

Quality Counts for Kids Task Force Meeting June 21, 2004

Task Force Members Attendance: Task Force Chair: Ann Terrell-Milwaukee Affiliate, NBCDI Board of Directors, Gershia Coggins-Child Care Providers Helper, Shelley Cousin-Wisconsin Head Start Association, Dave Edie-UW-Extension Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership, Lisa Furseth-Wisconsin Community Action Program, Tammy Hammell-Knowledge Learning Corporation, Dana Harmel-Wisconsin Family Child Care Association Representative, Laura Klingelhoets-Wisconsin Child Care Administrators Association Representative, Sandy Leibfried-Southwest Wisconsin CCR&R, Joyce Mallory-Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, Jose Martinez-United Migrant Opportunity Services, Inc., Carol Maurer-4C Community Coordinated Child Care, M. Judy Mays-Dusk 2 Dawn Child Care, Mary Motquin-Intertribal Child Care Council, Jeanette Paulson-Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, Mike Poma-Milwaukee County Department of Human Services, Jane Robinson-The Registry, Barb Schuler-Wisconsin Technical College System Office, Kari Stroede-Satellite Family Child Care, Jane Whitacre-Wisconsin Child Care Improvement Project

Task Force Staff Attendance: Laura Saterfield-Department of Workforce Development, Child Care Section Chief, DWD Staff: Alan Sweet, Kath McGurk, Linda Leonhart, Jane Penner-Hoppe, Lee Mutchler, Department of Health and Family Services Staff: Jill Chase, Anne Carmody, Dianne Jenkins, Julia Strong, Susan Harvey, Department of Public Instruction Staff: Jill Haglund

Task Force Early Childhood Community Experts: Pam Boulton-UW Milwaukee, Mary Roach and Diane Adams-UW-Extension Research Partnership, Chris Breunig-Community Coordinated Child Care, Inc., Susan Tragesser-Milwaukee Planning Council

Task Force Visitors: Beverly Anderson, Wendy Bahr, Michelle Bethke, Rebecca Brueggeman, Connie Colussy, Terri Dix, Sandra Esrael, Pat Hernandez, Carol Keintz, Angela Lampkin, Rhonda Mitchell, Kathleen Noble, Leticia Smith-Evans, Patrick Steliga, Barbara Stiefvater, Pirkko Zweifel

Call to Order

Ann Terrell, Chair of the *Quality Counts for Kids* Task Force and Laura Saterfield called the meeting to order and provided a warm welcome to Task Force members, staff and visitors. Introductions were made, ground rules (referenced on the DWD KidsFirst web page) of the Task Force were shared, and the meeting plan was reviewed.

Roberta Gassman, Secretary of the Department of Workforce Development and **Helene Nelson**, Secretary of the Department of Health and Family Services provided introductory remarks and shared the charge to the Task Force.

Secretary Gassman began with greeting the Task Force members and others in attendance and thanked members for agreeing to participate on this "*Quality Counts for Kids*" Task Force. Secretary Gassman indicated that this name: "*Quality Counts for Kids*" is the Task Force name that will be utilized from this point forward. The following direction is given to the Task Force:

To develop recommendations on specific quality indicators within child care programs that will be provided to the Governor. These identified quality indicators will be embraced within a tiered reimbursement system to assure that child care dollars (over \$300 million dollars in the current year) purchase better quality child care. Quality indicators are being identified to 1.) help parents recognize and choose higher quality care and 2.) to provide higher quality early learning experiences for children in those programs. Secretary Gassman provided examples of quality indicators that have been used by other states: programs with lower turn-over rates, programs with staff with higher education levels, and programs that include reading to children each day.

The **Charge of the Task Force** will be to:

- By September 2004: Develop a proposal of what specific quality indicators will be assessed in early childhood programs and how this will be linked to the reimbursement system. Secretary Gassman was clear that a full *Quality Counts for Kids* System will need to be identified by September to ensure an

approach that will provide an incentive to programs to move to higher quality. Necessary supports will need to be identified.

- October 2004: The Public Hearing Process
- December 15, 2004: The full report on the *Quality Counts for Kids* System is due to the Governor, including budget components.

Secretary Gassman provided **key questions** to the Task Force to consider:

- 1.) What are specific criteria that can be evaluated?
- 2.) How can identified quality criteria be linked to Wisconsin Shares?
- 3.) What specific program supports are needed?
- 4.) How will this information be shared with parents?

Secretary Nelson welcomed the early care and education expertise of the Task Force and their strong knowledge to provide advocacy efforts. Secretary Nelson shared the Governor's vision for strong collaboration between the state departments to share strong commitment to high quality early care and education opportunities for all children across the state.

In Wisconsin, over 200,000 children are in licensed child care programming. Safety is the key to licensing. Licensing rules provide the floor for safety, and programs are encouraged to move above minimal standards. As the quality indicators are identified, supports must also be in place to provide incentives to programs to move to higher quality. Joint opportunities for public-private partnerships should be explored to assure necessary training and technical assistance opportunities can be accessed. It is important to develop a system that helps all programs achieve higher quality. The system must be user friendly, for early care and education programs, families, training and technical assistance providers and regulators.

Judy Collins from the National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC) provided the Task Force with a power point presentation on Exploring the Complexities of Tiered Strategy Systems (referenced on the DWD KidsFirst web page). Judy is from Norman, Oklahoma and is currently a state technical assistance specialist for the NCCIC. Judy is presently the President of the National Association for Regulatory Administration and has completed a Masters Degree in Child Development. Judy's past experiences include work as a teacher and director of a child care center, and she worked with the Oklahoma Licensing Department for 29 years, the last seven years as the Director of Licensing. Judy has been the Chair of the Professional Development Team for ten years, and is considered an expert in the licensing and tiered strategy systems.

Judy provided a wealth of information on what other state experiences have been and on what key indicators have been utilized to identify quality within individual programs.

Lessons Learned and Key Concepts:

- Wisconsin needs to identify WHY a quality indicators/tiered reimbursement system is being developed. What are the goals for this initiative? In Oklahoma, three goals were identified: 1.) To provide consumer education to parents to choose higher quality child care for their children. 2.) To raise the child care reimbursement rate across the state to levels equivalent to market rate for private pay families. 3.) To raise the quality of early care and education across the state, not just limited to programs serving low-income families.
- Specific, concrete criteria must be established for assessing individual program quality.
- Supportive systems, including access to training and technical assistance must be in place prior to establishing a quality indicators rating system. Credit based access to course work must be available statewide. Scholarships, quality improvement grants, mentoring/counseling are examples of supports necessary to provide needed incentives to programs to move towards higher quality.
- Incentives for reaching higher quality must be in place for individual child care programs. Increased reimbursement rates must be meaningful in order for programs to want to move to those levels.
- Environmental Rating Scales discussion. Both pros and cons to using this. Need to look at what specific quality criteria is being assessed. Are there other ways to meet this?
- Accreditation discussion. Both pros and cons to using this. Wisconsin needs to determine what specific quality criteria should be assessed. It is possible that the self-assessment tool is the actual component that is best utilized by programs, and professional development planning moves forward from there.

- Be sure that quality rating scales provide opportunity for movement up the scale. Do not create levels that are so far apart programs are unable to move from one level up to the next.
- The movement of early care and education programs into quality indicator rating scales takes time. The first years will show less growth, but supportive systems must be in place. As time goes on, movement will increase dramatically. Initial expenditures will focus much more on support systems, vs. actual increased reimbursement. Having multiple levels with corresponding increasing reimbursement that can be accessed through a professional career path will provide the necessary incentive to programs to move up.
- Oklahoma found that with the implementation of a quality rating scale, staff wages increased over time, with an average increase of \$1.00/hour for programs achieving two stars. Additionally, Oklahoma found that two star and three star programs had a lower turn-over rate.
- Don't reinvent the wheel – utilize resources available from other states and lessons learned: public relation and public awareness material and other examples of what has worked well.

Specific Questions for Wisconsin to Think About:

1. Are the goals for developing and implementing a quality indicator rating scale clearly identified?
2. Are various stakeholders involved for maximum buy-in? Need to have consensus across broad groups for success. Child care programs, staff, parents, regulators and state administration must all have clear understanding of the goals of this program.
3. Parents need to understand the value of a quality indicator rating system in order to know what to look for in child care programming, and to know how to demand high quality care.
4. Wisconsin needs to have a clear picture on what the early care and education workforce looks like. This includes education levels, turnover rates, age, accreditation status, and access to credit based educational opportunities.
5. Does Wisconsin have an infrastructure and inter-structure in place to facilitate and support a *Quality Counts for Kids System*? Necessary supports must be in place to provide training, technical assistance and guidance to individual child care programs. Automation systems for collection and dissemination of information, must be in place, and linked to the child care reimbursement system.
6. How will the System be evaluated? Will there be a research project, parent surveys, environmental observations, or some combination?
7. Will the quality indicators be embedded within the state's licensing requirements (ex. North Carolina), or will they be separate? What specific statutory language change or rule changes are necessary? What administrative review/appeal process will be in place? Will loss of quality ranking affect payment rate immediately?
8. How will the child care program compliance history be evaluated? Oklahoma utilizes "NRS" – numerous, repeated and serious violations and has created a documented formula for assessment.
9. Will the quality indicators rating system be mandatory or voluntary for child care programs?
10. Will licensed family child care providers be included within the rating system? Will certified providers be included?
11. Will the rating system begin with the first level = to meeting regulation requirements or will it be a step up from that point, i.e., what is "the floor"?
12. Will Wisconsin begin with a pilot project or begin statewide?
13. How will the quality indicators be assessed? How many program visits will take place?
14. Will accreditation be utilized as a quality indicator? What accreditation bodies will be recognized?
15. Will environmental rating scales be utilized? How will validity be established? How will this be paid for?

Task Force Members Discussion

- North Carolina is the only state that mandates programs have a license issued with a star status to rate quality. All other states are voluntary for child care programs to participate in a quality rating system.
- Tennessee is the only state that requires all child care programs to have an environmental rating scale score.
- North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky and Oklahoma increased their licensing staff FTE levels significantly.
- Higher quality facilities must be available to parents prior to public awareness materials becoming available – Once parents are aware that they should be looking for higher quality care, there needs to be that level of care available.

- ❑ Focus groups should be utilized to inform parents on quality indicator ratings, and how these impact on quality. Parents must clearly understand how to assess quality in order to demand higher quality programming. The system must be easy for parents to understand. Must have all stakeholder buy-in in order to successfully implement a statewide “System”.
- ❑ Reimbursement rates for child care subsidy must provide an incentive to child care programs to work to achieve higher quality. States must develop policy that provides a “subsidy rate” and a “quality enhancement rate” in order for programs to maintain higher quality. Some states may also develop a “Scholarship Rate”, or a “Post It Rate” based on payment after service provided. Rate increases according to quality ranking must be significant in order to become incentives for reaching higher quality.

Oklahoma Information

- ❖ Large child care programs in Oklahoma that serve a very high percentage of subsidized children demonstrate lower quality at each designated star level, as compared to programs serving lower percentages of subsidized children at the same star level. This finding is similar to findings in Wisconsin.
- ❖ The growth of programs reaching higher levels of quality in Oklahoma takes time. The Oklahoma program began in 1998. The first year’s budget required approximately a \$500,000 increase for subsidy for higher quality care. It took nearly 24 months for the program to begin to significantly increase the number of programs moving to higher levels of quality. During that 24 month period, supportive services were necessary to help programs achieve higher levels of quality. The differential in subsidy payments for higher quality programming for the year 2000 was \$3 Million, in 2001 was nearly \$6 Million and currently is \$26 Million.
- ❖ The following statistics were provided for the Oklahoma Project:

\$6 Million	Licensing Staff
\$2.5 Million	TEACH
\$2.5 Million	REWARD
\$2.5 Million	Professional Development Centers
\$2 Million	Scholars Coordinators
\$600,000	Public Awareness Materials – parents and providers
\$500,000	Stars Outreach Specialists
\$350,000	Research and Evaluation

- ❖ Research in Oklahoma has clearly identified increased quality of child care programming across the state. In Oklahoma, the priority within the state has been to keep the quality indicators rating “system” in place, even during budget reduction cycles.

Next Steps

Laura Saterfield, Child Care Section Chief identified the next steps for the *Quality Counts for Kids* Task Force Members. An information web page will be established on the Department of Workforce Developments Web Page. Shared quality indicators/tiered reimbursement materials, membership information, meeting notices, and meeting notes will be housed on the following site: <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/kidsfirst/>. Public comments may be submitted in writing to the Task Force by sending an E-mail to: kathy.mcgurk@dwd.state.wi.us. Information can also be shared directly with all Task Force Members. The Child Care Section will work to develop an E-mail distribution list as a communication tool.

At the July meeting, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, Child Care Research Partnership will provide a presentation on several options for quality indicator models. Lee Mutchler, Budget Analyst from the Department of Workforce Development, and Erin Fath, Budget Analyst from the Department of Administration, will provide information to the Task Force to set the context on current state budget funding. Lee and Erin will include a brief overview of current federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) allocation funding. Additional discussion will center on where there might be opportunities for change within the current allocation structure.

Future Meeting Dates

Monday, July 19, 2004	10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Quality Indicator Model Examples Child Care Budget Information
Wednesday, August 18, 2004	10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Tiered Reimbursement Model Examples
Monday, September 20, 2004	10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Draft Report Complete
Wednesday, October 20, 2004	10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Public Hearing on Draft Report
Monday, November 15, 2004	10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Public Comment Review
Monday, December 6, 2004	10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Final Report Approved for Recommendation to the Governor

Quality Counts for Kids Task Force 6 21 04
meeting minutes 6 21 04
6/24/04