Quality Assistance Activities Aligned with Quality Rating Improvement Systems

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National Center for Children in Poverty
Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University
Who we are…

National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) is a national policy and research organization focused on low-income children and families. The Center is part of the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University. The three areas of NCCP’s work are early childhood, health/mental health, and family economic security. The report of our QRIS survey findings will be available on our website later this summer: www.nccp.org
Overview of session

♦ Present findings from a recent survey focused on quality improvement activities aligned with state-wide Quality Rating Improvement Systems

♦ Identify trends & areas showing strength/need for more development in these evolving systems

♦ Exchange information and ideas about how to strengthen PD/coaching strategies in QRISs and align these with the work of other systems
The NCCP Survey

♦ Goal: To learn more about the professional development and on-site coaching/technical assistance strategies that are part of state-wide Quality Rating Improvement Systems

♦ Conducted phone interviews with key informants in 17 states with state-wide QRISs: Respondents were child care administrators, directors of the states’ QRIS, and/or directors of the state’s QRIS professional development activities.

♦ Interviews conducted in March and April 2010.
Key topics covered in survey

♦ Assistance offered during “entry phase”

♦ General types of assistance (e.g., group training, on-site coaching) and the targeting of assistance to higher or lower quality programs

♦ Features of on-site assistance: Content focus, activities during site visits, use of models, support for coaches, special training targeted to program/education directors, infant-toddler caregivers
Key topics, cont.

- Features of group training: Content focus, models used, follow-up on-site assistance; use of single sessions versus integrated, sequenced trainings; special training targeted to program/education directors, infant-toddler caregivers

- Features of quality improvement planning (use of standardized form, documentation of progress)
We know that sizable numbers of programs and home-based providers are offering care in the low to mediocre range of quality (e.g., LoCasale-Crouch et al, 2007). What assistance is being provided to help these programs “get ready” to enter the system?

There is growing evidence that effective quality improvement models use professional development/coaching methods that help teachers intentionally practice strategies for promoting children’s learning (e.g., Powell et al, 2010; Wasik et al, 2006; Neuman & Cunningham, 2009). Is this approach evident in the quality assistance activities being used in QRISs?
There is solid evidence preschoolers’ development in key areas -- including language, emergent literacy, and social-emotional growth – are very important to later school success (e.g., Kendeous et al, 2009; Coolahan et al, 2000). Are quality assistance efforts focused on these domains?

There is evidence that early childhood programs can play a role in helping parents support young children’s learning and development (e.g., Arnold et al, 2008; Powell et al, 2010; Reese et al, 2010). Is this a target for quality assistance in QRISs?
Other features of survey

- 35 questions – 1.5 to 2.5 hours (about ¼ open-ended)

- Focus on programs and providers serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers – not school-age children

- Usually asked separate questions to get information about quality supports for center-based and home-based programs/providers
Entry Phase

Most states provide free or low-cost assistance to programs and providers to help them prepare for a QRIS application and rating assignment. Types of assistance cited:

- Group training/webinars on process of getting ready to apply (e.g., intro to ERS, application forms)
- Workshops on using ERS tools and self-assessment
- On-site T.A. to prepare for ERS assessments
- Community college courses on classroom assessment
- On-site coaching to improve quality
Availability/Targeting of On-site Assistance: Centers

Most states report on-site assistance is available at all levels:
- Lower: 100% (17)
- Medium: 94% (16)
- Higher: 94% (16)

Fewer than half the states target on-site assistance to lower levels:
- Lower: 41% (7) – five of these states also target to medium
- Higher: 6% (1)
- Not targeted: 53% (9)
Availability/Targeting of On-site Assistance: Home

Most states report on-site assistance is available at all levels:

- Lower: 94% (16)
- Medium: 88% (15)
- Higher: 88% (15)
- Not available: 6% (1)

Fewer than half the states target on-site assistance to lower levels:

- Lower: 41% (7) – four of these states also target to medium
- Higher: 6% (1)
- Not targeted: 53% (9)
Reported Use of On-site Assistance: LR Centers

About one-third of states report that on-site assistance is used by a high percentage of lower-rated center-based programs

- 25% (4) report that over 75% receive on-site assistance
- 7% (1) report that 50% - 75% receive on-site assistance
- 12% (2) report that 25% - 50% receive on-site assistance
- 56% (9) report that less than 25% receive on-site assistance.
About one-third of states report that on-site assistance is used by a high percentage of lower-rated home-based settings.

- 18% (3) report that over 75% receive on-site assistance
- 12% (2) report that 50% - 75% receive on-site assistance
- 6% (1) report that 25% - 50% receive on-site assistance
- 53% (9) report that less than 25% receive on-site assistance.
In states that target…

- Among states reporting they target on-site assistance to lower rated settings, few programs/providers receive it:
  - Most states (57% - 4 out of 7) report that under 25% of lower-rated center-based program receive on-site assistance
  - Most states (71% - 5 out of 7) report under 25% of lower-rated home-based settings receive on-site assistance
What activities occur frequently in on-site TA/coaching?

- “Talking to teachers or providers about how to improve classroom or home environments….and activities” ~ 82% (14)

- “Talking to a center-based director about how to improve the program and classroom quality” ~ 82% (14)

- “Observing teachers or providers interacting with children and giving guidance and feedback” ~ 59% (10)

- “Modeling best practices for teachers or providers” ~ 35% (6)
Use of formal guide for coaching/T.A.

Less than half the states (41% -- 7) reported using a formal guide for conducting on-site coaching/TA

- 2 states report that the guide is used only for training TA providers and coaches
- 5 states report that it is used as a resource for technical assistance providers and coaches
Frequency of Coaching Visits

- Over half the states report that the typical frequency of visits when on-site assistance is provided is fewer than monthly or monthly:
  - Less than monthly: 24% (4)
  - Monthly: 35% (6)
  - Twice a month: 6% (1)
  - None for weekly!
  - Varies by need: 29% (5)
Content areas reported as frequent – Centers

- Environment ~ 100% (17)
- Self-assessments ~ 76% (13)
- Social-emotional growth ~ 65% (11)
- Language ~ 47% (8)
- Supports for early literacy ~ 41% (7)
- Monitoring children’s development and individualizing curriculum ~ 24% (4)
- Children with special needs ~ 24% (4)
- Learning about math ~ 18% (3)
- English language learners ~ 6% (1)
- Helping parents help children learn ~ 6% (1)
Content areas reported as frequent: Home-based

- Environment ~ 94% (16)
- Self-assessments ~ 65% (11)
- Social-emotional growth ~ 65% (11)
- Language ~ 41% (7)
- Supports for early literacy ~ 29% (5)
- Monitoring children’s development and individualizing curriculum ~ 24% (4)
- Children with special needs ~ 24% (4)
- Learning about math ~ 18% (3)
- English language learners (0)
- Helping parents help children learn ~ 6% (1)
Most states report that most non-credit bearing professional development is offered as single sessions:

- 29% (5) states report 50-75% of trainings are in form of single sessions

- 41% (7) states report over 75% of trainings are single sessions
Features of Group Professional Development

- Most states report that less than half of non-credit bearing professional development trainings are offered as a series of sessions covering a single topic or closely related topic

  - 35% (6 states) report that under 25% of group trainings are offered as a series
  
  - 35% (6 states) report that 25-50% of trainings are offered as a series
Features of Group Professional Development

- Most states (76% - 13) report that they offer some group professional development that is formally tied to follow-up on-site coaching and assistance.

- Most states (59% - 10) have a process for converting non-credit bearing professional development into college credit: This process mostly occurs through states’ community colleges (8 states).
Features of Group Professional Development

- Most states (76% - 13) report that their group professional development staff use formal training curricula
  - Of these states, 8 require that professional development staff use these curricula
  - States report employing a variety of different curricula, including training modules from the Center on the Social-Emotional Foundations of Learning, the Program for Infant-Toddler Caregivers, and state-developed training curricula
Specialized Professional Development

Most states provide assistance specifically designed for program directors ~ 82% (14). Examples are:

- Training in using the PAS (Program Administration Scale)
- College courses in mentoring/leadership
- Required series (e.g., curriculum development, infant-toddler development, exceptional child); some related to director credential
- Group training on state’s learning standards
- Group training and onsite coaching to support director skills in promoting quality
- Training on ERS
Specialized Professional Development

Most states provide assistance specifically designed for infant-toddler caregivers: 88% (15) Examples are:

- Specific required credit-bearing courses
- Network of infant toddler specialists
- Training with the Program for Infant Toddler Caregivers
- Infant toddler credential or certification related training (state developed)
- Elements of CSEFL training
- T.A. provider focuses on ITERS identified areas of need
Trainer/Coach credentials and supports

- Most states require coaches/trainers to have special certifications or qualifications: 71% (12) TA providers/coaches; 76% (13) group trainers

  - 6 states cite minimum education requirements: Bachelors/Associate degree depending on level (2); Bachelors (3), Masters (1)

  - Other credentials mentioned were: ERS inter-rater reliability; participation in state-developed training
Support and Supervision of Trainers

- 7 states provide support and supervision to QRIS trainers, coaches, and technical assistance providers through their CCRR’s

- 2 states partner with local universities to provide support to trainers

- Other states have internal support and supervision mechanisms such as supervisory meetings, ongoing trainings
Current plans to strengthen professional development, training, coaching, and on-site assistance supports

- Most state's report having plans to strengthen supports for programs: 88% (15). Examples are:
  - 2 states are developing an infant/toddler credential
  - 5 states are working to improve professional development for coaches & T.A. providers
  - New types of PD (e.g. PD leading to health consultant credential)
  - Formalizing on-site follow-up to group training
  - Standardizing/improving coaching model
  - Overall
Information collected by QRISs in state database?

- Which providers/programs use different types of training: 63% (10)
- Content of on-site assistance: 63% (10)
- Content of group training/workshops: 63% (10)
- Content of credit-bearing courses taken by providers/program staff: 56% (9)
- Activities used in on-site technical assistance: 56% (9)
Trends and Questions for the Future

♦ Targeting and provision of the most intensive assistance to the “most-in-need” settings appears fairly weak. What conditions are needed to promote more coaching in high needs settings (funding, making coaching “count” towards QRIS training requirements)?

♦ Coaching appears to lack features found in effective models: intensity, observations and modeling focused on helping teachers learn and practice effective strategies in teacher/child interactions, use of a standardized model. What supports do states/systems need to incorporate research-based approaches to professional development and coaching?
Much group training appears to occur as single sessions that may not provide the depth needed to build practitioners’ knowledge and skills. As systems evolve, will this trend change? What can be learned from states that are using more integrated group PD?

Some states may be achieving the knowledge-to-practice transfer by linking group training to on-site coaching. What are the features of these models (e.g., content focus, intensity, strategies for linking of knowledge with practice) and supports needed for effective implementation.
Some content areas in group training and on-site assistance appear less prominent than expected given research suggesting their importance to children’s learning and school readiness: supports for language development; monitoring children’s learning and individualizing the curriculum; supports for second-language learners and children with special needs; and helping parents support children’s learning. **We need to better understand what is influencing the content of professional development and on-site assistance.**
Thank You!

For more information, please contact:

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States participating in NCCP QRIS Survey

- Colorado
- Delaware
- Indiana
- Illinois
- Iowa
- Louisiana
- Maine
- Maryland
- Montana
- New Mexico
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- Pennsylvania
- Rhode Island
- Tennessee
- Vermont