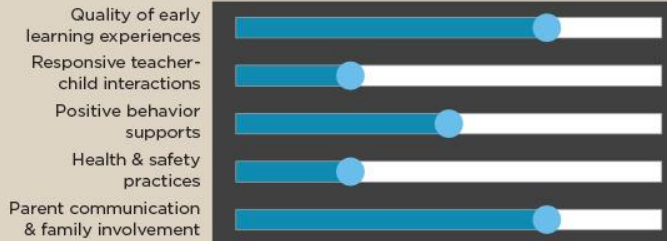
Information available to parents will represent the full picture of a program's operations, including licensure compliance, quality considerations, rules violations, and legal enforcement actions.

Information for Families

FUTURE SYSTEM

FAMILIES DEFINE QUALITY

Based on the needs of your child and family, how important are the following:



TAILORED RESULTS

Learn more about the programs that are the best matches for what matters most for your family.

OVERALL
QUALITY
72

ABC EARLY CARE & LEARNING CENTER



HELPING YOUR CHILD LEARN

Experiences and activities that promote development & learning



RESPONDING TO YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS

Sensitive, responsive teacher-child interactions



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOR

Classroom practices that support positive behavior



KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE & HEALTHY

History of health and safety violations



CONNECTING WITH YOUR FAMILY

Parent communication and family involvement

Tool Development

- Strongest Indicators of Successful Child Outcomes
- Two Sections of Elements and Indicators:
 - Health & Safety
 - Teacher Child Interactions
- Quarterly Evaluations with Immediate Feedback to Provider on areas needing Improvement
- Annual Score based on Overall Average
- Violations Captures through Unmet Elements/Indicators



Scoring

- Each element indicator on the Classroom Observation Tool is scored based on “required evidence”. To achieve a score of “met” on an item, all required evidence must be either visually observed or documented during the teacher interview.
- The total score for both Health and Safety and Teacher/Child Interactions are combined to create the overall score for the quarterly visit.
- Upon completion of the quarterly visit, prior to departure, the Licensing Consultant (LC) will meet with the agency director and/or educator to review the scoresheet and discuss strategies for areas that may have been deficient. If time or schedule does not allow for the director and/or educator to meet on this day the Licensing Consultant will schedule a time either in person, video chat, or through a telephone conversation within five (5) business days to review.

Critical Items

Critical Items are Health and Safety items that **must be** monitored during **each** visit. When scoring Health and Safety the Licensing Consultant will check the items which they are scheduled to monitor for that visit plus the eleven (11) Critical Items. Critical Items are listed at the beginning of the Health and Safety section of the Observation Tool. Critical Items include but are not limited to:

- Adult:child ratios
- Safe sleep
- Supervision (mealtime, playground, field trips)
- Transportation



Scoring Example (met)

Rating	Point Value	Elements and Indicators	Required Evidence
Element 1. Early Learning Activities and Routines			
Met	2	E1.1: Inclusiveness/Choice/Balance of Teacher & Child initiated activities. Opportunities for children to feel motivated to explore and learn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Each child provided an opportunity to participate in program activities. ✓ Balance between child's choice and educator directed activities. ✓ Group times limited based on children's age and ability to encourage independent exploration. ✓ All children allowed to move freely and choose their own companions during free play.

This element indicator was scored "Met" as **all required evidence** was either observed or documented to occur based on the educator interview. The point value for this element indicator is **2**.

Scoring Example (not met)

Rating	Point Value	Elements and Indicators	Required Evidence
Element 1. Early Learning Activities and Routines			
Not Met	0	E1.1: Inclusiveness/Choice/Balance of Teacher & Child initiated activities. (opportunities for children to feel motivated to explore and learn).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Each child provided an opportunity to participate in program activities. ✓ Balance between child's choice and educator directed activities. ✓ Group times limited based on children's age and ability to encourage independent exploration. ✗ All children allowed to move freely and choose their own companions during free play.

This element indicator was scored "Not Met" as the children were not allowed to move freely and choose their own companions during free play. All required evidence must be observed/documented. The point value for this element indicator is zero (0).

Scoring Example (NA)

Rating	Point Value	Elements and Indicators	Required Evidence
Critical Items (CI): Must be monitored during each visit			
NA	3	<p>CI 1.8: Transportation Supervision procedures as outlined in 1240-04-01-.17</p> <p>This may be scored NA if the agency does not provide transportation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management responsibility for compliance with transportation rules and children. • Agency conducts vehicle emergency evacuation drills quarterly. • Passenger logs contain first and last name of each child • Transportation loading and unloading procedures followed as outline in licensing rules • Driver and reviewer conduct separate physical walk through upon drop-off /return to agency and signs passenger log. • Passenger logs reconciled with master sign in/out sheet.

This element indicator was scored "NA" as this agency does not provide transportation. Points are not deducted when an agency receives an NA. The score for this element indicator is three **(3)**.



Modifications

Launch, Learn and Tweak

- Since QRIS implementation, we have continued to evaluate the QRIS process and monitoring/evaluation tool for any modifications specifically around,
 - Compliance Standards (federal and state)
- This continues to provide us with insight to what is working well and what needs to be tweaked
- This implementation year lets us evaluate additional resources that may be needed to support quality improvement
- We will continue to evaluate this first year to explore strategies for continuous improvement

Critical Items

- There have been modifications to the critical items to fully align with health and safety standards of practice
- The main changes include the specific language from rules to the required evidence so the checklist reflects the items have been checked
- The majority of what we were checking has not changed, just how we are reflecting on the checklist that posts to the consumer website and meets federal expectations.
- There are a few standards of practice that have been added

Standards of Practice Modifications

- C1 1.2 Emergency Preparedness and Response Planning
 - Added: Policies are in place for annual staff training and all current staff have been trained on the provider's emergency plan.
- C1 1.3: Prevention/Response to Food Allergies
 - Staff shall have documentation of all children's allergies and how to deal with any allergic reaction.
 - All allergies posted, and food/beverage substitutions made.
 - Information about individual children's food allergies shall be posted prominently, both where food is prepared and where food is served

Standards of Practice Modifications

- C1 1.4 Use of Safe Sleep Practices
 - Added: Educators receive orientation on safe sleep practices prior to caring for infants. Safe sleep supervision requirements shall be followed.
- C1 1.6 Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases (Including Immunization)
 - Added: Staff demonstrate knowledge either through observation or educator interview of:
 - Prevention and control, including the spread of infectious diseases.
 - Handling and storage of hazardous materials and the appropriate disposal of biological contaminants.
 - Policies are in place that require verification of immunizations, inclusive of any allowable exemptions, prior to enrolling a child.

Standards of Practice Modifications

- C1 1.8 Prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome and Abusive Head Trauma
 - Added: Policies are in place regarding procedures to identify and prevent shaken baby syndrome/abusive head trauma to include:
 - Recognizing potential signs and symptoms of shaken baby syndrome/abusive head trauma.
 - Creating strategies for coping with crying, fussing, or distraught child.
 - Understanding the development and vulnerabilities of the brain in infancy and early childhood.

Standards of Practice Modifications

- C1 1.10 Supervision
 - Added: Policies are in place regarding procedures for prevention, recognition, and reporting of abuse, neglect, and maltreatment.



Focus Group Questions

Question 1

- What additional tools or training do you recommend to further support you and other providers in understanding the new approach to QRIS?

Question 2

- What challenges have you experienced with understanding the scoring mechanisms with the new tool?

Question 3

- What additional resources/strategies would be most helpful to support agencies in improving their score?



Questions?

We want to hear from you!

- To view the QRIS tool you may visit our website:
 - [Child Care Provider Monitoring and Inspections \(tn.gov\)](http://tn.gov)
- For additional comments or suggestions please submit to:
 - ChildCareServices.DHS@tn.gov

Wrap-Up

Thank You!





**Building a Thriving
Tennessee**