

Minnesota Quality Rating System for Early Childhood Education and School-Age Care Programs

Planning Overview

Children who attend high-quality early learning and school age care programs attain higher levels of school achievement. Unfortunately, too few programs currently reach high levels of quality in Minnesota, and as a result, many children are not obtaining the enrichment they need to succeed. Boosting child success requires boosting program quality.

Nationally, several states use quality rating systems to measure program quality. These systems develop and market quality rating indicators to help parents identify higher quality programs when they are selecting care and learning opportunities for their children. This allows parents to help improve program quality through market forces. Many of these states use incentives or bonuses and other supports for providers and parents to encourage participation in their quality rating systems and to raise program quality.

The Minnesota School Readiness Business Advisory Council, Ready 4 K, and the Child Care Financing Project * have called for a voluntary system of measuring the quality of early learning and school age programs and children's readiness for school. These groups have joined forces with business leaders, early learning and school age professionals, Head Start, tribal programs, government officials, and concerned citizens, to explore ways to accomplish this goal.

In response, a task force has been formed to plan for a voluntary quality rating system. The citizen initiative, Ready 4 K and the Child Care Financing Project, are leading the public planning process.

Public Planning Process for a Quality Rating System

Step 1: *Ready 4 K is facilitating a task force to develop a quality rating system proposal for Minnesota's care and education programs. (Timeline: September 1, 2004 – January 31, 2005)*

The quality rating system proposal will be developed by a combination of care and education practitioners, including representation from child care centers, family child care homes, and school age care providers. Other important stakeholders from the care and education community will also be engaged in the task force, including provider organizations, child care resource & referral agencies, state agencies and counties.

Step 2: *The Quality Rating System Task Force will seek public input throughout the planning process. (Timeline: November 30, 2004 – March 31, 2005)*

Early learning and school age care providers, parents, early childhood and school age organizations and other members of the public are encouraged to provide input on this

* The Minnesota School Readiness Business Advisory Council is a coalition of business leaders interested in the school readiness of young children. Ready 4 K (www.ready4k.org) is a citizen initiative working statewide to increase awareness about school readiness and to develop support for a public policy agenda that will increase the number of children who enter kindergarten eager to learn and ready for school success. The Child Care Financing Project of the Greater Minneapolis Day Care Association (GMDCA) is developing ways to reform financing for early childhood care and education so that all families have access to quality programs that are well financed.

document and the draft plan upon its release. Written comments may be provided by sending an e-mail to qualityratingsystem@ready4K.org. If you are interested in receiving a draft copy of the proposed quality rating system plan when it is available, please send your contact information to the task force via the email address above.

Step 3: *Obtain endorsement from a broad range of organizations. (Timeline: March 1 – April 30, 2005)*

The task force will share the plan and obtain endorsements from a broad range of organizations with statewide representation. Groups that will be approached to endorse the plan include organizations representing business leaders, family child care providers, child care centers, Head Start, school age care providers, after school programs, tribal programs, child care resource and referral agencies, family support, higher education, K-12 education, and state departments.

Step 4: *The final plan will be used to seek support for and implement a Minnesota quality rating system. (Timeline: May 2005)*

The final quality rating system proposal will include a recommendation on what entity will administer the system as well as other infrastructure supports, funding structures, and evaluation models.

Minnesota Quality Rating System Mission, Guiding Principles and Plan Components

In its initial meetings, the Quality Rating System Task Force has agreed upon the following:

Mission

The Minnesota Quality Rating System will provide families with information about quality early care and education and school-age care programs. The quality rating system will identify, recognize and reward programs, practitioners and teachers who actively participate and succeed in preparing children for school success.

Guiding Principles

1. ***All Kids Ready for Kindergarten:*** Support parents in their role as their child's first teacher and provide incentives to programs and practitioners to increase the quality of early care and education and school age care programs so that children are ready for school.
2. ***Empower Parents:*** Provide consumer information for parents to better distinguish a range of quality programs and settings.
3. ***Fair Access:*** Create a system where all parents have the resources to access quality programs and settings.
4. ***Pathways and Incentives for All Programs and Practitioners to Achieve Quality:*** Provide professional development training and program improvement grants to help programs and practitioners move to higher levels of quality, and provide incentive bonuses to reward success.
5. ***Quality Workforce:*** Build on the strengths of our workforce by promoting the training and education of early learning and school age care practitioners, thereby improving the overall quality of care.

6. ***Voluntary Participation:*** Child care centers, family child care homes and school age care programs will not be mandated to participate in the quality rating system. It will not be a requirement of state licensing.
7. ***Increased Resources Linked to Accountability:*** Promote accountability for child outcomes and program outcomes and work for increased private and public investments in early childhood education.

Plan Components

The ***Minnesota Quality Rating System*** is voluntary, and is being developed for any licensed Rule 3 child care center and preschool, any Rule 2 licensed family child care provider and any legally unlicensed school age care program that chooses to participate. The final plan will include specific guidelines for each level, program assessment and monitoring linked to child outcomes, technical assistance for programs and practitioners, improvement grants and incentive rewards, and parent consumer information.

The Quality Rating System:

- Will provide various "levels" of achievement for different types of licensed child care, e.g., levels for child care centers, family child care homes, and school age care programs.
- Must be research based and linked to child outcomes.
- Will be a useful (clear, concise, easy to understand) consumer education tool for parents.
- Will build on the foundations already laid in Minnesota through the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress and the Minnesota Department of Education School Readiness Assessment regarding what young children should be able to know and do.
- Levels and indicators will align with early childhood and school age care program standards supported by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Department of Education; nationally and state recognized accreditation criteria and the Minnesota Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals.
- When possible, the quality rating system will draw on already collected data, e.g., licensing history, program/practitioner data collected by CCR&Rs, etc.
- Will include technical assistance for providers to make improvements and to achieve high standards.
- Will include financial incentives for providers to improve and financial rewards for reaching higher levels of quality.

Ready 4 K is also supporting a companion effort for developing best practices for legally unlicensed family, friend and neighbor caregivers. Family, friend and neighbor caregivers will be invited to use the best practices that are being developed.

For more information:

Additional information on the Quality Rating System plan will appear soon on the Ready 4 K website (www.ready4k.org).

Please send questions to qualityratingsystem@ready4K.org.

Or contact staff by calling: Nancy Johnson, Child Care Financing Project, 612-349-0553.

Minnesota Quality Rating System Task Force
Membership List

| Name | Organization/Affiliation | Workgroup |
|---------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Tammy Anderson | Children's Corner Learning Center | Centers |
| Bob Benes | Lakes and Pines Head Start | Infrastructure |
| Nancy Berndt | Scott County Child Care Licensing | Infrastructure |
| Sameerah Bilal-Roby | Early Childhood Resource & Training Center (ECRTC) | Infrastructure |
| Sarah Burks | Family Child Care Provider | Family Child Care |
| Deb Colling | Professional Learning Alternatives, Inc. | Family Child Care |
| Nancy Dougherty | MN School Age Care Alliance | School Age Care |
| Chad Dunkley | New Horizon/MCCA | Centers (co-chair) |
| Tamie Finn | MN Tribal Resources for Early Childhood Care (MNTRECC) | Centers |
| Deb Fitzwater-Dewey | MN Association for the Education of Young Children (MNAEYC) | Infrastructure |
| Karen Fogolin | MN Child Care Resource & Referral Network | Infrastructure (co-chair) |
| Tracy Frederick | Early Childhood Resource and Training Center (ECRTC) | Infrastructure |
| Nancy Jost | West Central Initiative | Infrastructure |
| Jane Kretzmann | Bush Foundation | Infrastructure |
| Matthew Majeski | Olmstead County Child Care Licensing | Family Child Care |
| Sue Molstad | Resources for Child Caring | Family Child Care (co-chair) |
| Beth Mork | MN Licensed Family Child Care Association | Family Child Care (co-chair) |
| Bryan Nelson | MN Assoc for the Education of Young Children (MNAEYC) | Infrastructure (co-chair) |
| Charlotte Nitardy | Metropolitan State University, Early Childhood Program | Family Child Care |
| Cindy Pic | Tri-Valley Opportunity Council CCR&R | Infrastructure |
| Brian Siverson-Hall | MNSACA | School Age Care |
| Phyllis Sloan | La Creche Child Care Center | Centers |
| Cheryl Smoot | MN Dept of Health | Infrastructure |
| Mary Szlaius | Woodview Terrace Montessori | Centers |
| Mary Terrass | New Horizon | Centers (co-chair) |
| Michelle Thole | MN Licensed Family Child Care Association | Infrastructure |
| Lisa Walker | MN School Age Care Alliance | School Age Care |
| Katie Williams | YWCA Child Care Programs/Child Care WORKS/Congregations Concerned for Children /TEACH/REETAIN | Centers |

Task Force Staff

| Name | Organization/Affiliation |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Zoe Nicholie | Ready 4 K |
| Vicki Thrasher-Cronin | Ready 4 K |
| Betty Emarita | Ready 4 K |
| Nancy Johnson | Child Care Financing Project |
| Kathryn Tout | Child Trends |
| Michelle Galvan | MN Department of Human Services |
| Deb Swenson-Klatt | MN Department of Human Services |