

# The ABCs of QRS

*Proposed Quality Rating System  
for Minnesota Child Care Centers*

QRS Task Force, November 2005



## What is the QRS?

Minnesota's Quality Rating System (QRS) is planned as a voluntary system of support, recognition and financial incentives for quality for participating licensed family child providers, centers, Head Start and schoolage care programs. The Minnesota QRS will also provide parents with specific quality indicators in the form of program ratings to help them make choices for their children's care and education.

## Goals of the QRS

The QRS will focus on increasing resources and supports to help providers improve and maintain quality, increasing parents' understanding of quality, and increasing young children's kindergarten readiness.

The QRS task force facilitated by Ready 4 K and the GMDCA Child Care Financing Project included licensed family care child providers, centers, schoolage and Head Start programs, child care resource and referral, provider professional organizations, and other support organizations.

## How Can the QRS Benefit Child Care and Education Providers?

Child care providers throughout Minnesota are doing the important work of helping parents provide their young children with safe, nurturing environments and opportunities for learning.

For providers, the QRS will provide:

- A clearly defined pathway for achieving quality programming
- Access to improvement grants
- Annual Performance Awards based on the number of children you serve and your rating level
- Recognition in your community
- Training on using child observation and program environmental rating scales and on school readiness standards

## The Rating Process

Upon application, each provider will work with a QRS program specialist to help guide them through the rating and improvement process. As needed, programs will also be referred to consultants for specific areas of program improvement.

## Program Ratings Will Involve:

- **Compiling documentation of meeting each indicator.** Depending on the criteria, this documentation may be submitted by the program, accessed from an existing database or collected during an on-site observation by trained QRS observers.
- **Assignment of the rating.** Once documentation has been submitted, the QRS will review and verify the information. When all criteria for a specific level are met, the program will receive a rating.
- **Monitoring for compliance.** To ensure the integrity of the rating system over time, participating programs will be monitored once per year if they choose to stay at the same level. More frequent monitoring may be triggered by changes in the child care setting or the program's request to be rated for a higher level.

## Measuring Child Outcomes

The QRS recognizes that child observation and assessment are critical components for monitoring and improving programming. Quality programs use ongoing child observation and assessment in their planning and improvement efforts. Also, child assessment data from a random sample of participating QRS providers will be used to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the QRS for improving children's school readiness. However, until the field has more valid and reliable instruments, individual child assessments are not being recommended to raise or lower a program's quality rating.

## The Indicators Explained

The QRS covers seven categories of quality, selected because of the field's consensus and strong research base linking them to both program quality and to children's positive outcomes and school readiness.

For each of the seven quality categories, there are four graduated levels of quality with specific indicators to be met at each level. This "building block" design means that a program must meet all the indicators in one level before receiving a rating for the next level.

**The seven areas of quality covered by the QRS are:**

- **Professional development and training**
- **Child-provider ratios**
- **Licensing compliance**
- **Learning environment**
- **Family partnerships and education**
- **Management and administration**
- **Program evaluation**

# QUALITY INDICATORS FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS

## LEVEL 1

## LEVEL 2

## LEVEL 3

## LEVEL 4



All criteria under level 1, plus:

### Professional development

At least 75% of classrooms have teachers with Child Development Associate degrees, or equivalent, or higher.

### Licensing

No major substantiated negative actions within the past two years.

### Learning environment

Daily activities and curriculum that are in line with Minnesota's Early Childhood Indicators of Progress.

### Family partnerships

Communicate with families daily about child's progress. Use one family communication strategy and one family education strategy.

### Management/administration

At least one employee benefit and documented compensation plan.

### Program evaluation

Obtain input from parents and staff for program planning.



### Licensing

Programs licensed by State or tribal governments automatically qualify for this level, as long as the program has not had more than one major substantiated negative action within the past three years



All criteria under level 2, plus:

### Professional development

Directors must be 21 or over, have at least 12 semester credits in higher learning, and every classroom must have teachers with Child Development Associate degrees, or equivalent, or higher.

### Ratios

Same as licensing requirements, with the exception of toddlers.

### Learning environment

Curriculum aligns with Minnesota's Early Childhood Indicators of Progress, and program earns observed score of 4 or higher on Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale.

### Family partnerships

Preschool screening information provided, parent in-take form includes cultural items, parent feedback collected, and at least two ways of communicating with families, and two family education strategies used.

### Management/administration

At least two employee benefits, and survey staff annually about working conditions and compensation.

### Program evaluation

Collect input from parents, staff and board to develop annual improvement plan. Child assessment information used in daily planning.

Accredited programs and Head Start programs that meet all of the Head Start Performance Standards are automatically recognized as level 4.

Programs may also achieve level 4 by meeting the criteria in level 3, plus the following:

### Professional development

75% of classrooms have teachers with an AA, or equivalent, or higher, and the person in charge of the education program has a BA.

### Ratios

Infants 1:3 or 4  
 maximum group size 6–8  
 Toddlers (12–24 mos) 1:5  
 maximum group size 10  
 Toddlers (24–36 mos) 1:6  
 maximum group size 12  
 Preschoolers 1:7  
 maximum group size 20  
 School age (5 yrs) 1:12  
 maximum group size 30  
 School age (6+) 1:15  
 maximum group size 30

### Learning environment

Assess the progress of children and achieve an observed score of 5 or higher on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale.

### Family partnerships

Provide kindergarten transition activities, and use at least 3 ways to communicate with families and 3 family education strategies.

### Management/administration

Program offers staff at least three employee benefits.

For more information, email [Nancy.Johnson@gmdca.org](mailto:Nancy.Johnson@gmdca.org) or visit: [www.ready4k.org](http://www.ready4k.org)

## Grants, training supports, and performance awards for providers participating in the QRS

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<b>Improvement Grants</b>	\$500–\$10,000	\$500–\$10,000	\$500–\$10,000	\$500–\$10,000
<b>Priority for Existing Sources of Financial Support for Quality</b>	CCR&R Program Improvement Grants TEACH and REETAIN Scholarships - Bonuses Accreditation validation 50% of fees reimbursed	CCR&R Program Improvement Grants TEACH and REETAIN Scholarships - Bonuses Accreditation validation 50% of fees reimbursed	CCR&R Program Improvement Grants TEACH and REETAIN Scholarships - Bonuses Accreditation validation 50% of fees reimbursed	CCR&R Program Improvement Grants TEACH and REETAIN Scholarships - Bonuses Accreditation validation 50% of fees reimbursed
<b>Annual Performance Awards</b>		\$70 per child per year	\$100 per child per year	\$150 per child per year

### QRS Preparation “Field Test”

From October 2005 through March 2006, Child Trends, a research and evaluation organization, has been contracted to develop the materials and procedures to operationalize the task force’s QRS plan. A small number of providers will help during this “field test” of the QRS plan.

### Where Will Funding for the QRS Come From?

We will request funding from the private/public Minnesota Early Learning Fund as well as regional economic development funds, private and community philanthropy and from the state legislature.

**For more information, email [Nancy.Johnson@gmdca.org](mailto:Nancy.Johnson@gmdca.org) or visit: [www.ready4k.org](http://www.ready4k.org)**

