

Policy Brief SCHOOL READINESS

Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS)

2015

A QRIS is a systematic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and school-age programs. Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, QRIS awards quality star ratings to early care and school age programs that meet a set of defined program standards. These systems provide an opportunity for States to increase the quality of care for children, increase parents' understanding and demand for higher quality care, and increase professional development of child care providers. A QRIS can also be a strategy for aligning components of the early care and school-age system for increased accountability in improving quality of care (NCCIC, 2009).

Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS) are being developed across the country to improve the quality of early childhood education programs. These systems have been developed to provide a more objective way to assess quality in a facility providing childcare. Currently, there are Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS) in 38 states and local jurisdictions, including Nevada, and the remaining 18 are in the process of developing a QRIS.¹ Each of these systems varies slightly in its requirements and protocols, but all have the goal of improving the quality of early childhood education.

In July 2012, the Division of Welfare and Supportive Services, Office of Early Care and Education officially launched the Silver State Stars QRIS in Southern Nevada. This new quality initiative has since been expanded and is open to all licensed child care centers in Nevada. The centers are awarded stars depending on their quality in four categories: Policies and Procedures, Administration & Staff Development, Health & Safety, and Families and Community. When the initiative started, it was determined that all licensed centers would automatically be considered a one star center. In order for a center to attempt to increase their star rating, they must complete the Silver State Stars QRIS process and make improvements in each of the four categories: 2- star programs must meet 4 additional (16 total) quality indicators in each of the four categories, 3- star programs must meet 8 additional (32 total) quality indicators in each of the four categories, 4- star programs must meet 12 additional (48 total) quality indicators in each of the four categories, and 5- star programs must be nationally accredited thus they have met the majority of additional quality indicators.²

As of April 2014, forty-nine centers throughout Nevada have participated. The participating centers receive: training by coaches who develop a Quality Improvement Plan and visit centers approximately once every other week to evaluate progress and train staff; a one-time initial quality improvement grant (\$4,000-\$8,500) based on the maximum number of children allowed by licensing; advancement bonus at renewal; eligibility for increased child care subsidy rates of 6, 9, or 12% depending on their final star rating level.

¹ <http://qrisnetwork.org/qris-state-contacts-map>

² http://www.nvsilverstatestars.org/public/files/Year_4_Evaluation_Report_FINAL.pdf

Star Level Definitions



HIGHEST QUALITY (Far exceeds high quality)



QUALITY PLUS (Exceeds high quality standards)



QUALITY (Meets high quality standards)



PROGRESSING STAR (Approaching high quality standards)



RISING STAR (Committed to quality improvement)

NO RATING (Program has chosen not to participate in the QRIS)

Recommendations:

Nevada's Silver State Stars Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), which is designed to establish a structure and accountability system for ensuring the provision of high quality early childhood education in Nevada, currently lacks the appropriate resources for full participation by licensed centers, family child care, licensed exempt and tribal child care.

Statewide expansion should be implemented on a gradual basis, with continued assessment, evaluation and improvement to further refine the process. Further funding is needed to increase the number of participating centers and the inclusion of family child care, licensed exempt and tribal child care. Efforts should also be made to include appropriate resources for marketing and outreach to ensure that parents are aware of and understand the star rating system. Upon statewide implementation, direct alignment between QRIS and child care subsidy reimbursements will ensure that state funds are being used both efficiently and effectively to provide the highest level of quality care and education to our state's most vulnerable children.



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*Adapted from the Nevada Silver State Stars Website, <http://www.nvsilverstatestars.org/>