

**Alaska's
Quality Rating and Improvement System**

Final report with recommendations for
implementation

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Introduction and Rationale for Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

In the last decade, our understanding of how young children learn and the critical importance of development from infancy through the early years has exploded. America's long-term economic success depends on ensuring that children – the next generation of citizens – succeed in school and life (Heckman & Masterov, 2004). The early care and education industry has expanded along with this knowledge and as a direct result of more families working and choosing to enroll their young children – babies, toddlers and preschoolers – in early care and education settings. Public investment in child care and preschool, especially in the states, has grown too. Yet families, as consumers on behalf of their children, still contribute the lion's share – 60% – of investment in early care and education (Mitchell, Stoney & Dichter, 2001). A credible estimate of the total annual early care and education expenditure by U.S. consumers is \$46 billion based on information from the U.S. Census Bureau (Stoney, Mitchell and Warner, 2006).

Both public and private investors make reasonable demands for accountability – value for the money being spent. The early care and education market does not offer consumers much information on which to make their choices. The twin concerns for quality and accountability from the investors in early care and education led states to develop systems to improve and rate the quality of early care and education programs – similar to the American Automobile Association ratings of restaurants and hotels.

Fourteen states¹ now operate statewide Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) and at least 30 other states are planning or piloting them. The first Quality Rating System was launched in Oklahoma in 1998 and other states followed quickly, making this a fast-moving policy trend. Several states in the planning stages have begun to call their systems QRIS to recognize the two major purposes: improvement and rating.

What is a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)?

A QRIS is an organized way to assess, improve and communicate the quality of early care and education programs that families consider for their children. The United Way of America promotes quality rating and improvement systems as one of its national priorities. A QRIS empowers parents to become savvy consumers and choose high quality for their children; enables policymakers to implement policies proven to improve quality; promotes accountability so donors, legislators and tax

¹ The states and year each was launched are: Colorado (2000), District of Columbia (2000), Iowa (2006), Kentucky (2001), Maryland (2001), Montana (2002), New Hampshire (2006), New Mexico (2005), North Carolina (1999), Ohio (2006), Oklahoma (1998), Pennsylvania (2002), Tennessee (2001), and Vermont (2003).

payers feel confident investing in quality; gives providers a roadmap to quality improvement; and improves the health and development of children in early care and education.

A QRIS affects the early care and education market through three major avenues.

- 1) *Quality assurance.* All QRISs have progressive quality standards based on research and best practice, with monitoring and assessment. Usually there are three to five quality levels.
- 2) *Supply side interventions.* Supports are provided for programs such as technical assistance on conducting self-assessments and developing quality improvement plans. Professional development is offered to personnel to enhance their knowledge and skills and increase educational qualifications. Financial incentives are offered to providers to encourage improvement and significant ongoing financial awards help to maintain higher quality.
- 3) *Demand side interventions.* All QRISs use easy to understand symbols for the ratings, usually multiple stars. The star ratings of programs are publicly available and financial incentives are offered to reward consumers who choose higher quality.

QRIS are in many ways similar among states. Recognizing that staff qualifications is the strongest predictor of program quality and child outcomes, all 14 states include staff qualifications and professional development as essential standards. All states but one include national accreditation (only North Carolina does not). All states include center-based programs; nearly all include Head Start, school-age programs and family child care homes. Several include state-funded prekindergarten programs. Interestingly, only one state has a QRIS that is truly mandatory (Tennessee); North Carolina's is effectively mandatory since it is a rated license; all the rest are voluntary.

Do Quality Rating and Improvement Systems Work?

Researchers in Oklahoma, Tennessee and North Carolina have validated that the QRIS in their respective states measures quality accurately and with meaningful distinctions among levels. Oklahoma, North Carolina and Pennsylvania have conducted evaluations of their systems that demonstrate overall quality improvement and better child outcomes.

Evaluation results

North Carolina researchers studied child care centers participating in Smart Start, the early childhood initiative in which the state's Star rating system is embedded. The primary goal of Smart Start is to ensure that all children enter school healthy and prepared to succeed. Preschool children who attended higher quality centers scored significantly higher on measures of skills and abilities deemed important for success in kindergarten than children from lower-quality centers (Bryant, et al., 2003).

In Pennsylvania, Keystone Stars has reversed the trend of declining quality in only three years (Barnard, et al, 2006). Prior to establishing the QRIS, child care quality was declining across the state according to average scores on a widely used program quality measure, the Early Childhood

Environment Rating Scale (ECERS). The average ECERS score declined from 4.5 in 1996 to 3.9 in 2002. Keystone Stars, began in 2002 and went statewide in 2003; by 2006 its overall participation rate was 70% of centers. The evaluation of Keystone Stars found the average scores in 2006 for centers not participating in Stars was the same as the state average before Stars (3.9). The average scores for programs participating in Stars rose significantly; programs at the beginning level Start with Stars scored 4.1 and those at the top (Star 4) scored 5.4.

Evidence from states' experience

Experience in other states shows that quality will improve over time if the supports, financial and otherwise, are sufficient and the ratings are widely publicized so that consumer, funder and program behavior is affected. The initial profile of quality in any geographic area is related to the existing community characteristics – the stringency and enforcement of basic regulations, degree to which quality is a matter of public discussion, the types and amounts of program support and professional development that are available, and whether national standards are valued, as well as the relative wealth of the community. The profile at the beginning of an improvement and rating effort may be skewed to the low end until programs have time and resources to rise to the expectations. If quality is valued in the community and resources are ample, the initial profile might be shifted toward the higher levels.

Imagine a classic bell curve – if the community quality profile is a bell curve with most in the middle star levels and few at the very low or the very high levels, then the standards and supports are probably set correctly. When the curve shifts to having more at the upper levels, it's time to consider adjusting the expectations higher and/or eliminating the lower level. This is precisely what happened in North Carolina. After about five years of operation of their Star Rated License there were so few programs at the one-star level that the level is being eliminated. After a year or so of operation, Oklahoma had to invent the one-star plus level in their three star system to fix the fact that moving from level one to two was much harder to accomplish than moving from level two to three. These kinds of adjustments are normal operating procedure.

The Approach in Alaska

Alaska has many quality improvement efforts upon which to build. The quality rating initiative in Fairbanks, called Hearts for Kids, was a positive experience with evidence of good outcomes. Recent experience in the Quality Enrichment Demonstration Project reinforces the Hearts for Kids lessons on outreach, provision of technical assistance, improvement grants and other financial supports and the need for assessor reliability. The Department of Health and Social Services proposed regulations for enhanced rates in the child care subsidy system based on national accreditation, staff turnover/retention and professional qualifications and progress in the Alaska System for Early Education Development (SEED) professional development framework. Alaska has a strong child care regulatory system. The Department of Education and Early Development has standards and procedures for certification of preschool.

With funding from the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, the Alaska Humanities Forum contracted with Anne Mitchell of Early Childhood Policy Research to assemble a team of national experts to work with the Alaska QRIS Advisory Committee. The national team is Anne Mitchell, Louise Stoney and Judy Collins. The Alaska QRIS Advisory Committee is a broadly representative group of experts in the early care and education field in Alaska. See Attachment A for a list of Advisory Committee members.

The process

The exploration of a QRIS in Alaska began with a series of three focus groups in January 2007. One member of the national team presented an overview of QRIS background information and experience in other states. The Advisory Committee was then formed to represent key sectors of the early care and education systems in Alaska and the public and private sectors. The Advisory Committee worked with the national team using phone and email as well as internet surveys.

Goals and guiding principles

The first task of the team and the advisory committee was to agree on overall goals and a set of guiding principles and basic agreements to frame the work going forward. The overall goal is that Alaska's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) be a sustainable system to recognize, reward and improve the quality of early care and education programs; provide reliable methods for parents and the public to evaluate early care and education programs; and ensure children have access to programs that offer strong foundations for learning and life-long positive outcomes. In this statement, note that "early care and education" means all types of programs in centers, family child care, preschools, schools, Head Start, etc. and that "quality" means a strong well-managed program using developmentally appropriate practices that promote the full range of children's development.

The committee further agreed that the Alaska QRIS will be a voluntary system, open to all center-based and home-based programs, and aligned with the Alaska professional development system and its personnel registry (System for Early Education Development or SEED). It will also reinforce the Alaska Early Learning Guidelines, recognize nationally accredited programs, and be supported by consultation and financial incentives. Initially the system will be designed for programs serving children birth through five (infants, toddlers, preschoolers); school-age programs will be added in a second phase.² The first level of the proposed QRIS is defined as any program that is licensed by either the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) or the Municipality of Anchorage DHSS; or a preschool certified by Alaska DEED; or certified by the US Army, US Air Force, or US Coast Guard; or designated as a Federal Head Start Program. The highest level includes national accreditation and other state-specific criteria. The proposed QRIS is a 5-level

² By adding the SACERS to the standards, the school-age programs that are in centers can easily be included. For school-age only programs, it is advisable to develop a distinct set of standards and consult with the National AfterSchool Association (NAA) and its accreditation system.

system with standards in five categories. It is structured as a block system, progressive from one level to the next.

The Standards

The majority of initial effort by the Advisory Committee was devoted to crafting the set of multi-level standards for both center-based and home-based early care and education programs. After consultation with the advisors, the national team drafted categories and criteria for review and eventually a consensus document emerged. The five categories for both the center- and home-based standards are:

- staff qualifications and professional development,
- environment,
- curriculum and learning
- leadership and management, and
- family engagement.

For the completed standards, see Attachments B for center-based and C for home-based. These standards were carefully constructed to progress incrementally from one level to the next and to include evidence-based criteria that are known to distinguish variations in quality. Each category is followed by a brief description of how the criteria in that category will be assessed. The widely used family of program quality measurement tools known as the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) is included; at the first two levels ERS are used as self-assessment while at the three higher levels the assessment is to be conducted by a trained and reliable outside observer. The ERS score is not used to assign a rating in Alaska's QRIS, rather it informs the provision of technical assistance to a program and is the basis for a program quality improvement plan.

Implementing the Alaska QRIS

The action plan for implementing the QRIS in Alaska begins with a period of outreach and communication with key stakeholders in the field and with policymakers to gain support and buy-in. This effort has already begun and will continue through June of 2008. The next phase is a one-year field-test of the QRIS.

The Field Test

The main focus of the field-test will be to refine the standards and assessment measures and assure that consultation for program improvement is accessible and effective. A draft of the QRIS application will need to be developed so that it can be tested and refined. ERS assessors will need to be recruited. It appears that there are a sufficient number of trained ERS assessors in Alaska for the field-test; a plan for recruiting and training additional assessors may be needed once the QRIS is fully operational. Although only programs aiming for the upper levels of rating will need an outside assessment when the QRIS is fully implemented, it may be useful to conduct ERS assessments in programs at all five levels in the field test to determine how ERS scores vary according to QRIS

levels. Additionally, an “introduction to the ERS” workshop should be developed to ensure that programs have sufficient knowledge of these tools to participate in the field-test.

To be an accurate test of the QRIS, the programs in the field test should represent the types of programs expected to participate in the system, that is, centers of all types (e.g., nonprofit, proprietary, military, tribal), Head Start centers, and both small and group family child care homes. Given the proportion of centers and homes, a reasonable pool for the field test would be about half homes and half centers. The sample size and the cost of the field-test is discussed below in the Cost section.

Statewide implementation of the QRIS can occur over time, beginning in the 2009-10 state fiscal year. Based on experience in other states, full implementation will likely take 2-3 years. As they become available, results from the field test can be used to inform implementation of the QRIS. The pace of implementation will be influenced by how effectively the QRIS opportunity is communicated to programs as well as the level of support – both technical and financial – that is available to programs.

Moving from field-test to full implementation

Managing a Quality Rating and Improvement System involves six distinct and interrelated functions.

- 1) Assigning a rating: processing applications, verifying information, maintaining data on participation and compliance, managing the appeals process, etc.
- 2) Conducting classroom and home assessments using the ERS
- 3) Offering program and practitioner supports: consultation and technical assistance to help programs attain and maintain quality, and professional development so that practitioners can meet QRIS educational requirements.
- 4) Administering financial rewards and incentives
- 5) Promoting consumer engagement: ensuring that consumers (parents, funders, community leaders and others) have access to, and understand QRIS information
- 6) Developing policy: establishing and reviewing QRIS standards, developing the formal links to other systems, staffing the Advisory Committee, analyzing data & making decisions regarding goals and targets, etc.

It is not necessary to have a single entity assume responsibility for delivering all of these functions. Some separation of duties in implementation is advisable to maintain integrity and promote trust in the QRIS. Engaging multiple agencies is also likely to produce better results and broaden understanding and support for the QRIS.

Assigning a Rating

Assigning a QRIS rating involves gathering and/or verifying data from multiple sources. The foundation of the rating decision is an application that follows directly from the criteria laid out in the standards. The proposed QRIS includes some standards that are already monitored by various

entities. For example, state licensing regulations are monitored for compliance through a combination of document review and direct observation (onsite visits) by government employees. This is done at least twice annually. National accreditation systems typically involve an onsite assessment, by a consultant working for the national accrediting body, to validate information in a self-study. In the case of accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), this is done once every five years with detailed annual reports of compliance and random unannounced visits to check compliance. Head Start programs are monitored using the PRISM (Program Review Instrument for System Monitoring) in an annual self-assessment and once every three years in an onsite review by a team of outside experts hired by the Head Start Office. Military child care is monitored four times a year by staff from the Department of Defense; the peer review visit and the multi-disciplinary team visit are sources of information for QRIS. Tribal child care may also have monitoring staff and information sources. Additional QRIS data will be obtained from personnel registries (SEED) and other existing data bases. The QRIS will use information from all of these sources to verify compliance with criteria in the five categories of standards.

The task of assigning a rating is essentially a procedure for verifying information that is on the QRIS application and reviewing documents that are included with it. The entity responsible for assigning ratings should have the capacity to collect and process information from multiple public and private agencies. Ideally, the entity will create or adapt an automated system (or coordinate information from multiple automated systems) to efficiently monitor compliance.

In most statewide QRIS, state employees are responsible for assigning ratings. Typically, staff is in the state licensing division (North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Kentucky) but in some cases (Montana) subsidy staff assumes this responsibility. In Pennsylvania staff based in each of the six regional Keys to Quality agencies is responsible for assigning ratings; the regional Keys are state-contracted private agencies that provide professional development and technical assistance. Vermont currently contracts with a private consulting firm to handle this function, although the long-range plan is to have government employees assume responsibility for assigning ratings. In Colorado the QRIS is managed by a private sector entity (Qualistar) that includes both the QRIS and the state's child care resource and referral network; these two staffs are separate and distinct.

Recommendations for Alaska:

- The state of Alaska's DHSS child care office has the infrastructure to assign ratings and manage the data that are necessary to do so. The staff person assigned would be distinct from the licensing staff but might be supervised within the same structure.
- An agreement to share the licensing data that are needed for QRIS ratings should be negotiated. The Department will need to negotiate agreements with the SEED Registry, federal and regional Head Start Offices, various branches of the military, and other oversight entities to share their data.

Conducting Environment Rating Scale Assessments

Eight of the 12 states with a statewide QRIS use the set of environment rating scales (ERS) to assign a rating for at least some, if not all, quality levels. Ohio, Oklahoma, Montana and Vermont do not use ERS scores to assign ratings, although Ohio and Vermont offer ERS as an option for self-assessment and Oklahoma uses the ERS scores to inform technical assistance. There are four ERS scales: Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-revised (ECERS-R), Infant Toddler Rating Scale-revised (ITERS-R), Family Day Care Rating Scale (FDCRS), and School Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS). Most states require that one-third of the classrooms in a center (or the entire program in a home) be rated annually using the setting- and age-appropriate scales. Classroom scores are usually averaged for a total center score (Mitchell, 2005).³ Conducting an ERS classroom assessment requires that assessors/observers be well trained. Inter-rater reliability must be assured and checked regularly.

Some states are considering using an ECERS-related tool that measures curriculum content for preschoolers; the ECERS Extension (Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2006) includes four curricular subscales: Literacy, Mathematics, Science and Environment, and Diversity. States are also considering using the CLASS (CLassroom Assessment Scoring System) which measures the social-emotional climate and content in classrooms for preschoolers.

It is essential to ensure that ERS assessors are able to make impartial decisions and maintain a high degree of inter-rater reliability. If in the future ERS scores become part of Alaska's rating, then it will be especially important to ensure that staff who conduct assessments are distinct from those who assign ratings and those who provide consultation and technical assistance. All of the states that have implemented statewide QRIS ensure that classroom assessments are conducted by staff that is separate from those responsible for assigning ratings. Many states (including North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee) contract with a university to conduct ERS assessments. In Pennsylvania and New Mexico, staff from the state's child care resource centers or T/TA centers (which are similar to Alaska's CCR&R agencies) perform this function. Tennessee and Oklahoma have made assessors permanent state employees. Representatives from several of these states stress the importance of making assessors full-time staff, so that they have job stability and strong back-up from their superiors if their ratings are challenged.

Recommendations for Alaska

- Issue an RFP seeking an entity to conduct ERS assessments. Key criteria in selecting an entity should be the capacity to: ensure and regularly monitor inter-rater reliability; provide both classroom and home assessments, in a timely manner, across the state; and gather and

³ There are exceptions: Maryland requires each classroom to be rated annually and establishes a minimum classroom score for each level of their QRIS; Colorado and the District of Columbia rate all classrooms annually and average the scores for a center score; and North Carolina uses the lowest classroom score. Oklahoma requires that one classroom, randomly selected, be assessed every two years and uses the results to guide technical assistance but not to assign a quality rating.

report data from assessments in a format that can be used to inform program improvement plans and can also help inform policy decisions regarding standards and accountability.

- Ensure that the entity selected to conduct ERS assessments is free from conflict-of-interest. In other words, if the same contractor offers TA and conducts ERS assessments, separate staff should be assigned to perform each of these functions.

Program and Practitioner Supports

States work with a range of organizations to provide and coordinate technical assistance (TA) and consultation for program improvement in support of their QRIS. Such assistance focuses on whole program improvement including reviews of financial management and personnel policies and practices. Ultimately, quality improvement is a program-wide process, not one that a director/owner can do alone or one classroom can do by itself. As the QRIS movement has grown, so have questions about how to ensure that the technical assistance programs receive effectively improves program ratings. A recent paper from the National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC) identified four strategies that states use to effectively link TA/consultation to QRIS:

1) TA is directly and intentionally linked to a QRIS and designed for that purpose. Examples of this approach include the following:

- Each program participating in the QRIS is automatically assigned a coach or TA provider who helps them through the process. Colorado and KS use this approach. Both states assign a QRIS coach to each participating center or home and contract with CCR&R agencies to provide coaching.
- Each program participating in the QRIS has the option to request assistance from a TA provider, but is not required to do so. North Carolina and Pennsylvania are two states that use this approach. Pennsylvania has created an automated system that maintains data on the consultation programs receive. (See box right.)

Tracking TA: Pennsylvania's Automated System

Pennsylvania has developed a database to maintain information on the technical assistance that is requested by, and provided to, each early childhood program that participates in STARS. The database is connected to the KIDS Keystone STARS management data base. Each participating provider has a technical assistance plan as well as an electronic file that contains information on the type of TA requested/received, the organization providing the TA, when services commenced and were completed, and other relevant information.

2) TA, consultation and/or professional development are not directly linked to a QRIS, but participating programs receive priority. For example, Pennsylvania gives priority status in the allocation of T.E.A.C.H. scholarship funds to staff in programs that participate in Keystone Stars. Oklahoma gives STARS participants priority when applying for scholarships or technical assistance.

- 3) TA is not directly linked to a QRIS, but the State offers financial incentives and/or tracks performance measures that encourage TA providers to serve programs that participate in a QRIS. Examples of this approach include the following:
- A specific percentage of the funds allocated to a local CCR&R or Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) agency are 'earmarked' for technical assistance provided to programs that participate in a QRIS. Colorado uses this approach. Each of the CCR&R agencies with whom it contracts must spend at least 25% of their quality improvement allocation on TA that is specifically linked to QRIS participation.
 - CCR&R agencies and other regional T/TA agencies are required to track and report the number of providers in their region at each star level. Steadily increasing the percentage of providers at higher star levels is used as one performance measure. North Carolina uses this approach when evaluating the progress of their local Smart Start Partnerships. Pennsylvania uses increased star level in the region as a performance measure for their Regional Keys.
- 4) QRIS standards are used to guide the goals, activities, content and approach used for all TA and training funded by the state. Examples of this approach:
- Creating a curriculum within the State's professional development system aimed at helping programs and/or practitioners meet QRIS standards. For example, Pennsylvania has developed a core training series that includes topics such as: understanding environmental rating scales, how to complete a professional development record, how to develop a quality improvement plan, and so forth.
 - Offering Statewide training to organizations and individuals engaged in helping early childhood programs improve their quality rating scores. The Clayton Foundation, in Colorado, has developed a coaching curriculum model to be used with Qualistar QRIS. North Carolina has taken a similar approach, and has launched a new statewide training initiative for technical assistance providers linked to revisions in their QRIS.

"Everything is examined through the lens of STARS. Every time we launch a new initiative we ask ourselves if this will be an incentive or disincentive to the STARS rating system..."

State Child Care Administrator

Recommendations for Alaska

Alaska can look to a range of existing organizations to help deliver technical assistance linked to the QRIS. With sufficient leadership and clear guidelines, this approach can be very effective. Specific recommendations include the following:

- Ensure that programs participating in QRIS have the option to request assistance, the approach used by Pennsylvania and North Carolina. Responsive TA/consultation, rather than automatically assigning a coach to each participant, is a more cost-effective approach.
- Develop an automated system, with a file for each provider that participates in the QRIS, to track TA. The automated systems in Pennsylvania and Miami, Florida could be used as models.

- Review all of the TA currently available in Alaska – from any funding source and/or auspices – to identify possible partners for QRIS supports and to assess whether current capacity for offering consultation matches the expected need. For each of these TA efforts, assess current capacity and explore how it can be linked to QRIS. Possibilities include giving priority to QRIS participants, earmarking a certain portion of TA funding for QRIS participants, limiting access to TA to QRIS participants, offering additional funding (e.g. a bonus) to TA providers that succeed in helping programs enroll in QRIS and/or increase their quality level.
- Require all TA providers funded by the State to track and report the QRIS level of the programs with whom they work. This would include CCR&R agency staff, USDA Food Program monitors, Military Child Care managers, Head Start coordinators, Tribal Child Care managers, and others.
- Develop and fund a professional development initiative for TA/consultants providers (regardless of the funding source for the services they provide) aimed at strengthening capacity to help EC&E programs reach higher quality levels, as defined and measured by the QRIS. Offer this training, free of charge, to all TA providers in the state, regardless of auspices or funding stream. This would potentially include CCR&R agency staff, USDA Food Program monitors, Military Child Care managers, Head Start coordinators, Tribal Child Care managers, and others.
- Because the Alaska Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs) are referenced in the QRIS standards, it is essential that the ELGs are communicated widely, i.e., summarized, printed in a book and/or posted on the web. To ensure that the ELGs are integrated into programs, training and credit-bearing coursework on implementing the ELGs should be developed and offered. Curricula and assessment tools that are aligned with the ELGs should be identified and communicated.
- Similarly, the Family Engagement category of the QRIS standards references the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment. Make sure there is information about this tool, including copies readily available, and training on how to use it.
- Align the offerings of Alaska's professional development system (SEED) with the content of the QRIS. Develop courses aimed at helping EC&E programs and practitioners meet QRIS standards, and include this training in the core curricula supported by the state's professional development system, SEED. For example, Pennsylvania offers training on participating in an ERS classroom assessment, courses in child observation and conducting individual child assessments, etc.

Administering Financial Rewards and Incentives

Financial incentives are designed to address the gap between the cost of producing a higher-quality program and the tuition price that is charged to families. Most families' income is insufficient to cover the full cost of quality and competition within the market tends to keep tuition low. In addition to helping fill the cost-price gap, financial support is a powerful incentive for EC&E

programs to participate in a QRIS. All of the existing statewide QRIS provide financial incentives of some kind. These incentives include the following:

- tiered reimbursement: subsidy payments at higher rates (District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Vermont)
- quality grants, bonuses and awards (Colorado, Iowa, Kentucky, Montana, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont)
- tax credits linked to QRIS (Louisiana, Maine, Oklahoma, Vermont)
- loans linked to QRIS (North Carolina)
- scholarships for staff training and education linked to QRIS (Oklahoma and Pennsylvania)
- wage supplements for staff linked to QRIS (Maryland and Pennsylvania)
- other incentives (Oklahoma Success By 6 grants, Colorado School-Readiness Grants, North Carolina links with More at Four funding)

Tiered reimbursement is the most common QRIS financial incentive, but is not the most effective. Since many EC&E programs serve only a handful of subsidized children, increasing the publicly subsidized reimbursement rate ceiling will have only a marginal impact on a program's overall revenues. Further, since programs are required to charge all families their published rate and the published rate determines the level of the subsidy payment, using tiered reimbursement as a QRIS finance strategy has the potential of driving up published rates, and making EC&E even more expensive for non-subsidized families. Most states avoid this problem by structuring the higher payment as a quality bonus, not as part of the 'reimbursement rate.'

Given the limitations of tiered reimbursement, many states have created *quality grants, bonuses or awards* linked to QRIS participation. These awards take many forms (see Attachment D for more details on financial incentives in the 10 states with QRIS in 2006) and are often structured to provide incentives for programs that serve children at all income levels. Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS offers annual Merit Awards that are intentionally structured outside the subsidy system so that tuition prices for private paying families are not affected. The awards are calibrated by program enrollment size, star level, and percentage of low-income children served.

Linking *tax credits* to QRIS is an emerging financing strategy. Louisiana just enacted a package that includes four, refundable tax credits linked to their state QRIS. The package includes: a refundable tax credit for parents, with higher credits if they enroll their child in a program with higher star-levels; a refundable tax credit for child care teachers, based on their educational qualifications; a refundable tax credit for EC&E programs, based on their star level and the number of low-income children they enroll; and, a refundable tax credit for investors based on the star-level of the program in which they invest. North Carolina has linked EC&E provider *loans* to QRIS. Government child care funds are used to 'buy down' the loan principal – essentially converting a loan into a grant – if, during the loan period, the program increases its star-level.

While most states do not link practitioner scholarships (such as T.E.A.C.H.) or wage supplements (such as W.A.G.E.S) to QRIS, a few have taken this approach. When awarding T.E.A.C.H. scholarships, Pennsylvania gives priority to staff working in programs that participate in Keystone STARS. Pennsylvania has also developed separate Retention Award grants to programs, linked to STARS participation, to supplement wages. Oklahoma targets supports from its Scholars for Excellence initiative and R.E.W.A.R.D wage initiative to staff in programs with ratings above the one-star level.

It is possible to link almost any funding stream to QRIS participation. For example, Colorado has offered special School-Readiness grants to EC&E programs that participate in QRIS and are located in poor performing school districts. The premise is that these EC&E programs are 'feeders' for the school districts and improving the quality of early care and education will help prepare children for school. North Carolina has negotiated an agreement with the State Department of Education to require that public and private programs participating in the state's More At Four pre-kindergarten program must also participate in QRIS. Oklahoma has been able to secure additional private funding from a local Success By 6 effort for programs that participate in QRIS. In short, funding possibilities are broad and varied. If a wide range of public and private funding sources view the QRIS as a framework for common standards, any funding stream could be linked to QRIS. Thus, financing should be viewed strategically and considered when developing the QRIS *standards* so that existing funding entities regard QRIS as reinforcing their goals, and when planning *outreach* (so that many funding partners are engaged).

Recommendations for Alaska

There are many ways that Alaska can strategically structure financial incentives for QRIS. The first step is to identify all of the public and private EC&E funding streams available in Alaska and then consider how to link these dollars, as well as the accountability standards used by these entities, to the proposed QRIS. Some examples follow, but this list is not exhaustive:

- Restructure the Child Care Grant program to align with QRIS levels. Currently, grants can range from \$30 to \$50 per child per month. The QRIS Advisory Committee believes a range from \$30 to \$65, matched to QRIS levels, would provide adequate financial incentives. The Child Care Grant program is currently available only to licensed child care homes and centers; for purposes of supporting the QRIS it will need to be expanded to include preschools, Head Start and military centers.
- Restructure the proposed Enhanced Rates to align with QRIS levels.
- Reinstate the Child Care Facility Revolving Loan Fund and align it with the QRIS levels by incorporating loan forgiveness based on achieving higher ratings. The Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development is authorized in statute to operate a child care facility revolving loan fund.
- Consider reinventing the small grant programs (targeted to purchase of equipment and supplies) administered by the CCR&R agencies to align with and support QRIS.

- Consider establishing a wage enhancement grants program linked to the QRIS. The former ROOTS initiative could be revised, expanded and linked to QRIS. The ROOTS awards were relatively modest (several hundred dollars).
- Reach out to the Head Start Regional Office, to talk about the proposed QRIS and how it will enhance compliance with Head Start program performance standards and request that the Regional Office encourage Alaska Head Start programs to participate.
- Reach out to the local Department of Defense Child Care staff, to talk about the proposed QRIS and how it will enhance compliance with DOD standards and request that they encourage or require EC&E programs that receive DOD funding to participate.
- Reach out to the Tribal child care agencies, to talk about the proposed QRIS and how it will enhance Tribal child care, and request that they encourage Tribal child care providers to participate.
- Explore ways to secure additional funds for SEED and to link other funding from the Department of Education and Early Development to EC&E programs that participate in QRIS.
- Even though the state does not tax income, Alaska has had a child care tax credit in the past, which could be revived and linked to the QRIS.
- Reach out to private sector funders such as United Way and private philanthropy to explore the extent to which they could encourage the programs they fund to participate in QRIS.

Promoting Consumer Engagement

Ensuring that consumers understand and rely on the QRIS is crucial to success. Early childhood programs and practitioners must also be engaged in the system and believe that active participation is in their interest. And funders must value QRIS and understand the power it holds as a universal accountability tool. These goals are mutually reinforcing. When practitioners see that consumers and funders take quality rating seriously, they will begin to participate more actively in quality improvement. Maine's experience linking their state Dependent Care Tax Credit to quality is a case in point. When tax forms were distributed explaining the new, increased tax credit for quality child care, tax preparers asked parents if they used a quality provider. Parents began calling their child care providers with a new question: *do you have a quality certificate?* Providers who were not familiar with the program began calling the Regional Child Care Development Centers seeking information. Enrollment in accreditation facilitation projects and professional development efforts increased dramatically. The system began to change because a new incentive had been created, an incentive that had clear benefits for consumers and practitioners.

Most states with QRIS have made investments in outreach and awareness campaigns. However, they caution that it is advisable to delay these efforts until a significant percentage of providers are participating in the effort; 40-50% appears to be the tipping point. The most common form of outreach is the web. Nearly all states with a statewide QRIS post rating information on the web, and some – such as Colorado – have very sophisticated web-enabled tools that allow consumers to understand program ratings in detail. Most states also work in partnership with the CCR&R network

to ensure that quality data is included in referrals. Quite a few states (including Colorado, Montana, Oklahoma, Vermont and Tennessee) contracted with a private sector entity to prepare outreach materials such as brochures, posters, billboards, window decals, banners, certificates and pins for providers, TV and radio public service announcements, and other outreach materials.

Tennessee aggressively markets their QRIS to the media. This includes offering interviews, sample Letters to the Editor, and regular information updates. Every television outlet in the state's four urban areas now runs weekly 'Star Results' that list the ratings of each early childhood program evaluated that week and what the rating means in lay language (e.g. OK, Good, Better, Top Score.) Additionally, a 'Do Your Own Press Release' kit is given to programs, who can fill in the blanks and send the release to local media outlets to announce their star rating.

Recommendations for Alaska

Alaska currently has a number of natural opportunities for promoting consumer engagement in QRIS. These include the following:

- Ensure that QRIS information is available on the web in a user-friendly format.
- Work with the Alaska One consortium of public broadcasting stations to develop and distribute information on QRIS.
- Reach out to statewide newspapers and business journals to develop and distribute information on QRIS.
- Require that all CCR&R agencies include program ratings when they give parent referrals as well as in their web-enabled search functions.
- Ensure the all licensing staff has information about the QRIS and are prepared to communicate it to providers.
- Reach out to the business community and private funders to support the development of a package of QRIS outreach materials for consumers, practitioners and funders.
- Distribute information on QRIS to pediatricians, health clinics, schools, community centers, tribes and other public and private access points.
- Seek ways to link information on QRIS to existing information that is sent to all state taxpayers or consumers. For example, find out if the power company would be willing to insert a flyer on QRIS in all electric bills; and whether schools would distribute information on QRIS to prospective parents; and whether a notice about QRIS could be included in the state's annual oil revenue distribution check.

Policy Development

Establishing a statewide QRIS can be a powerful tool for system development. In addition to providing a consistent and clear focus on pursuing excellence in early care and education, a QRIS can be used to begin the process of aligning the funds, policies and procedures that govern existing early care and education sub-systems. This not only helps to build a cohesive system, it is also a way to maximize and track all existing funds and resources, as well as bring new funds into the system.

Guiding QRIS development, and using it as the linchpin for system reform, will require on-going engagement from a host of individuals. It is advisable to create a governance strategy that includes staff and advisors to establish and periodically review QRIS standards; build and maintain formal links to other systems/sectors; ensure buy-in from programs and practitioners; analyze data and make decisions regarding goals/targets; review and revise technical assistance strategies; and so forth.

Recommendations for Alaska

There are a number of ways that Alaska can ensure that QRIS helps to promote system reform and EC&E policy alignment. These include the following:

- Determine which department of state government will have overall responsibility for policy development and oversight of the QRIS.
- Create a QRIS Advisory Committee that is comprised of public and private stakeholders to provide oversight and direction for the QRIS. The current QRIS Advisory Committee can serve in this capacity. Initially the role of this body will be to offer advice and support for the outreach phase and field-test of QRIS. As implementation occurs, the advisory body will shift its focus to the whole system and ensuring that all the elements are in place, e.g. financial incentives, capacity for program consultation and professional development.
- Develop a plan for ongoing regular evaluation of the QRIS process and outcomes. This might be done at three year intervals to provide data to periodically revise policies, procedures, incentives, support, outreach and standards.
- Prepare a briefing packet and presentation on QRIS suitable for multiple audiences.
- Use the briefing packet and presentation on QRIS to provide periodic updates on progress, results and funding needs to the Governor, Commissioners, Legislature, and other interested stakeholders such as private sector funders.

Estimating the Cost of Alaska's QRIS

Quality rating systems have five major elements: program standards, accountability and monitoring, program and practitioner supports, financial incentives related to quality levels, and outreach to consumers. A set of Excel spreadsheets has been developed based on the parameters of the proposed Alaska QRIS (see attached file).

The Cost of Implementation

This section describes each element of the QRIS and explains the assumptions and methodology used to estimate the cost. The dollar figures included below represent only one cost-estimate scenario; Attachment F displays the summary of this scenario. The accompanying Excel file⁴ contains the flexible model that can be used to produce many different scenarios. Once a new

⁴ The Excel workbooks for both QRIS implementation and the field test are in separate electronic files that are available from the Alaska Humanities Forum.

scenario(s) is agreed upon, this written description, if desired, can be updated using those dollar figures.

Participation rates

Based on experience in the Alaska Child Care Grant program, we assume that likely participation rates in the QRIS will be at least as high. Currently, 85% of licensed centers and 55% of family child care homes participate in the grants program. As of December 27, 2007, fifteen center-based programs in Alaska are accredited by NAEYC and 12 family child care homes are accredited by NAFCC; this is 4% and 2% respectively of the total of all centers and homes. Additionally, about 30% of all centers receive funding from Head Start or Early Head Start and therefore are assumed to be meeting performance standards. Using these facts, we estimate that the majority of programs in the QRIS initially will be at levels 1 and 2 (65%) and that 35% will be at levels 3 through 5.

Quality assurance monitoring

There are two parts to quality assurance monitoring: on-site observations and review of applications. On-site observations will be conducted only for programs at levels 3-5; half of the classrooms will be observed and all homes will be observed. Based on information from other states, from the authors of the ERS and from the company that manages electronic scoring for all of the ERS tools (Branagh Systems), a trained observer working full-time can complete about 130 on-site assessments per year. To estimate the cost for trained observers, we use Alaska data for a comparable occupation (social scientist) from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Benefits and overhead are estimated to equal 50% of salary; supervision is at a ratio of 1:10 (one supervisor for ten assessors). The Branagh system for ERS is an interactive data storage and management system that allows for calculating scores (overall and subscales), inter-rater reliability overall and on specific questions and subscales, and can be customized to include other tools. The cost for the annual license is \$6,500 per assessor using the system. Taking the expected participation of programs at levels 3-5, we calculate the annual cost of onsite assessment is \$238,244.

The cost for reviewing applications and assigning quality ratings is based on the combination of two occupations: a compliance officer and a human resources assistant. The average is used and again benefits and overhead are 50% of salary and supervision is 1:10. It is reasonable for one QRIS reviewer to completely process eight applications per week, taking account of necessary follow-up confirmation, missing documents, etc. Taking the expected participation of programs, we calculate the annual cost for application review and processing will be \$82,648.

A one-time expense is necessary for initial training of assessors in the ERS and the Branagh system and the hardware for electronic scoring. ERS training is estimated based on this cost in the Quality Enrichment Project. Branagh training is \$1,050 per user (assessor and supervisors); hardware is either a tablet or notebook for which the average cost is \$2,850. The initial training and hardware will cost \$43,360.

Professional development

At the top level of the QRIS, the expectation is that teachers or providers will be at SEED Level 5 or above, having an associate's degree in ECE or an AA with 24 credits in Early Childhood Education (ECE)/Child Development (CD) or a BA with 12 credits in ECE/CD. Data from the SEED registry and from Head Start indicates that some proportion of the Alaska workforce may already meet this standard. The cost of increasing qualifications is modeled as the cost of providing full scholarships for tuition at public college rates (on average \$178 per credit) for 30 course credits for the proportion of the workforce that does not meet the SEED Level 5 standard. These costs are spread over 10 years to reflect the time it takes working professionals to complete education and the current capacity of the higher education system. The annual scholarship investment would be \$1,086,715.

Technical assistance and consultation for program improvement

Technical assistance (TA) may need to be provided intensively to programs as they enter the QRIS and less intensively as they advance in quality over time. Some programs will need intensive consultation in the first year and may not need any further help; others may need modest help for several years. The cost of TA is estimated based on averaging the costs of TA in Alaska in the QEP and a rural quality improvement initiative, or about \$6,000 per program or \$3,280,321 per year.

Facility improvements

Some programs' facilities may need renovation to meet the requirements of the QRIS. Rather than attempting to estimate the current status of facilities and the need for renovations, we assume a revolving loan fund could be set up. Based on examples from other states, a reasonable loan fund for Alaska might be about \$500,000. The Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development is authorized in statute to operate a child care facility revolving loan fund. Another alternative, based on experience in other states, is to contract with a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI); this can be a cost-effective way to administer an early care and education loan fund. CDFIs are not only familiar with development costs and procedures, they often have access to additional matching funds and are able to offer technical assistance in facility development, renovation and planning.

Financial incentives

Incentives should reflect and help defray the cost of meeting quality standards (for programs) and the price of tuition (for consumers). Two types of program incentives are planned based on the current child care grants program: one for programs at Levels 1-2 to support improvement and one for programs at Levels 3-5 to support the maintenance of quality achieved. For annual improvement grants for Level 1-2, we assume \$360 per child enrolled (the same as the current child care grants); this amounts on average to \$20,000 per center and \$2,500 per home. For the Level 3-5 grants, the annual amount is \$780 per child; this is about \$44,000 per center and \$5,500 per home. The annual total for program incentives comes to \$9,379,120. Additional incentives such as

instituting a quality rate differential in the subsidy system, as well as links to other funding streams that may be explored in the future are not included in this cost estimate.

Communication

The QRIS plan includes various communication strategies to educate the public and especially consumers on the importance of early childhood education and choosing a rated program. Targeted communication aimed at encouraging early care and education providers to participate in the QRIS is also planned. Based on other states' experience, this is an opportunity for private sector partners to engage e.g., United Way, businesses, private philanthropy and others. We expect that CCR&Rs will list QRIS ratings and/or there will be a central website publicizing them. Communication can involve brochures, buttons, banners, sample media releases, media coverage (earned not paid), etc. The precise cost of these is difficult to estimate. Thus we include a set amount per year (\$100) for communication based on the number of participating programs for a total of \$54,835.

Evaluation

An evaluation will be conducted by a third-party, that is, not those agencies and organizations involved in implementing the QRIS. Evaluation should focus on process (program implementation) in the first years, shifting to measuring outcomes as the system is implemented. A process evaluation can be useful in shaping the QRIS as it unfolds and can lay the foundation for later evaluation of results. By evaluating early implementation and continuing to evaluate as the QRIS goes to scale, mid-course corrections can be made to ensure that the design is effective. However, it is best to wait to begin an outcome evaluation until the QRIS is functioning at optimum levels and children have been able to experience a significant amount of time (years) in well-functioning programs.

To estimate costs for evaluation, we looked at what other states have spent or are spending and also considered "general rules of evaluation cost." The general rule for estimating evaluation costs is about 5% of total program costs. Thus, the cost will be up to 5 percent of each year's total for QRIS costs, excluding the financial incentives, which is \$264,273 for evaluation.

Estimating the cost of the field test

Using the estimates developed for implementation, we can estimate the cost of a field test (see Attachment E). The assumptions and methodology are essentially the same, except that all participants will be assessed using the ERS, not only those at Levels 3-5. The reason for assessing all participating program is to evaluate whether the five levels of the QRIS do in fact distinguish levels of quality as assessed with the ERS. The overall participation rates are reduced to match the sample size for the field test. Assuming that a 10% sample is a reasonable size for a field test, there would be 35 centers and 45 homes involved. These would be a mix of types of centers and both kinds of homes.

The field test can be conducted in several ways. One approach is to limit the field test to the quality assurance aspects of the QRIS, that is the standards and the assessment procedures to assign ratings would be tested but not the technical assistance, professional development, facility fund, financial incentives or communication. With a 10% sample, the cost of this field test would be about \$332,000.

Another approach is to test quality assurance along with technical assistance and professional development, but not other aspects. The technical assistance and professional development would still be limited to the sample of programs in the field test. With a 10% sample, the cost of this expanded field test would be about \$945,000.

If the cost of the field test needs to be reduced, another approach is to reduce the sample size. A 5% sample would include 18 centers and 23 homes. Using a 5% sample would bring the limited field test to about \$228,000 and the expanded field test to \$536,000.

Summary and Next steps

The QRIS proposal presented in this report is a fundamental operational element of the Early Learning System envisioned for Alaska. As the graphic in Attachment G illustrates, Alaska's Early Learning System has two parts: In the Home Parent Support and Out of the Home Early Care and Education System. The second graphic in Attachment H, titled A Standards-Based Early Care and Education System, elaborates the Out of Home part of the system. The standards to which it refers are the program standards described in this report (and included in Attachments B and C), the practitioner standards in the SEED professional development framework and the Early Learning Guidelines. Likewise each of the system elements in the graphic in Attachment H are aligned with an essential function of the QRIS that has been described above. The exception is that financial support to ensure access and parental choice has been added to the graphic, and has not been included in the overall budget. Adequate financial support is critical to allow families access to Alaska's Early Care and Education System. This includes funding child care assistance, Head Start programs, and the start up of new programs where there is an identified need. The QRIS plan presented here operationalizes and unifies Alaska's Early Care and Education System.

Moving forward, a plan for next steps has been created. First, to focus on outreach and communication with stakeholders; second, conduct a field test of the QRIS; third, prepare to implement the QRIS; and finally, implement statewide. The QRIS Advisory Committee is ready to take the next steps. The Advisory Committee is currently creating a briefing on QRIS that can be used with different audiences to introduce the concept and the benefits and explain the proposed QRIS for Alaska. Simultaneously, the committee should begin to raise public and private funds to support the field test and draft the RFP for an evaluator to conduct it. Alaska will soon join the ranks of states with a fully functional statewide QRIS.

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Attachments

Attachment A. QRIS Advisory Committee Members

<i>Member Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Debi Baldwin	RurAL CAP, Child Development Division
Margaret Bauer	Providence Alaska Medical Center, Center for Child Development
Marcey Bish	State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services, Child Care Program Office
Debra Bruneau	RurAL CAP, Head Start
Karen Dewinter	Municipality of Anchorage, Department of Health and Human Services, Child and Adult Care Licensing
Kathy Fitch	Children's Advocates, Resources, and Educational Services (CARES) Resource and Referral
Kathleen Gaard	Camai Early Care and Learning Center
Betsy Harris	Joy Child Development Center
Bonny Headley	University of Alaska Anchorage
Debbie Hopper	Fort Richardson Child and Youth Services
Michele Jaeger	Child Care Connection
Carol Jensen	Municipality of Anchorage, Department of Health and Human Services, Child and Adult Care Licensing
Jean Johnson	Family Child Care
Meghan Johnson	Child Care Connection
Cheryl Keepers	Children's Advocates, Resources, and Educational Services (CARES) Resource and Referral
Sarah Kuenzli	Alaska Region X Head Start, Training and Technical Assistance
Mary Lorence	State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services, Child Care Program Office
Joy Lyon	Association for the Education of Young Children, Southeast Alaska
Nita Madsen	State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services, Child Care Program Office
Kari Martin	Kawerak Tribal Child Care
Lolly Miller	Sheldon Jackson College Child Care Center
Carmen Peralta	Family Child Care
Tiffany Ryan	Alaska Association for the Education of Young Children (Alaska AEYC)
Kalen Saxton	Family Child Care
Paul Sugar	State of Alaska, Department of Education and Early Development, Head Start Collaboration
Candace Winkler	Child Care Connection and System for Early Education Development (SEED)

Leadership and Expertise From

Abbe Hensley Best Beginnings, Executive Director
Melinda Myers Best Beginnings, Senior Manager

Anne Mitchell Early Childhood Policy Research, National QRIS Consultant
Judy Collins National QRIS Consultant
Louise Stoney National QRIS Consultant

**This report was prepared for
the State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services.**



Attachment B. Standards for Center-based Programs

Alaska's Quality Rating and Improvement System for Early Care and Education

(last revised December 26, 2007)

Standards for Center-based Programs

This is a 5-level system with standards in five categories. It is structured as a block system, progressive from one level to the next. Generally the criteria that are progressive within a category are repeated so that the additional requirements for each level are clear.

1. Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Licensed by either the State of Alaska DHSS or Municipality of Anchorage DHHS; or preschool certified by Alaska DEED; or certified by the US Army, US Air Force, or US Coast Guard; or designated as a Federal Head Start Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of an individual staff development plan for all staff annually. • <i>Administrator/Director</i> at SEED Level 3 or above • All <i>Child Care Associate's/Associate Administrator's/Child Development Leaders/Teachers</i> at SEED Level 2 and above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of an individual staff development plan for all staff annually. • <i>Administrator/Director</i> at SEED Level 4 or above and at least 3 college credits in management and/or administration • All <i>Child Care Associate's/Associate Administrator's/Child Development</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of an individual staff development plan for all staff annually. • <i>Administrator/Director</i> at SEED Level 5 or above and at least 6 college credits in management and/or administration • 50% of <i>Child Care Associate's/Associate Administrator's/Child Development</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or other Alaska-approved accreditation bodies including Montessori • 100% staff participation in the SEED Registry <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Head Start program that has achieved 'gold

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All <i>Caregivers/Teacher Assistants</i> at SEED Level 1 or above 	<p><i>Leaders/Teachers</i> at SEED Level 3 and above</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% of <i>Caregivers/Teacher Assistants</i> at SEED Level 2 or above • 25% participation in the SEED Registry 	<p><i>Leaders/Teachers</i> at SEED Level 4 and above</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of <i>Caregivers/Teacher Assistants</i> at SEED Level 3 or above, or • 50% participation in the SEED Registry. 	<p>star' compliance in its most recent triennial review</p> <p>OR</p> <p>a program that meets all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Administrator/Director</i> (or agency approved designee teacher) must be at SEED Level 6 • 100% of <i>Lead Teachers</i> at SEED Level 5 or above • 100% of <i>Teacher Assistants</i> at SEED Level 3 or above • 100% participation in the SEED Registry
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* **SEED Levels:**

- 1 20 hours ECE overview from SEED approved trainer **or** 1-3 ECE college credits
- 2 60 hours ECE from SEED approved trainer **or** 4 ECE college credits
- 3 CDA **or** other national credential SEED approved **or** 13 ECE college credits
- 4 30 ECE college credits **or** CDA plus 12 ECE credits
- 5 AA in ECE **or** AA other plus 24 ECE credits **or** BA other plus 12 ECE at bachelors' level
- 6 BA in ECE **or** BA other plus ECE teacher credential **or** BA other plus 21 ECE at BA/MA level
- 7 masters in ECE or related **or** masters in other plus 21 grad ECE credits **or** ECE endorsement on teaching credential
- 8 doctorate ECE or related field

How assessed? The QRIS application lists each staff member by name and SEED Level; report from SEED Registry is attached as documentation that all staff participates and at what levels. Accreditation is documented by submission of valid certificate and letter from NAEYC. Head Start status is documented with a letter from the regional or federal office of Head Start. Sample staff development plan is attached to application and attestation is made that all staff have such a plan in their file. An example of an implemented plan with documentation is submitted (without staff name)

2. Environment

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<p>Licensed by either the State of Alaska DHSS or Municipality of Anchorage DHHS; or preschool certified by Alaska DEED; or certified by the US Army, US Air Force, or US Coast Guard; or designated as a Federal Head Start Program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program completes a self-assessment of each classroom using the appropriate Environment Rating Scale for the ages of children in the classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program has an ERS assessment completed by a trained impartial assessor of 50% of classrooms (randomly selected and at least one in each age group) The program develops by itself or with a consultant, an improvement plan based on the results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program has an ERS assessment annually completed by a trained impartial assessor of 50% of classrooms (randomly selected and at least one in each age group) The program updates its improvement plan based on the results and can demonstrate progress on at least 3 elements in the improvement plan. The program has ratios for infants of 1:4 in a group of 8 or better, and ratios for toddlers of 1:5 in a group of 10 or better. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program has an ERS assessment annually completed by a trained impartial assessor of 50% of classrooms (randomly selected and at least one in each age group) The average ERS scores are at least 4 in all classrooms. The program updates its improvement plan based on the results and can demonstrate progress on at least 3 elements in the improvement plan. The program has ratios for infants of 1:4 in a group of 8 or better,

			'Better' means lower ratio OR smaller group.	and ratios for toddlers of 1:5 in a group of 10 or better AND all groups have 2 staff AND ratios for preschoolers of 1:9 in a group of 18 or better.
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How assessed? Onsite observation by trained and reliable assessors using the appropriate Environment Rating Scale (ECERS or ITERS); 50% of classrooms are assessed; classrooms are selected randomly and at least one classroom in each age group is observed. Written ERS report from the self-assessment or the outside assessment and written improvement plan with progress report are submitted with the application. Ratios and group size for all classrooms are listed and attested to (at Level 2) and recorded by the ERS assessor and submitted along with the ERS reports (Levels 3-5).

3. Curriculum and Learning

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Licensed by either the State of Alaska DHSS or Municipality of Anchorage DHHS; or preschool certified by Alaska DEED; or certified by the US Army, US Air Force, or US Coast Guard; or designated as a Federal Head Start Program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Written statement of philosophy •Administrator/Director is aware of Alaska Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs) and has at least one copy on site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written curriculum framework, consistent with philosophy, and includes goals and objectives for children's development and learning •Curriculum addresses all domains of learning as defined in the ELGs •Daily schedule includes time for all domains, indoor and outdoor play, small and large 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All classroom and appropriate administrative staff are trained in program's curriculum framework and in ELGs • Classroom curriculum-activity plans are available for at least the last 3 months • the program has a written assessment plan, consistent with program philosophy and aligned 	Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or other Alaska-approved accreditation bodies including Montessori OR A Head Start program that has achieved 'gold star' compliance in its most recent triennial review OR A program that meets all

		<p>group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrator/Director and at least one <i>Child Care Associate/ Associate Administrator/ Child Development Leader/Teacher</i> have completed ELG Implementation training • Each classroom has the summary version of the ELGs 	<p>with curriculum, and the plan addresses purposes for which assessment is used e.g., to individualize curriculum, for program planning and improvement, and to report child progress to families.</p>	<p>of Level 4 plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the program has a written assessment plan, consistent with program philosophy and aligned with curriculum, and the plan addresses purposes for which assessment is used e.g., to individualize curriculum, for program planning and improvement, and to report child progress to families. • The plan is implemented.
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How assessed? The QRIS application will ask for copies of the written statements and/or plans, daily schedule, samples of classroom plans and evidence of training/coursework in ELGs.

4. Leadership and Management

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<p>Licensed by either the State of Alaska DHSS or Municipality of Anchorage DHHS; or preschool certified by Alaska DEED; or</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A system of financial record keeping for revenue and expenses is developed. • At least 2 of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have written financial policies and procedures in place • At least 3 benefits are offered (from the list in level 2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of level 3 plus: • The operating budget is prepared annually and at least quarterly reports of income and expense compared to budget are 	<p>Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or other Alaska-approved accreditation bodies</p>

<p>certified by the US Army, US Air Force, or US Coast Guard; or designated as a Federal Head Start Program.</p>	<p>following benefits are offered to all staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Paid professional associations membership b. Paid leave (sick, vacation, personal, family or bereavement) c. Paid holidays d. Insurance (health, life, dental, vision, fully or partially paid) e. Paid release time for professional development. f. Retirement <p>Benefits are offered to all staff and may be pro-rated for part-time staff.</p> <p>The program provides at least one means of communication among staff and between staff and management., e.g., bulletin board, suggestion box</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The program provides several means of communication among staff and between staff and management including: •Staff meetings are held at least quarterly. •Staff participates in developing agendas for regularly held staff meetings. •A written annual performance appraisal is conducted by supervisor for all teaching staff using objective criteria. 	<p>approved by board/owner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Written personnel policies include salary scale that rewards educational attainment related to SEED levels •At least 4 benefits are offered (from the list in level 2) • Administrator/Director is a member of a professional Early Childhood organization • A written annual performance appraisal is conducted for all staff, matched to job descriptions, and uses multiple sources of evidence including direct observation. 	<p>including Montessori</p> <p>OR</p> <p>A Head Start program that has achieved 'gold star' compliance in its most recent triennial review</p> <p>OR</p> <p>A program that meets all of Level 4 plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offers at least 5 benefits (from the list in level 2) • A cooperative system of ongoing feedback on performance for teaching staff is implemented.
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How assessed? The QRIS application will ask for copies of documents referred to in this category and evidence of staff meetings and agendas.

5. Family Engagement

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Licensed by either the State of Alaska DHSS or Municipality of Anchorage DHHS; or preschool certified by Alaska DEED; or certified by the US Army, US Air Force, or US Coast Guard; or designated as a Federal Head Start Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Written plan for ongoing communication with families is included in the parent handbook •Provider communicates with parents in conversation or writing, daily for babies and at least weekly for older children •At least 1 of the following is offered: regular parent newsletter, additional parent-teacher conferences, daily report of activities, family social gatherings, educational events on topics chosen by families, opportunity to be on governing board or other policymaking body, community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Parent-teacher conferences to review child progress and set goals are offered at least twice per year •All staff has knowledge of community resources to be able to make appropriate referrals •At least 3 of the following are offered: regular parent newsletter, additional parent-teacher conferences, daily report of activities, family social gatherings, educational events on topics chosen by families, opportunity to be on governing board or other policymaking body, community resource handbook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Parent-teacher conferences to review child progress and set goals are offered at least twice per year and 85% of families participate •All staff is able to make appropriate referrals and the program has written information about community resources. •Families have annual opportunity to evaluate the program (e.g., via a survey). •At least 5 of the following are offered: regular parent newsletter, additional parent-teacher conferences, daily report of activities, family social gatherings, educational events on 	<p>Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or other Alaska-approved accreditation bodies including Montessori</p> <p>OR</p> <p>A Head Start program that has achieved 'gold star' compliance in its most recent triennial review</p> <p>OR</p> <p>A program that meets all of Level 4 plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has completed the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment • and developed a plan to improve family engagement based on it.

	resource handbook		topics chosen by families, opportunity to be on governing board or other policymaking body, community resource handbook	
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How assessed? The QRIS application will request copies of handbooks and recent examples of other documents, e.g., report of survey results.

Attachment C. Standards for Home-based Programs

Alaska's Quality Rating and Improvement System for Early Care and Education

(last revised December 26, 2007)

Standards for Home-based Programs

This is a 5-level system with standards in five categories. It is structured as a block system, progressive from one level to the next. Generally the criteria that are progressive within a category are repeated so that the additional requirements for each level are clear.

1. Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Licensed by either the State of Alaska DHSS, Municipality of Anchorage DHHS; or certified by the US Army, US Coast Guard or US Air Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provider is at SEED Level 1 or above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provider is at SEED Level 2 or above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provider is at SEED Level 3 or above 	Accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) AND provider is at SEED Level 5 or above

How assessed? The QRIS application lists the provider's (and any staff) by name and SEED Level; report from SEED Registry is attached as documentation of SEED levels. Accreditation is documented by submission of valid certificate and letter from NAFCC

* SEED Levels:

- 1 20 hours ECE overview from SEED approved trainer **or** 1-3 ECE college credits
- 2 60 hours ECE from SEED approved trainer **or** 4 ECE college credits
- 3 CDA **or** other national credential SEED approved **or** 13 ECE college credits

- 4 30 ECE college credits **or** CDA plus 12 ECE credits
- 5 AA in ECE **or** AA other plus 24 ECE credits **or** BA other plus 12 ECE at bachelors' level
- 6 BA in ECE **or** BA other plus ECE teacher credential **or** BA other plus 21 ECE at BA/MA level
- 7 masters in ECE or related **or** masters in other plus 21 grad ECE credits **or** ECE endorsement on teaching credential
- 8 doctorate ECE or related field

2. Environment

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Licensed by either the State of Alaska DHSS, Municipality of Anchorage DHHS; or certified by the US Army, US Coast Guard or US Air Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider does a self-assessment using the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider has an assessment using the FCCERS completed by a trained impartial and reliable assessor • Provider develops, by herself or with a consultant, an improvement plan based on the results 	All of level 3 plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider can demonstrate progress on at least 3 elements in the improvement plan. 	Accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)

How assessed? Onsite observation by trained and reliable assessors using the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS), revised. Written FCCERS report from the self-assessment or the outside assessment and written improvement plan with progress report are submitted.

3. Curriculum and Learning

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Licensed by either the State of Alaska DHSS, Municipality of Anchorage DHHS; or certified by the US Army, US Coast Guard or US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written daily schedule is available • Space arranged with at least 2 learning centers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily activity plans are available for at least the last 3 months. • Provider reads to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily schedule is posted and daily activity plans are available for at least the last 3 months. 	Accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) AND provider has completed

Air Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen time (TV, video, computer) is limited to an hour or less per day and alternatives are always available 	<p>children at least 20 minutes per day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider observes and periodically documents children's development and uses the information to respond to them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider uses information on children's development to plan and implement activities and curriculum choices • Provider is aware of the Alaska ELGs and has a copy 	training on the Alaska ELGs
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How assessed? The QRIS application will ask for copies of the written statements and/or plans, daily schedule, and evidence of training/coursework in ELGs.

4. Leadership and Management

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Licensed by either the State of Alaska DHSS, Municipality of Anchorage DHHS; or certified by the US Army, US Coast Guard or US Air Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A system of financial record keeping for revenue and expenses is developed. • Provider has written policies on persons authorized to pick up child, and a written emergency plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider has a written contract with each family that specifies hours, fees, vacation and sickness policies (both provider's and child's), and termination policy • Provider has written policies (in addition those in level 2) on guidance and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider has an annual budget for the program • If staff (other than family members) is employed, they are paid at least the minimum wage. • Provider is a member of a state or national professional organization 	Accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)

		<p>discipline, parent conferences and parent visiting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider has insurance coverage (accident for children and any staff and liability) and vehicle if children are transported. • Facility participates in the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program 		
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How assessed? The QRIS application will ask for copies of documents referred to in this category.

5. Family Engagement

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Licensed by either the State of Alaska DHSS, Municipality of Anchorage DHHS; or certified by the US Army, US Coast Guard or US Air Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written plan for ongoing communication with families is included in the parent handbook • Provider communicates with parents in conversation or writing, daily for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent–teacher conferences to review child progress and set goals are offered at least twice per year • Provider has knowledge of community resources to be able to make appropriate referrals • At least 3 of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent–teacher conferences to review child progress and set goals are offered at least twice per year and 85% of families participate • Families have annual opportunity to evaluate the program (survey). 	Accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)

	<p>babies and at least weekly for older children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 1 of the following is offered: regular parent newsletter, additional parent-teacher conferences, daily report of activities, family social gatherings, educational events on topics chosen by families, opportunity to be on governing board or other policymaking body, community resource handbook 	<p>following are offered: regular parent newsletter, additional parent-teacher conferences, daily report of activities, family social gatherings, educational events on topics chosen by families, opportunity to be on governing board or other policymaking body, community resource handbook</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 5 of the following are offered: regular parent newsletter, additional parent-teacher conferences, daily report of activities, family social gatherings, educational events on topics chosen by families, opportunity to be on governing board or other policymaking body, community resource handbook 	
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How assessed? The QRIS application will request recent documents (copy of written communication) and attestation that the activities occur.

Attachment D. Financial Incentives in State's QRIS

Comparison of Financial Incentives in State's Quality Rating and Improvement Systems December 2006

Kristen Kerr and Anne Mitchell, *Early Childhood Policy Research*

The information in this table was collected in November and December 2006 from publicly available information on websites.

	Colorado Qualistar Rating System (2000)	District of Columbia Going for the Gold (2000)	Iowa Child Care Rating System (2006)
Structure	4 Levels – point system	3 Levels – Bronze, Silver and Gold	5 Levels – block and points
Participation Rate	16%	unknown	New system
QRS Website	Qualistar Rating System http://www.qualistar.org	Going for the Gold Web site not available	Iowa Child Care Quality Rating System http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/iqrs/
Quality Grants, Bonuses, and Awards	<p>School Readiness Grant - In 2002, Colorado established a school readiness child care subsidization program (HB 1297) that used private funds (from Qualistar) to match federal child care funds. The three-year initiative made grants available to child care centers that feed into low performing public schools. To receive funding the centers were required to obtain a quality rating and show improvement within 18 months (Stoney, 2004, p. 24).</p> <p>In school readiness sites, local organizations receive funds for one-time awards of up to \$3,000 per classroom for program improvements. Up to \$1,000 per classroom is reserved for conducting assessments for the rating (Paula Neth, private communication, December 5, 2006).</p>	None	<p>Achievement Bonus - The amount of the bonus is determined by the size of the program and the quality level achieved. Achievement bonuses are paid each time a rating is re-determined or renewed. A quality rating level is in effect for two years. Award amounts for child development (regulated family child care) homes range from \$400 at Level 2 to \$1,000 at Level 5. Awards for licensed child care centers range from \$400 at Level 2 for programs serving up to 25 children to \$4,000 for programs at Level 5 serving more than 100 children.</p> <p>The Web site is available at http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/iqrs/faqs/index.html</p>

Tiered Subsidy Reimbursements	Yes, county option – no information available on the web	Yes – no information available on the web	None
Loans Linked to Quality Rating Systems	None	None	None
Scholarships	T.E.A.C.H. – Eligibility for Colorado's T.E.A.C.H. program does not appear to be tied to programs participation in QRS.	None	T.E.A.C.H. – Information on Iowa's T.E.A.C.H. program is not available on the web.
Wage Supplements	None	None	None

	Kentucky Stars for Kids (2001)	Maryland Child Care Tiered Reimbursement Program (2001)	Montana Star Quality Rating System (2002)
Structure	4 Levels	4 Levels – Level 1, Bronze, Silver & Gold	3 Levels – Star 1 & 2, Accreditation
Participation Rate	30%	unknown	unknown
QRS Website	STARS for KIDS Child Care Quality Rating System http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Early+Childhood+Development/STARS+-+The+Childcare+Quality+Rating+System.htm	Maryland Child Care Tiered Reimbursement Program http://63.236.98.116/cca/creden/tiered.htm	Star Quality Rating System http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/programsservices/starqualitychildcare.shtml
Quality Grants, Bonuses, and Awards	The Participation/Star Achievement Award is a one-time cash award upon reaching each star level. These awards are available to all participating programs, not just those that serve children receiving child care subsidies. For Star 1 the award is \$200 for centers and \$100 for homes. At levels 2–4, the size of the award is based on the enrollment size of centers and star level, ranging from \$500 (Star 2 with less than 50 children) to \$5,000 (Star 4 with more than 100 children). Family child care awards range from \$250 for Star 2 to \$1,000 for Star 4.	None	Montana has two on-going quality grant programs—mini grants and large provider grants—that are linked to participation in the QRS or other quality improvement efforts such as professional development. Mini-grants are between \$1,000 and \$1,500 per year. Large Provider Grants can be up to \$15,000 a year for up to three years (Stoney, 2004, p. 24). Additional information is available on Montana's Child Care Resource and Referral Network Web site at http://www.montanachildcare.com/provider_grants.htm
Tiered Subsidy Reimbursements	Star Quality Incentive Awards - an annual award paid quarterly to star level 2, 3 and 4 programs serving subsidized children. Reimbursement rates for child care centers depend on the percentage of subsidized children being served, the child's age and the star level of the program. For centers, the additional per child subsidy for children under age ranges from \$8.00 per subsidized child per month for a star 2 center serving 1-10% subsidized children to \$17.00 per subsidized child per month for a star 4 center serving 76% or more subsidized children.	Participation in the Tiered Reimbursement program is voluntary and programs at Level 2 or higher are paid a higher reimbursement for Purchase of Care Vouchers. The additional amounts are based on the level achieved (Bronze, Silver, Gold) and the child's subsidy level for the Purchase of Care program. Specific information about the amount of the differential payment is not available on web. Information about the Tiered Reimbursement program is available on the Maryland Department of Education, Division of Early	In Montana's system, according to the State Child Care and Development Plan for FY 2006-2007, reimbursement rates for a 1- star facility are increased by 10% above the base rate; and 15% for a 2–star facility. Section 3.2 Payment rates http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/publications/childcarestateplan.pdf

	Centers that are nationally accredited (NAEYC, NAA, NAECP) receive an additional \$2 per subsidized child per day (\$40+ per month). For family child care homes, the amount of the subsidy depends on the program's star level. For a child under age three, a star 2 family child care home would receive \$10.00/month and a star 4 would receive \$15.00/month.	Childhood Development, Office of Child Care Web site at http://63.236.98.116/cca/creden/tiered.htm Information about subsidy rates is at http://www.mdchildcare.org/mdcfc/for_providers/cc_reimb.html	
Loans Linked to Quality Rating Systems	None	None	None
Scholarships	None	None	None
Wage Supplements	None	Achievement Bonuses – To be eligible for an achievement bonus for professional development, an individual must: apply, be accepted, participate in the credential program for a least one year, and complete continued training and professional activities as well as one year of continued employment in a child care facility. A one-time bonus, at each credential level, is paid directly to the participating individual upon completion of all requirements. The bonus amounts are: Credential Level Two - \$200 Credential Level Three - \$300 Credential Level Four - \$500 Credential Level Five - \$750 Credential Level Six - \$1,000	None

	New Hampshire Licensed Plus (2006)	New Mexico Look for the Stars (2005)	North Carolina NC Star Rated License (1999)
Structure	3 Levels – Licensed, Licensed Plus and Nationally Accredited	5 Levels – Star 1 to 5	5 Levels – Star 1 to 5
Participation Rate	Participation increased from 1 to 60 Licensed+ providers in first 6 months.	unknown	100% since Star 1 equals licensed; 73% are above Star 1 according to a recent statistical report at http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/pdf_forms/august_2006_Statistical_Report.pdf
QRS Website	Licensed Plus http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/CDB/license_dplus.htm	Look for the Stars http://www.newmexicokids.org/caregivers	North Carolina Star Rated License http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/parents/prsn2_ov_sr.asp
Quality Grants, Bonuses, and Awards	None	None	<p>Local Partnerships for Children (Smart Start) may offer grants for quality improvement.</p> <p>To support the move from the 3 component rating system to the 2 component rating system (licensing compliance was omitted beginning 1/1/06), North Carolina is offering Rated License Transition Grants for two years (2006 and 2007).</p> <p>The goal is to help child care programs that have achieved 3 Stars or above in the current rated-license system to transition to the new two-component system by providing financial support to help providers to maintain the education of their staff and the quality of their child care settings.</p> <p>Quarterly payments are based on (1) the number of points earned by the program for education and program and (2) the number of children enrolled in a program. The maximum payment amount is \$3,000.00 per quarter. Amounts range from \$7.50 per child per quarter for a program with 5</p>

	New Hampshire Licensed Plus (2006)	New Mexico Look for the Stars (2005)	North Carolina NC Star Rated License (1999)
			points to \$20 per child per quarter for a program with 10 points. Rated License Transition Grants http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/pdf_forms/transition_grants.pdf
Tiered Subsidy Reimbursements	<p>Programs that participate and are certified to serve children in protective and preventive care are eligible for cash rewards. http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/CDB/license_dplus.htm</p> <p>National accreditations accepted are NAEYC, NAA or NAFCC.</p> <p>Recognition awards for participation are \$250 (homes) and \$500 (centers). In addition, Licensed Plus programs receive an annual payment equal to 5% of total subsidy payments for the previous year. Nationally accredited programs receive an annual payment equal to 10% of total subsidy payments for the previous year.</p>	<p>NM's tiered reimbursement rates are based on the star level achieved by the program. The differential per month per subsidized child increases in \$25.00 increments. The range is from \$25.00 for a 2-Star program to \$100.00 for a 5-Star (nationally accredited) program.</p> <p>Regulations are available at: http://www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/nmac/parts/title08/08.015.002.htm</p>	<p>Tiered reimbursement rates are determined for each star level and vary by county. The web links below provide details on the rates by county and star level. For example, according to the market rates effective 4/1/03 the subsidized rate for an infant in Robeson County in a one star center is \$289/month as compared to \$614/month in a five star center (increase is \$325/month). In Wake County, the rate for an infant in a one star center is \$592/month and in a five star center is \$847/month center (increase is \$255/month).</p> <p>Division of Child Development Subsidized Child Care Market Rates for Child Care Centers http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/pdf_forms/Center_Market_Rates.pdf</p> <p>Division of Child Development Subsidized Child Care Market Rates for Family Child Care Homes http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/pdf_forms/child_care_home_market_rates.pdf</p>
Loans Linked to Quality Rating Systems	None	None	Early childhood programs in North Carolina can access special loans to assist with needed repairs. These loans are linked to the quality rating system. Programs that improve their star

	New Hampshire Licensed Plus (2006)	New Mexico Look for the Stars (2005)	North Carolina NC Star Rated License (1999)
			rating during the loan term may have all or part of the loan converted to a grant, depending on the degree of quality improvement in the star system.

	New Hampshire Licensed Plus	New Mexico Look for the Stars	North Carolina NC Star Rated License
Scholarships	None	T.E.A.C.H – Information on NM's T.E.A.C.H. program is not available on the web.	T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project offers scholarships, health insurance and salary supplements to child care workers. Information about T.E.A.C.H. in North Carolina (the founding State) is available on the Web at http://www.childcareservices.org/ps/teach.html .
Wage Supplements	None	None	WAGE\$ - Salary supplements are tied to the education level of the recipient, the position the recipient holds in her/his program and the "Tier" level chosen by each participating county. (Counties choose which of 3 tiers of financial support they will provide.) For example, a teacher or family child care provider is eligible for a \$450 or \$600 annual supplement for having attained the Early Childhood Certificate. The award is \$1,500 or \$2,000 more per year for an AAS in Early Childhood Education. Directors are funded on a different scale than teachers and home providers. In all Tiers, the amount of the supplement increases as the level of education increases. Supplements for part-time employees are prorated based on a 40 hour work week Information available at: http://www.childcareservices.org/ps/wage.html

	Oklahoma Reaching for the Stars (1998)	Pennsylvania Keystone Stars (2002)	Tennessee Child Care Evaluation and Report Card Program & Star-Quality Child Care Program (2001)
Structure	4 Levels – 1 Star, 1 Star Plus, 2 Star, 3 Star	4 Levels – 1 Star to 4 Stars	4 Levels – Licensing, 1 Star to 3 Stars
Participation Rate	53% at 1 Star Plus or above	70% of centers; 30% of family child care homes	100% in Report Card; unknown for Star Quality
QRS Website	Reaching for the Stars http://www.okdhs.org/divisionoffices/visd/dcc/	Keystone STARS http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/child/childcare/KeystoneStarChildCare	Star-Quality Child Care Program http://www.tnstarquality.org
Quality Grants, Bonuses, and Awards		<p>Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS offers 2 grant programs. The award amounts are based on the type of program, size of program, and percentage of subsidized children.</p> <p>STARS Support Awards are for programs that are beginning to participate in the QRS, and are at the Start with Stars and Star 1 levels. Start with Stars is a one time award; amounts range from \$300 for a family day care home serving one subsidized child to \$5,000 for a very large center (more than 181 children) with at least 33% subsidy enrollment. Programs that attain a Star 1 rating are eligible for a Support Awards twice; amounts range from \$420 for a family day care home serving one subsidized child to \$7,000 for a very large center (more than 181 children) with at least 33% subsidy enrollment.</p> <p>Annual STARS Merit Awards are for programs with 2–4 stars. At the Star 2 level awards are available to programs three times and the awards range from \$675 for a family day care home serving one subsidized child to \$21,600 for a very large center (more than 181 children) with at least 33% subsidy enrollment. Awards at the Star 3 and 4 levels are awarded on an on-going basis and range from \$1,050</p>	None

		<p>for a Star 3 family child care home to \$45,600 for a very large Star 4 center.</p> <p>Information about STARS financial support is available on the Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality Web site at http://www.pakeys.org/stars/FinancialSupports.aspx</p>	
Tiered Subsidy Reimbursements	<p>Oklahoma's reimbursement rates are determined by star status, setting and the child's age. For example, the full time daily reimbursement rate for an infant (0-12 months) in a one star center is \$15/day and increases to \$28/day for a three star center. The age breakdown is different in a family child care home. For an infant (0-24 months) in a one star family child care home the full time daily rate is \$18 and increases to \$24 for a three star child care home.</p> <p>Child Care Eligibility/Rates Schedule http://www.okdhs.org/NR/rdonlyres/6C1E2B9A-A97A-45E3-BF42-7E0BB6360209/0/OKDHS_ApC4.pdf</p>	None	<p>Programs that participate in the Star-Quality Child Care program receive reimbursements based on the level achieved. Programs that have achieved one-star overall rating receive a reimbursement rate bonus that is 5% above the base, two-star programs receive a 10% bonus and three-star programs receive 20% above the base. The state rate ceiling for full-time infants is \$110/week. The 20% bonus increases the payment to \$132/week.</p> <p>http://www.tnstarquality.org/html/star-quality.htm</p> <p>FY 05-06 Reimbursement Rates (see page 71) http://tennessee.gov/humanserv/adfam/06-07-State-Plan-6.21.05_4.pdf</p>
Loans Linked to Quality Rating Systems	None	None	None

	Oklahoma Reaching for the Stars	Pennsylvania Keystone Stars	Tennessee Child Care Evaluation and Report Card Program & Star-Quality Child Care Program
Scholarships	<p>The Scholars for Excellence initiative provides scholarships to individuals to help pay for tuition and books; Scholar Coordinators in each community college publicize the program and assist students to participate (Mitchell, 2005, p. 42). To qualify for the Scholars for Excellence in Child Care program, an individual must work in a program rated one-star plus or above at time of application. Scholars for Excellence in Child Care program applicants must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in a one-star plus or above DHS- or tribal-licensed child care facility with a minimum of 10 percent subsidy children at time of application • Work at least 30 hours per week as follows: Teachers: with children Family child care providers: paid to care for children other than their own Directors: performing administrative duties and/or working with children • Be employed at a child care facility at least three months before beginning coursework. <p>Additional information about the Scholars for Excellence in Child Care program is available on the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education Web at http://www.okhighered.org/secc/</p>	<p>T.E.A.C.H. PENNSYLVANIA gives priority to practitioners who work in programs at a two-star or higher level.</p> <p>T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® PENNSYLVANIA is administered by the Pennsylvania Child Care Association (PACCA). Additional information is available on the Web at http://www.pacca.org/TEACH/</p>	None

	Oklahoma Reaching for the Stars	Pennsylvania Keystone Stars	Tennessee Child Care Evaluation and Report Card Program & Star-Quality Child Care Program
Wage Supplements	<p><i>R.E.W.A.R.D.TM Oklahoma</i> provides education-based salary supplements to practitioners based on their qualifications. This program is not directly tied to Oklahoma's QRS but these supports are targeted to staff in programs with ratings above the One-Star level (Mitchell, 2005, p. 42 and Center for Early Childhood Professional Development Web site). The <i>R.E.W.A.R.D. Oklahoma</i> program is offered Statewide with funding provided by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) Division of Child Care. These Participants in the <i>R.E.W.A.R.D. Oklahoma</i> program may increase their supplement amounts by gaining more education. Maximum annual award is \$2,000. http://www.cccpd.org/Reward/rewardoklahoma_new.html</p>	<p>Education and Retention Awards are available to staff that have worked for a minimum of 12 months in same program. The program must also have a 5% subsidy enrollment. Award amounts are prorated for part time staff. For directors (with a BA in ECE) award amounts range from \$3,000 in Star 2 center to \$4,000 in a Star 4 center. A staff person with a CDA in Star 2 center qualifies for \$750 award and in a Star 4 center a \$1,000 award.</p> <p>This information about STARS financial support is available on the Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality Web site at http://www.pakeys.org/stars/FinancialSupports.aspx</p>	None
Tax Credits	<p>Beginning in tax year 1998, Oklahoma enacted a tax credit for child care businesses that are at least at the Two Star level, working toward accreditation. The credit is equal to 20% of the expense incurred to comply with standards of national I accrediting bodies recognized by Oklahoma's Reach for the Stars. The expenses cannot have been incurred to comply with Oklahoma's child care licensing act. The credit can be carried forward into four subsequent tax years.</p> <p>For more information, see http://www.oscn.net/applications/oscn/DeliverDocument.asp?CiteID=92595 http://www.oktax.state.ok.us/oktax/forms00/</p>		

	511cr00.pdf		
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	Vermont Steps Ahead Recognition System (2003)		
Structure	5 Levels – point system 1 Star to 5 Stars		
Participation Rate	200 participating, approximately 10% of providers		
QRS Website	STep Ahead Recognition System for Child Care Programs (STARS) http://www.STARSstepahead.org		
Quality Grants, Bonuses, and Awards	<p>Quality Incentive Bonus is a one-time financial incentive payment based on the number of stars earned. The incentive payments for programs are in addition to the current Child Development Division (CDD) system of \$1,000 bonuses for accreditation, credentialing, and renewals.</p> <p>The 2005 incentive payments are: One Star - \$250 Two Stars - \$500 Three Stars - \$1,000 Four Stars - \$1,150 Five Stars - \$1,550</p> <p>STARS programs are given preference for facilities grants from the Building Bright Spaces for Bright Futures Facilities Panel.</p> <p>Programs with three or more stars become eligible to receive a Young Explorers computer learning center donated by IBM in support of STARS.</p> <p>Additional information is available under Provider Incentives in the FAQ section of the STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS) Web site at http://www.starsstepahead.org/.</p>		

	Vermont Steps Ahead Recognition System		
Tiered Subsidy Reimbursements	<p>Participants are eligible for increased reimbursement rates through the Vermont Child Care Subsidy program.</p> <p>The 2005 increased reimbursement rates:</p> <p>One Star – 4%</p> <p>Two Stars – 8%</p> <p>Three Stars – 12%</p> <p>Four Stars – 17.5%</p> <p>Five Stars – 20%</p>		
Loans Linked to Quality Rating Systems	None		
Scholarships	None		
Wage Supplements	None		
Tax Credits	<p>Vermont has a refundable child care tax credit and allows taxpayers a higher credit (from 24% to 50% more) if the program meets national accreditation. For more information on the credit and a list of accredited programs, go to</p> <p>http://www.state.vt.us/tax/creditslowincome.shtml</p>		

References

- Mitchell Anne W. (2005). *Stair Steps to Quality: A Guide for State and Communities Developing Quality Rating Systems for Early Care and Education*. Alexandria, VA: United Way of America. Online at http://national.unitedway.org/files/pdf/sb6/StairStepstoQualityGuidebook_FINALforWEB.pdf
- National Child Care Information Center (July 2006). *Financial Incentives in Quality Rating Systems*. Fairfax, VA: National Child Care Information Center Online at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/poptopics/qrs-fi.pdf>

Stoney, Louise (2004). *Financing Quality Rating Systems: Lessons Learned*. Alexandria, VA: United Way of America Success by 6. Online at http://www.earlychildhoodfinance.org/handouts/Louise_Stoney_QRS_Financing_Paper.pdf

Attachment E. Cost Estimate for Field Test

Cost Estimation Tool for Alaska's Quality Rating Improvement System

last revised 1/15/08

to estimate a FIELD TEST phase at a specific dollar amount

For purposes of estimating costs, we include the following elements:

\$92,805	<i>Quality assurance monitoring:</i>	
	\$35,950	1. initial assessor training, materials and hardware
	\$50,788	2. Ongoing on-site program assessment: conduct ERS (in at least 50% of classrooms and all homes) and observe ratios/group sizes in all classrooms
	\$6,067	3. Review of QRIS applications (documents) and designation of level
\$66,492	<i>Professional Development</i>	
\$240,782	<i>Technical Assistance for program improvement</i>	(This will require regulatory and possible statutory changes that could impact when this component is implemented)
\$499,339	<i>Facility improvements fund</i>	
\$651,470	<i>Financial Incentives</i>	
\$4,025	<i>Communication</i>	
\$135,517	<i>Evaluation</i>	\$535,596 without facility fund or financial incentives or communication (with TA, PD)
\$1,690,430	TOTAL	\$228,321 quality assurance and evaluation only

Alaska Facts and Averages

Source of information

Center-based Programs		Field-test Sample
161	= number of licensed centers <i>(226 licensed including tribal; 65 are school-age only. Per Marcey Bish 12/14/2007)</i>	8
60	= number of school-based preschools not licensed or certified <i>(Per Mary Lorence 12/14/2007)</i>	3
10	= number of military centers <i>(Per Marcey Bish 12/19/2007)</i>	1
17	= number of DOE certified preschools <i>(30 total; 13 are licensed. Per Paul Sugar on 12/13/07)</i>	1
104	= number of Head Start/Early Head Start sites <i>(138 sites; 16 licensed; 18 home-based. Per Paul Sugar 12/13/2007)</i>	5
352	= total number of centers	centers = 18
3.5	= average number of classrooms per center <i>(based on average of 4 in centers and Head Start and 1-2 in preschools)</i>	
4	= number of teachers per center	
6	= number of assistants per center	
1	= number of directors per center	

Home-based Programs

373 = number of family child care (FCC) homes (Per Marcey Bish 12/14/2007)
 = number of FCC group
 80 homes (Per Marcey Bish 12/14/2007)
 453 = total number of homes
 1 = number of providers per FCC home
 1 = number of assistants per FCC Group home

Field-test Sample

19
 4
 homes
 = 23

Any cell highlighted in yellow on this page can be changed and the cost estimate will automatically adjust.

CAUTION: These highlighted cells are referenced on the other worksheets in this file, so please change them here NOT on the other worksheets)

Participation variables for field-test

5% = participation rate of centers in QRIS
 5% = participation rate of homes in QRIS

Quality Assurance variables

100% = percent of **centers** Levels 1-2 to be assessed per year
 Note: 100% = once a year; 50% is once every 2 years; 33% is once every three years; 0% is not assessed
 100% = percent of **centers** Levels 3-5 to be assessed per year
 Note: 100% = once a year; 50% is once every 2 years; 33% is once every three years; 0% is not assessed
 50% = percent of **classrooms** per center to be assessed
 Note: 100% = all; 50% and 33.3% mean random sample with at least one I-T and one preschool classroom
 100% = percent of **homes** Levels 1-2 to be assessed per year
 Note: 100% = once a year; 50% is once every 2 years; 33% is once every three years; 0% is not assessed
 100% = percent of **homes** Levels 3-5 to be assessed per year
 Note: 100% = once a year; 50% is once every 2 years; 33% is once every three years; 0% is not assessed

Estimated Participation by Level

Level 1 40%
 Level 2 25%
 Level 3 15%
 Level 4 10%
 Level 5 10%
 100%

**PD
variables**

10 = number of years to reach staff qualification goal

**TA
variables**

100% = percent of participating programs that need TA

Incentive variables

\$360 annual per child for Quality Improvement grants (levels 1-2)

\$780 annual per child for Quality Recognition grants (levels 3-5)

Communication & Marketing variables

\$100 per program for communication activities

Attachment F. Cost Estimate for Full Implementation

Cost Estimation Tool for Alaska's Quality Rating Improvement System

last revised 1/15/2008

Use to estimate annual cost/investment for a fully operational system

For purposes of estimating costs, we include the following elements:

\$364,252	<i>Quality assurance monitoring:</i>	
	\$43,360	1. initial assessor training, materials and hardware
	\$238,244	2. Ongoing on-site program assessment: conduct ERS (in at least 50% of classrooms and all homes) and observe ratios/group sizes in all classrooms
	\$82,648	3. Review of QRIS applications (documents) and designation of level
\$1,086,715	<i>Professional Development</i>	
\$3,280,321	<i>Technical Assistance for program improvement</i>	(This will require regulatory and possible statutory changes that could impact when this component is implemented)
\$499,339	<i>Facility improvements</i>	
\$9,379,120	<i>Financial Incentives</i>	
\$54,835	<i>Communication</i>	
\$264,273	<i>Evaluation</i>	
\$14,928,854	TOTAL	\$13,113,854 = Total (less current annual investment in Quality Improvement, see below)

Alaska Facts and Averages

Source of information

Center-based Programs	
161	= number of licensed centers <i>(226 licensed including tribal; 65 are school-age only. Per Marcey Bish 12/14/2007)</i>
60	= number of school-based preschools not licensed or certified <i>(Per Mary Lorence 12/14/2007)</i>
10	= number of military centers <i>(Per Marcey Bish 12/19/2007)</i>
17	= number of DOE certified preschools <i>(30 total; 13 are licensed. Per Paul Sugar on 12/13/07)</i>
104	= number of Head Start/Early Head Start sites <i>(138 sites; 16 licensed; 18 home-based. Per Paul Sugar 12/13/2007)</i>
352	= total number of centers
3.5	= average number of classrooms per center <i>(based on average of 4 in centers and Head Start and 1-2 in preschools)</i>

- 4 = number of teachers per center
- 6 = number of assistants per center
- 1 = number of directors per center

Home-based Programs

- 373 = number of family child care (FCC) homes *(Per Marcey Bish 12/14/2007)*
- 80 = number of FCC group homes *(Per Marcey Bish 12/14/2007)*
- 453** = total number of homes

- 1 = number of providers per FCC home
- 1 = number of assistants per FCC Group home

Any cell highlighted in yellow in the A column can be changed and the cost estimate will automatically adjust.

CAUTION: These highlighted cells are referenced on the other worksheets in this file, so please change them here NOT on the other worksheets)

Participation variables

85% = participation rate of centers in QRIS

55% = participation rate of homes in QRIS

Quality Assurance variables

0% = percent of **centers** Levels 1-2 to be assessed per year
 Note: 100% = once a year; 50% is once every 2 years; 33% is once every three years; 0% is not assessed

100% = percent of **centers** Levels 3-5 to be assessed per year
 Note: 100% = once a year; 50% is once every 2 years; 33% is once every three years; 0% is not assessed

50% = percent of **classrooms** per center to be assessed
 Note: 100% = all; 50% and 33.3% mean random sample with at least one I-T and one preschool classroom

0% = percent of **homes** Levels 1-2 to be assessed per year
 Note: 100% = once a year; 50% is once every 2 years; 33% is once every three years; 0% is not assessed

Estimated Participation by Level

Level 1	40%
Level 2	25%
Level 3	15%
Level 4	10%
Level 5	10%
	100%

100% = percent of **homes** Levels 3-5 to be assessed per year
 Note: 100% = once a year; 50% is once every 2 years; 33% is once every three years; 0% is not assessed

PD variables

10 = number of years to reach staff qualification goals set in QRIS standards

TA variables

100% = percent of participating programs that need consultation and technical assistance

Incentive variables

\$360 annual per child for Quality Improvement grants (levels 1-2)
\$780 annual per child for Quality Recognition grants (levels 3-5)

Communication & Marketing variables

\$100 per program for QRIS communication activities

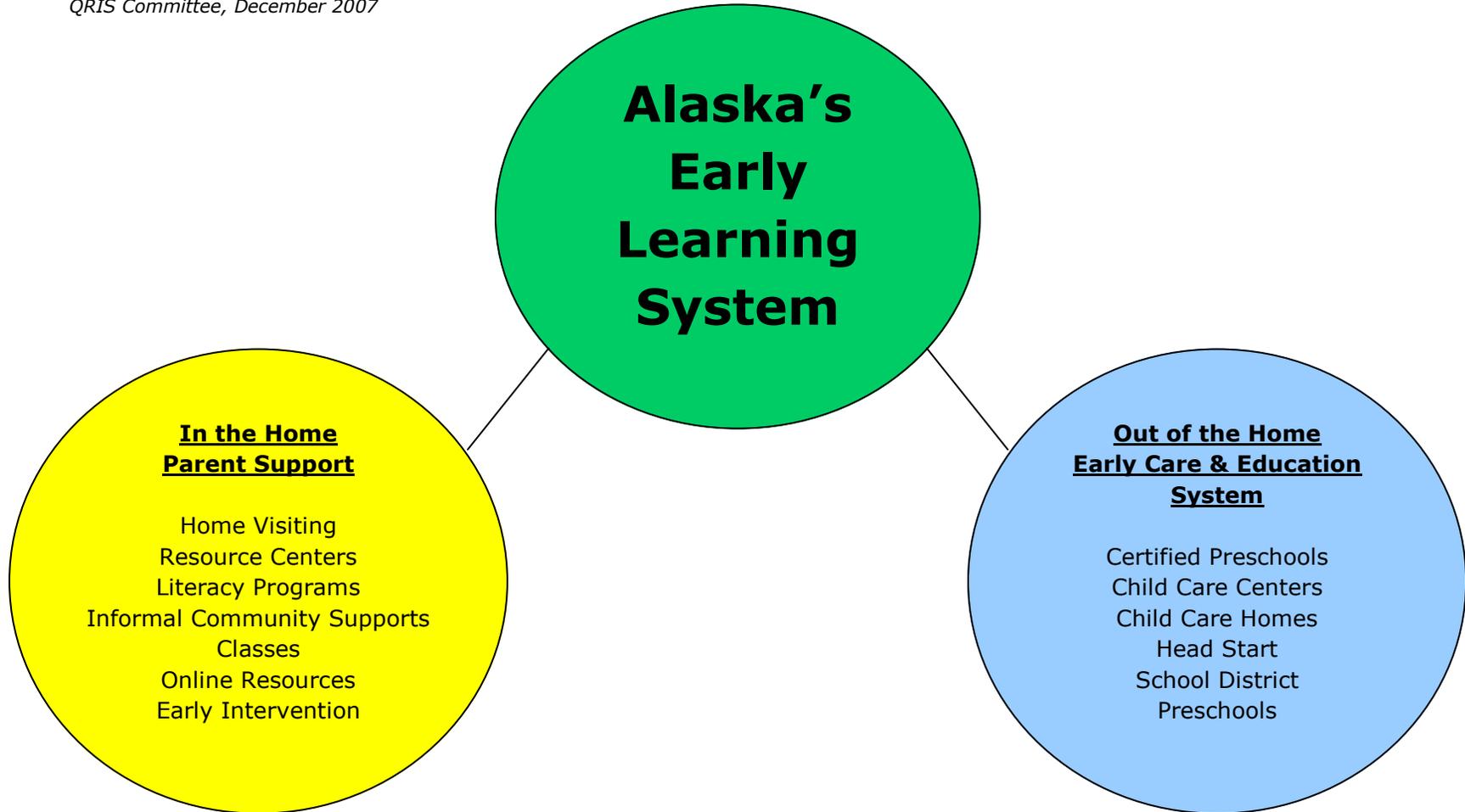
Current Quality Improvement Investments

<i>SEED</i>	\$95,000	DEED	per Paul Sugar 12/21/07
<i>CC Grants</i>	\$1,720,000	DHSS	per Mary Lorence 1/3/08, updated 1/4/08 to omit school-age grants
<i>other (TBI)</i>			
<i>other (TBI)</i>			
Total =	\$1,815,000		

Attachment G. Alaska's Early Learning System

Alaska's Early Learning System

**Developed by the System for Early Education (SEED)
QRIS Committee, December 2007*



Attachment H. A Standards-Based Early Care and Education System

**Developed by the System for Early Education (SEED) QRIS Committee, December 2007*

