



New Findings About the State of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

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Webinar Transcript*

Shannon Rudisill: Our National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement, most of the same staff have worked on it all along. We had partners at field 00:08 [Inaudible], we had partners in OPRE—our Planning, Research and Evaluation office that you'll hear about—and a number of States. You're going to hear about this tool that we developed as well as some of the research that ACF has been undertaking, both before this and continuing along the way, and you're going to hear from one of our States that is, you know, constantly looking for ways to continue to develop what is already a quite impressive Quality Rating and Improvement System. And I think you'll hear from Peggy Ball about where we're in this process now and what we'll do next. I hope that you all had a chance to open up who I believe it 00:50 [Inaudible] and to look at it a little bit. We're not going to be able to go through this quite detailed document today, but Peggy is going to give you a little, kind of a user's guide to how to think about it.

We feel like it's a valuable tool for folks in the field who are trying to look at their current practices in these areas. And I'll just give you an example of the one that always comes to mind for me the most. When we talk about the financing that's available for our program to meet standards, our thinking about what's good practice in that area is evolving very rapidly. At first it's, well, do you offer any help for people to meet the standards, and now we've really evolved to a world where it's, okay, do you offer the kinds of sustainable ongoing support that people need in an adequate amount to actually allow them to provide the kind of high-quality early learning program that we're looking for? And so that's the sort of thing that this Benchmark Tool seeks to distinguish, right? The difference between just giving a grant and coming up with a sustainable financing system for a program that really covers what they need. So we went through all the areas of QRIS and tried to come up with those sorts of qualitative pathways to the highest level of practice. So I'll just say a little bit about our speakers.

Our first speaker is Peggy Ball, who is the Technical—Lead Technical Assistance Specialist at our National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement, who has been working with numerous States over the years on Quality Rating and Improvement Systems and many other topics. She is an extremely valued TA partner for us and has been taking a strong lead in this work. You'll also hear from Melanie Brizzi, our State CCDF Administrator from the State of Indiana, who has developed a very fascinating Quality Rating and Improvement System with strong private partners. And I think the interesting thing that Melanie will be able to bring to the table is this system has a tremendous number of assets, but was also developed in a land where there was, you know, not a tremendous amount of new funding available to build it. So thinking about how to build on what was already going on in the State and her continued thinking, along with her many partners there, and how to keep improving the system, it's always really a pleasure to be able to learn from her. And also Ivelisse Martinez-Beck, who leads the Child Care Research Team at the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation here at ACF. They have made many investments over the years in research on Quality Rating and Improvement Systems, and also for the fundamental conversation between researchers and policymakers and practitioners and States about

how to keep the two-way conversation going between policy and practice. So I hope that, you know, this really is something that will stimulate your thinking, you'll learn about new tools to help you continue to advance on your continued quality improvement journey. And I will be happy to turn over to Ivelisse—I mean to Peggy, sorry, Peggy Ball.

Peggy Ball: Okay. I'm having a little trouble getting the screen to move forward.

Can you see that now?

Thank you, Shannon, and thank you to everyone who wanted to learn about Benchmarks for Quality Improvement Project. Is everybody seeing the Timeline of Development screen? I just want to make sure this works.

Shannon Rudisill: Yes, it looks good! Thanks Peggy!

Peggy Ball: Okay, thanks! The Benchmarks for Quality Improvement Project, often called BQI, was developed—as Shannon was saying, it's an indicators database based on input from the National Advisory Committee. It was introduced to 10 States that agreed to participate in the pilot at the 2011 National QRIS conference. The pilot explored the indicators; are these the correct indicators, is there something missing, are they asking the right question, do they provide a fair and accurate description of data activity, and will they help States in planning preserve support through quality and increased access? And then the data collect; do States have the data to assess the program? Is it existent? The pilot States provided excellent and detailed feedback from suggestions for use of the terms to even suggest details on finding stuff and measuring progress and on how to gather data from other States, which was a real issue. This data was analyzed May and June of 2011. At the same time, if we speak to our pilot feedback being analyzed, there were exciting new initiatives capturing the attention and engaging the States in new work; one of those was Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant. And the second was a new revision CCDF state grants that included the creation of a quality report 6:28 [Inaudible]. So the decision was made to see how the revised 6:33 [Inaudible] and the Race for the Top might provide new information and new considerations for additional changes, in the BQI process and how this tool might help States.

The goal of the BQI was to serve the whole early care to late care education system, and to create a mechanism to help States track their progress serving for low-income children in higher quality settings. The Early Education and School-Age Care System in this country serves families of many backgrounds, and children who come with their own unique gifts. Best service is provided for very diverse delivery system, with many family structures, Regulated Child Care and Head Start, Early Head Start, State-Funded Preschool, IDA, Out-of-School-Time Programs, and many settings; licensed, regulated centers, family child care homes, profits, nonprofits, school-based, faith-based; it's a very diverse system, and capturing it in the Benchmark for Quality Improvement Project was a challenge. The Guiding Principles for Development of Benchmarks were that the Benchmarks were based on the five common elements of current quality improvement system being used at the State. They were designed to help States assess their quality initiative, both within the framework of a QRIS, if a State had a QRIS, but also States that were implementing quality elements without having a full QRIS, allowing for flexibility and capturing the variation they support. Again, it was also the look across the whole early care to late care system, promoting collaboration across settings, and last of all, aligning with the current research and the best practices.

The Benchmark Quality Improvement Project defined a fairly simple system of high-level indicator that established a common language and a consistent structure for the quality improvement discussion. The indicators were organized the five elements of quality improvement most used by State. These indicators can be used by a State in assessing the strength of their early and late care and education infrastructure. As indicated by the presence of clearly defined standards that are inclusive of all settings that provide adequate support for improvement, that provide strong 9:53 [Inaudible] and that provides clear and consistent education for parents. The indicators were designed to self-assess, so that States could review the work in their State on each indicator and determine where they're making progress. In the upcoming slides we'll talk a little bit about guiding questions and documentation help. The States use indicators to measure their progress on a continuum, from No Action from that indicator, one of the three stages are, Developing, Implementing, and Fully Implementing. They are assessing whether the structural aspect of a quality improvement system has been created in their State and they can with those quality improvement systems apply all sets of children, family, practitioners.

Let's take a look at a sample indicator from each of the five elements of quality improvement. Program Standards were the first element category of quality indicators. First indicator in this category is that the State has established graduated quality standards that create a pathway to excellence, building on the foundation of licensing. A continuum of progress above no action ranges from the State has graduated standards higher than life, for at least one setting and one sector, to fully implementing where those standards exist and all settings and sectors are eligible to participate.

Regarding questions that are provided in the school and the suggested documentation allow a State to assess their progress by asking themselves the following types of questions: have graduated standards been developed? Are they built foundation 12:16 [Inaudible]? Is meeting the licensing requirements the first level of the standards or are prerequisites to participation in the higher standard? Do the graduated standards apply to all steps, not just family child care school-based setting? Do the graduated standards apply all 12:40 [Inaudible], Regulated Child Care, Head Start, Early Head Start, 12:45 [Inaudible]? And what is the coverage of those graduated standards? Are they implemented statewide or only offered in a limited geographic area, or only being implemented in a pilot or field test?

The second element category of quality is Support for Programs and Practitioners. One of the indicators of this element is that programs receive technical assistance to move up 13:22 [Inaudible]. The highest level of a State program fully implemented would be that a State offers customized technical assistance based on the each program 13:37 [Inaudible] specific quality standards. Some of the questions suggested 13:44 [Inaudible] together in assessing their progress are: do they offer technical assistance programs? Is that technical assistance designed to help programs achieve 14:00 [Inaudible] standards or achieve quality standards, such accreditation or 14:06 [Inaudible]? And what methods does a State use for providing specialized technical assistance based on each program's needs? Is it individualized program improvement plans or is it training on use of assessment? Is the TA available to programs in all settings and all sectors?

A sample indicator from the Financial Incentives proves 14:40 [Inaudible], Financial Incentives and Support, third element for Program Improvement. This is States will provide financial support to programs to help them meet, achieve, and maintain higher quality program standards. With fully implementing assistance, a State would provide those support in a periodic, predictable basis and supported by multiple funding streams to ensure sustainability. Some of the questions 15:20 [Inaudible]

ask to use in measuring their progress: do they have one-time bonus awards to help programs meet quality standards? Who are those bonus supports available to? Centers, family child care home. And do they have predictive, periodic award that help programs such as centers and family child care maintain a higher quality? And does State use a multiple funding stream to create a sustainable funding support for these ongoing financial supports that would help programs maintain their higher quality?

A sample indicator for Quality Assurance and Monitoring, a fourth element of program assessment: Do the States use a validated assessment program 16:29 [Inaudible] Program and Practitioners on using validated program assessment tools and culminates in the fully implementing States with a 16:44 [Inaudible] system that measures quality based on the standards using validated and provide that service to all settings and sectors. Some of the guiding questions and suggested documentation are: do States use validated program assessment tools and do they conduct external assessment of quality? Do they provide training on the use of these, and are the programs assessed by objective, external assessment? How many programs are assessed and what methods are used? Best tools, onsite audit, document review, and are these assessments available in all settings and sectors?

Sample Indicator from Consumer Education, the fifth and last element of the program improvement system. The State has established a QRIS or other quality framework that uses symbols or other methods to designate quality levels, so that information on child care quality 18:09 [Inaudible]. And the highest level of progress would be that this information is program specific and displayed on at least one public site and is included in referral database or other information systems used by families, practitioners, and human/community service agencies. The guiding questions in the suggested documentation would ask the questions, is this information available? Is it displayed on programs on a Web site and provided on a referral database?

The next steps in the Benchmark for Quality Improvement Project is to refine the framework and indicators and revise the database and in a few months to offer a Topical Learning Table to about eight states to participate the revised Benchmark Quality Improvement self-assessment planning process. In identifying States, in identifying States 19:30 [Inaudible] consideration is being given to States on QRIS that have not participated in a previous Topical Learning Table and are willing to get to leading the self-assessment planning process. The feedback, the pilots, and the Topical Learning Table will then be used to identify TA needs. These Benchmark indicators are a structure that guide 19:59 [Inaudible] as we learn more from States.

Trish, I am seeing that the audio tends to be a little sloppy, I apologize for that. And we'll move now to one of the State Administrators who participated in this pilot of Benchmark Quality Improvement Project, to share her experience with the State assessment and planning. Melanie Brizzi is the State CCDF Administrator in Indiana. Melanie, thanks for joining us today!

Melanie Brizzi: Hi Peggy! Thank you for asking me to be part of the conversation. Let me give just a little bit of background information about Indiana. We have a voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System that is open to a variety of different provider types. We're entering into our fifth year of implementation, started this January, and we've had very successful participation rates and seen some very positive outcomes. And I think that this tool can be a very helpful part of that process. So I just want to talk a little bit about our experience. We completed the tool as part of the pilot back in 2011, and it certainly took some time and energy, without a doubt. We pulled in some of our quality partners to help complete the tool, which I highly suggest using, it has been very beneficial for both us and our standard

partners. What this tool did for us? It provided a bit of a definitional framework around the work that we had been doing with quality improvement. And it was a framework with common definitions and based on best practice and nationally recognized. And the partners that were involved with us all said that they thought it was a good guide and a good reference, and so that spoke strongly to me, because these are the folks that we're asking to implement many of our quality improvement efforts. We're able to use the tool as a self-assessment.

So with the definitional framework and some common indicators to reach toward, it became a planning framework. It highlighted the areas that we were moving very successfully on, and then also showed us some things that we wanted to include. And we may have had bits and pieces of these things that we wanted to include in our short and long-term planning. But what the tool did as a self-assessment involving our partners was get everybody on the same page as to what those different items to focus on should be. This has helped us with the writing of our State plan, that we had the common definitions and the framework and we had assistance with framing our quality goals.

We've gone through this process, we've talked about it, took a hard look at where we are and what we thought we could accomplish over the next year, as well as future goals, and so that helped us really articulate what our quality improvement goals should be. And also, by making us sit down as a group and going through the process and looking at the documentation that we had, it did a number of different things. And one of those things was that it helped us anticipate what our data needs were going to be. So if we want to show documentation that we're moving forward and have these metrics to show the outcomes, are we collecting the data that is needed, and that has helped tremendously over this past month as we completed the QPR. So that was very, very important and well worth the time that we took in completing the Benchmark Tool.

As I stated before, we did utilize our key partners in the completion of the tool. We built our Quality Rating system on, as Shannon referenced at the beginning, on work that was already in progress and being completed by just a variety of different partners, really wanting to make sure that we were leveraging what was available and pulling it all together and in a way that made sense. Doing that, and having so many moving pieces and so many things happening all at the same time, it's sometimes difficult to keep communication thorough and consistent among all these different stakeholders. So pulling all the people together around a common framework, with common goals, helped us to say, okay, now I understand what this partner is doing and what's available here and how we can better align and coordinate what everyone is doing. I think sometimes we move so quickly in doing so many different things that you really have to force yourself to sit down, take the time to document what you're doing. And so the benefit of that aside from this more effective collaboration is that we have tools to point providers and families in the right direction.

We have a good handle on all of the different pieces and parts that are available, all the supports that are available. And so, again, that common definition and that self-assessment of where we are really helped us understand even greater the big system that was at play. Other things that we've been able to do is leverage the Benchmarks. We have our State plan and our QPR and they're in alignment, and we have data to show where we're moving, and the outcomes of our different projects has helped us to leverage the work that we're doing on both sides of the equation. For example, in our Learning Advisory Council or with the Governor's Office on one end showing why we're doing what we're doing, as well as with our contracted quality improvement partners, here's where we're moving towards, here's why, here's the data that we need to be able to measure and see what we're doing. So we've been able to

utilize that as well. And I think, again, having the quality partners say that, okay, this is valid tool, that's been very helpful, and a good resource speaks well to that.

We're also able to make sure that our contractual performance measures, for our quality projects, those metrics that we're asking for are all in alignment. And again, this helps in many ways to leverage additional funding with private partners. It helped us be more involved around the community-based preK conversation, in that we have the documentation and the data to show the work that is being done and that we are indeed making improvements to the quality of child care and early care and education programs, and difference to the lives of children. So that's helped us tremendously putting the pieces together. Like I said, our voluntary—we have a voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Our participation rates right now are, we have 88 percent of our licensed centers are involved, voluntarily enrolled, and 60 percent of our licensed homes, as well as other unlicensed providers who have voluntarily enrolled in the higher standards. And I think there are numerous reasons for this. One is that we have a very relationship-based system, and that's a conversation for another day. But a second piece of this is, is when we are—when we were forming the system, and as we continue to evaluate all the time, we're looking at, do we have all the pieces in place to support providers so that families and children have higher quality care? And in the planning stages we asked ourselves, you know, okay, are we asking providers for anything that we're not able to support them in? And that was the question that we were asking ourselves at that time, six and seven years ago. Now I think that Benchmark Tool really steps in and says, do you have all of these pieces in place, or have you at least considered them and thought about them? In my mind you're never going to be fully implementing on those standards, all of those standards, because you need to be continually evaluating and circumstances are going to change, and it's going to look a little differently, but are you considering all of these critical components, and are you making progress, and moving forward?

So now there's that tool available for us to use, to ask those questions as we move forward. And we have embedded those questions within our governance structure of the QRIS. We divide up into different committees and subcommittees and work groups, and they align very well with the pieces, the indicators within the benchmarks. We have a standard subcommittee and a professional development evaluation, marketing and outreach. So within each of those groups we can create strategic action plans and use this tool as one of the guidelines to say, here is the things that we need to be considering in moving forward. So just in closing, it can be a very valuable tool for self-assessment and is certainly worth the time that it takes to complete it, particularly I think when you bring other partners to the table and you have those conversations.

Ivelisse Martinez-Beck: Thank you, Melanie! This is Ivelisse Martinez-Beck from OPRE and we're going to talk now a little bit about some of the resources that the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation has been developing over the last five or so years in support of using evidence from research to make decisions about quality improvement strategies, as well as support the work of both designing, implementing, and evaluating Quality Rating and Improvement Systems and other Quality Initiatives. So I am going to reference here a group that is supported by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation and the Office of Child Care, called the Quality Initiatives Research and Evaluation Consortium. This is a Consortium of researchers that we call INQUIRE, conducting research and evaluation in collaboration with States on the Quality Initiatives and the Quality Rating and Improvement Systems and they meet on a regular basis to both share lessons learned and new methodologies and approaches to do a better job at evaluating the system, as well as trying to translate the research evidence into products that are useful for both designers, implementers and administrators

that need to make decisions about the systems that they are developing in their States. So a lot of the products I'm going to be talking about were developed by members of INQUIRE and most of them work collaboratively and on areas that are reflected of their own expertise.

So I wanted to try to link some of the products we have with the elements of the Benchmarking from quality improvement and the indicators. So I'm just going to mention a few of the resources that we have available to you, but at the end of this PowerPoint there is a long list of existing resources and resources in development that I hope you will take the time to explore and see if they are useful to the work that you're doing in your State.

So the first set of resources link very well to element one as described by Peggy Ball in the earlier presentation, the element of Program Standards. Currently we are doing several products and research projects related to these elements. One of them is developing a revised conceptual model for QRIS. Another one is doing a synthesis of the quality indicators and a research review and the connection between quality indicators and children's outcomes. And the third one is an interesting product on validation of QRIS. Then is the product related to Developing a Refined Conceptual Model for QRIS have combined researchers working towards an updated, more broad and articulated theory of change for QRIS, by including more detail and specification about the parameters in QRIS. So for example, the components and the subcomponents levels, etcetera, as well as trying to connect those components to specific outcomes that are the desired outcomes for the State or the system developers, as well as articulate what is known about the content, scope and intensity of activities in QRIS that will promote the desired outcomes beyond child outcomes.

Although we acknowledge that most QRIS has as the ultimate outcome affecting children's developmental outcomes, there are many other intermediate outcomes that are also important in designing and improving a quality early care education system that includes outcomes for the workforce, for parents, as well as for providers and programs. So the work of this group is actually reviewing existing theory of change models, identifying where further specifications can be made, and where we may have new research to support identification of critical pathway of the components towards the outcomes that we decide to effect. The Quality Indicators Project actually came out of conversations with many stakeholders, policymakers, and people implementing QRIS about the need to identify those indicators that are most linked and predictive of children's developmental outcome. So the purpose of this product is to respond to the desire of indicators of having some information that is safe and solid research evidence in that respect. The group is working on doing a database of the relevant literature about indicators in QRIS and developing a policy brief that provides a short summary of the findings by placing the findings in the broader context of desired outcomes for QRIS. Like I said before, this is focusing specifically about the strength of the relationship between different indicators and children's developmental outcomes. The indicators that are under review include indicators like many States include in the QRIS about Curriculum, Child Assessment and Individualization, Program Accreditation, Cultural and Linguistic Diversity, Family Partnerships, Program Administration, Community Involvement, as well as the usual aspects of Ratios and Group Size, Staff Qualifications, and Classroom Environment.

The third product that links very well to the standard elements in the Benchmarking effort is already in publication and you can access it in the URL that I'll give you at the end of this presentation. And this brief validation of QRIS introduces a framework for QRIS validation, highlights key issues to consider when you are conducting a validation study, as well as offer guidance on developing an individualized

State plan for QRIS validation in response to the important information about how important it is to increase the credibility of the QRIS by validating it so that parents can rely on ratings as well as providers are more willing to participate. And supports effective deployment of limited rating resources, as well as promote efficient use of limited quality improvement resources by allowing to target technical assistance on the key aspects of their systems that are important, as well as allow the providers to use the ratings to target quality improvement efforts.

The QRIS validation brief includes information about the four key approaches for validation, including examining the validity of key underlying concepts and standards in the systems, examining the psychometric properties of measures used to assess quality, assess the outputs of the rating process, as well as relating the ratings to children's developmental outcomes. It also addresses the fact that the approaches vary in terms of timing, cost, and difficulty, and how these may occur simultaneously and concurrently and may overlap. Another set of products that are linked to element two in the Benchmarking efforts that the element that—about Supports for Programs and Practitioners.

There are many, many resources we have developed in this area; I am going to highlight only two. The first one is in development and it's "A Brief on Early Childhood Education Quality Improvement: A Typology of Intervention Approaches," which presents a conceptual framework and typology for quality improvement efforts, identifies strategies to support quality improvement, and assesses the strength of the research evidence in each of those. The second one is a brief that is already published; it's called *Onsite Approaches to Quality Improvement in QRIS*. And then I'm also going to talk a little bit about the current workgroup on quality improvement, which is trying to unpack the black box of quality improvement, as well as provide guidance on designing good evaluation that look at quality improvement in the concepts of QRIS. The third brief I talked about is co-authored by members of the Quality Improvement Workgroup—like I said, presents a conceptual framework and identifies the evidence of evaluation of effectiveness of each type of strategy that they include in the typology, as well as identifies gaps in the research in several areas.

So just to give you a sense of the coverage of this brief in terms of quality improvement efforts, this is a framework that they have developed to guide the review of evidence that they are looking into. So they're looking at quality improvement efforts that are Workforce Interventions, Family Interventions, Setting Interventions, as well as Systemic Interventions. And as you can see in this particular chart, many of the elements in the Benchmarking efforts are included in more than one of these areas, where the research evidence has been summarized. This one is one on *Approaches to Quality Improvement*, authored by Martha Zaslow, Kathryn Tout, and Tamara Halle, which defines coaching and onsite quality improvement efforts and summarizes the evidence and then provides new perspectives on multi-level approaches to quality improvement, which I'm sure that you are familiar with, because you have to do that at the level of the system, at the level of the program, at the level of the provider.

The third element is Financial Incentives and Supports, and we have a couple of products in that area that are in preparation. The one I just mentioned about in terms of the Typology of Intervention Approaches, and one that is also in preparation about "Financing to Promote Quality in Early Care and Education and School-Age Care: Incentives, Supports, and Affordability." I want to underscore that this is probably the least studied area that we have right now in OPRE, and it's a very important area because we need to understand better which financial incentives work best to support quality improvement, so that providers can go up in the ratings and how much do you need to continue to provide in terms of support so that they can maintain those levels. So this is an important area of research that we need to

definitely focus more on. The one that we probably have the most resources, and I'm going to select to talk a little bit about a few of them, not all of them, you know, being careful about time, is in the area of Quality Assurance and Monitoring.

We have some really exciting new products in preparation that should be ready in the next couple of months. One of them is a two-part series of brief on Best Practices in Data Management for QRIS. We also have a Dictionary of Common Data Elements for QRIS and other Quality Initiatives, a Guide to Linking Policy, Monitoring and Evaluation Questions about Quality Initiatives with Data Elements and Indicators, Best Practices in QRIS Data Collection, and then a few that are already, like I mentioned, already published, and you can find on our Web site. The first one is one that has been in development for a while and it actually includes some contributions from some State administrators that were introduced to inform this particular product. It's on *Data Governance and Structures to Support Data Integrity*. This particular report outlines the need for strong data management practices by describing existing QRIS data systems and the challenges to data integrity that emerge in these systems, and provides guidance on best practices related to data that are collected or accessed in a QRIS, and on creating integrated systems that can support QRIS implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. In addition, it incorporates a new area for us in early care education by providing recommendations from the fields of informatics and uses State examples to demonstrate effective practices.

The second part of this series is on Data Processing and Analysis, and is in preparation by the INQUIRE Group. And it's more about specific procedures to ensure data integrity when you are developing the systems for QRIS and other Quality Initiatives. I'm very excited about this particular product. This is the QI Data Elements and Resources. The first one, the "Dictionary of Common Data Elements for QRIS and Other Quality Initiatives," and the accompanied piece, "A Guide to Linking Policy, Monitoring and Evaluation Questions about QRIS and Quality Initiatives with Data Elements." These have a very long history in INQUIRE and OPRE.

Several months ago we met and decided that we needed to contribute to the field by providing common data elements that people could start using and also guidance about the level of coding that this data needed to be entered into a system, to be able to answer important data collection questions, both for tracking implementation, but also for evaluating the system. We have coordinated this effort with several national efforts, including the Early Childhood Data Collaborative, which is introducing fundamentals of coordinated state data systems, in addition with the Common Education Data Standards effort that is promoted by the National Center for Education Statistics and the U.S. Department of Education, which includes set of data elements in the Early Learning domain with definitions on formats. And with the Workforce Data Systems Alignment Project; a collaboration between leaders of Pre-Early Childhood Workforce Data Systems, the Registries, T.E.A.C.H., 45:10 [Inaudible] and others, in addition to the Center for the Child Care Employment at University of California at Berkeley.

Our suggestions for data elements for quality and quality improvement were picked up by the CEDS effort, and they accepted our recommendations. Those data elements have been out for comments already and have received comments through the Department of Education effort. Many of the data elements will not be released until the next version of the CEDS. So our group at INQUIRE has moved forward to finish developing this data element so that we can make it available to the field. And the product from this data elements work include a data elements matrix, which is huge and very hard to use, and that's why we're developing a national data dictionary so that it will assist readers in reviewing

similar data elements together and navigating the matrix, as well as an accompanying document which will focus on key questions that States would want to answer related to the quality improvement efforts on QRIS and identifies the data elements and the types of analysis they would have to do.

So just to give you an example of this product, this would be what would be included, for example, in a data dictionary, with each element having a—a particular data element having a definition as well as instructions about, is it a numeric or categorical variable and the different options. In addition to that, you would have the policy documents that have different policy questions, and this is an example of a policy question, for example, does workforce stability increase from year to year? And it tells you which data element you would need to be answered—to be able to answer that question, at the Practitioner level, at the Program level. And then in addition to that, the same question would have a set of analysis recommendations, where you identify the data elements in the Dictionary and it tells you exactly what you need to do to answer the question.

So right now we are in the process of finalizing the question and the policy links. And hopefully this will be available to everybody in the next couple of months. Another area is Best Practices in Data Collection. This also is in response to request we had from States and other leaders about the need to put in place valid and reliable data collection methods for measuring quality in the context of licensing, in the context of QRIS, and in the context of research and evaluation. So the goal is to support an understanding of the breadth and depth of reliability, beginning with an overview of reliability as it relates to best practice in QRIS data collection. And then the audience of course is to support State administrators and system implementers in understanding systems reliability, as well as to support States as they put systems in place, including the evaluators and researchers. Just to give you a sense of the content of this product, it will define reliability, including different types of reliability; it will differentiate between reliability and validity; it will describe different components of and approaches to reliability depending on where you're going to be applying this; and discuss sources of error and strategies for training, etcetera.

I already talked about the Valuation of QRIS for Early Care Education and School Age Care earlier; you can find that information on Slides 7–10. The group is also developing a template for developing validation and evaluation plans for QRIS. I wanted to highlight the QRIS Evaluation Toolkit, which has been published in 2011, and the INQUIRE Validation Group is also working together to trying to define studies with methods and measures that are common across so that we can do better across State types of analysis. I'm going to skip this for a minute, although you should look into our Implementation Science work, which includes a series of briefs as well as an upcoming volume published by Brookes Publishing on the topic.

And then finally on element five, which is Consumer Education. We have a forthcoming brief, which is a Synthesis of QRIS Evaluations co-authored by INQUIRE members, and it includes review of findings from four States that have evaluated consumers and QRIS. These are the results of State household surveys that gauge parents' interest in QRIS, awareness of the QRIS, and the use of QRIS.

One point that I was going to talk about is, although in evaluations conducted so far most parents say that "QRIS ratings will be important in their decisions making about care for their children," most parents in many of these surveys had not heard about QRIS in their States and had limited information—the limited information they had basically came from the home providers that they had already selected. So a lot of important work to do in this area. Some other things that came out in this research

is that, in general, States have limited resources for marketing and consumer education; they have lack of sustained funding; it is difficult to direct information to parents who do not speak English—for example, as a minority population; and limited understandings of best practices for engaging parents. So in terms of how to talk about it, what to highlight, how can we time the provision of information so that they can use it to make better decisionmaking, and then how can QRIS become a trusted source of information for parents about care? So an important area that we need to continue to research.

I just wanted to say that this Synthesis of QRIS Evaluations also includes findings on implementation evaluations, design and validation, quality improvement, as well as the program/practitioner perceptions about QRIS, in addition to the parent perceptions that I discussed about. So this is my contact information and also the URL for accessing all the products that I talked about. The ones that are forthcoming should be ready for you in the next couple of months. Many of them are already there and in the slides you will receive after this presentation there is a long list of resources that are very relevant to the work you're doing and I encourage you to go to the OPRE Web site and look at them.

Tricia Haley: So that brings us to your questions. Kim and Anya, I think you guys have been keeping track for us. So we should get started.

Anya Reed: Okay, the first question is, are there any school districts in the country which have taken over the control of all child care sites, including those with Early Head Start? If not, wouldn't this be a good idea?

Shannon Rudisill: Hi! This is Shannon and this is a very challenging first question. So I'll just first say that we're kind of looking at each other here in the Office of Child Care where we have several people gathered, we're not aware of that happening in any State or location, and I would just say that, I don't want to go too far out on a limb on opining on the side, but when you think about the variety of settings in the early childhood world, the variety of different preferences parents have, particularly when you think about infants and toddlers, you think about a mix of parents who want home-based settings and center-based settings, and you also think about parents trying to balance out two needs, which in Office of Child Care we've tried very hard to bring folks together around how we talk about meeting both, and that's the growth and learning needs of their kids when they can't be with their parents and the working needs of the parents. It really does take a very diverse range of settings to balance all that out. So it seems like it would be a very monumental task for one government's entity to try to assume responsibility for operating and monitoring all of that, which is part of the reason why the approach we've taken about Head Start education and child care is aligning standard, aligning monitoring, and using—and I think that you could see in the Benchmark Tool that we shared all the places that are referred to cross-sector and using common definitions and thinking about common standards for teachers, common standards for programs, common goals for children. That's personally because it's just hard to imagine a world where operations are all consolidated. So we're trying to use the common framework that will deliver the same high quality of service, even if funding an operation remains differ.

Okay. We're ready for the next question I think.

Anya Reed: Okay, the next question is, how well does QRIS align with NAEYC accredited program and what modifications might be anticipated in order to receive a strong rating?

Shannon Rudisill: Hi Peggy! If you are able, I think that, that might be an interesting one, but you're probably the most experienced across the range of States with standards.

Peggy Ball: Well, it is an interesting question. There are States that have purposefully aligned, particularly their higher standards, with NAEYC accreditations, and have even looked at some Head Start standards. So there are States that are looking at that. One interesting thing that we are working on with the Office of Child Care right now is a cross-walk tool that would help States to look at their QRIS standards in relationship to other national standards, and we hope to have that out fairly soon so that States can do that. A few States have done that specifically, but you almost have to go State to State and looking at each State's QRIS standards at the highest level to see how they align with other national standards.

Anya Reed: Okay. I think the next question is for you as well, Peggy. They wanted to know when you spoke of the quality improvement, did you mean Quality Rating and Improvement System, the five elements for the larger system, is that correct?

Peggy Ball: When we worked in the development of the Benchmark Quality Improvement Project, it was built to be very broad, because there are States, over half of the States who have a Quality Rating and Improvement System; fewer at the time the benchmarks were developed. But then more have developed them and almost all States and territories are in some process of exploring this or designing or implementing. So the indicators were made to be broad so that if a State did not have a fully implemented QRIS, they could still use this tool to sort of test the strength of their system and creating the structure that would allow them to do this work.

Anya Reed: Okay. The next one is a little bit long. About 10 years ago there was a strong focus in early care and education on collaboration between Federal, State, and local to create seamless systems, services, and support for consumers and for program providers. Has there been any discussion or concept development around common core QRIS similar to Common Core Standards in K-12?

OCC Staff: I'm not sure I totally understand, but I think that actually the effort of a QRIS is to get to some common language and consistency in looking at high-level standards and to try to define them and align them with other national standards. I don't know if there has been particular effort, back to the corresponding question on a national level to do that, but very much on a State level and with the support of the Office of Child Care, there has been a lot of work to help States in that effort.

Linda Smith: This is Linda Smith and this is an interesting and a very, very good question I might add. And it is one that we've been giving some thought to in terms of what is the possibility of such an effort. I think we've had discussions about how we can align these programs for sure and what would it take to align them and some of that work requires standards—a look at standards in commonality across Head Start, preK, child care, and the Part B and C programs. So we've had those conversations. It's probably one of those things, if I could be candid on this one is that, an effort like this, I think, would better come from the States working together to agree and suggest what those might be more along the lines of what happens with the core elements for education, Common Core Standards I should say, rather than something that is Federally driven.

I think in today's climate that would be a better approach. I think we would encourage and support from our offices any folks out there interested in pursuing that. Because I think ultimately we need to get

there and we need some commonality and some core standards that we have all agreed to. We are on the Child Health and Safety Issue, as many of you have heard me talk about this, interested in the possibility of promoting work around Stepping Stones in our work with our sister agency here at HHS, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, to get common health and safety standards that we could at least use as a foundation, as the first step in that direction. But that certainly doesn't answer the fundamental question that we're all after, which is improving the program quality in the sense of what it is kids are learning and able to know as a result of this program.

So again, I just put it out there that I think we would be interested in supporting States who wanted to come together and work on that and we'd be interested in working along with you. I think the initiative is better led by the States.

Shannon Rudisill: This is Shannon, and one thing I guess I would add is, I was on travel, sort of a state of travel last spring and one thing when I was going on my travels I was in a variety of States and in at least three States they mentioned that some of their current work was around taking their current State's Early Learning Guidelines, also known as Early Learning and Development Standards in the Race to the Top context, and aligning those to Common Core, which is interesting because that means they all probably do look different. I mean, they took what was a State specific standard and tried to align it to Common Core. But it might provide a foundational step then if they did get together to start looking across, because they're looking to Common Core, I think—I won't say all, but there is a big trend where it's looking to Common Core and it seems like that's almost an interesting new light into the Early Learning Standard conversations when States go back and take a fresh look at it.

Linda Smith: This is Linda Smith again, and I do know that some of our regional staff are interested in this too. And so for those of you in State positions who might be interested in looking at that, I would encourage you to speak to the regional staff out there and they could be the conduit for the possibility of us looking at some effort around that. I think if there is a next step and you're interested, that might be how we might organize something like that. Next question.

Anya Reed: Okay. In terms of workforce development, what retention strategies have been used by programs to keep the degreed educators from leaving the ECE field?

Shannon Rudisill: I'm wondering if Peggy or Melanie, either one have examples of like a practice that they want to cite, not to stop, but if you have something you worked on or seen?

Peggy Ball: I will just make a comment and then I would really appreciate any thoughts Melanie might have. There are a number of strategies that States use. One thing that they have discovered is just more education and training seems to increase retention of staff and satisfaction in their job. Certainly more benefits increase compensation, more benefits, such as some access to health insurance or planning time and so forth, all have contributed to it. But also Ivelisse might speak to whether there—there are a number of workforce studies that have been done around the country by States that identified the mechanisms they're using. But right off the top of my head I can't think of a specific research that has sort of determined which is most effective, but Melanie, do you have particular mechanisms that you all use in Indiana?

Melanie Brizzi: What we have found to be successful is very similar to what you just said, in increased education we utilize, teach, and so there is a retention piece and an increase salary piece to that as well,

that has shown to decrease turnover, as well as involvement with the QRIS in that, Level 2 of the Quality Rating Improvement System does focus on some administration pieces within the Child Care Program itself. So things like paid planning time and other pieces that help increase job satisfactions have shown to be beneficial as well.

Shannon Rudisill: So this is Shannon again, I want to highlight that you might have noticed in the Benchmark Tool that we sent out, there was a strong integration of practitioner interventions, and I really liked the new schematic that Ivelisse put up that's going to be in our forthcoming brief, because it shows the way that the teacher practices are sort of closest to the child, but nested within the quality of the setting. So one of the things I think you'll notice if you look at the Benchmark Tool, we've integrated practitioner work with the program work, and that was actually not necessarily in our minds the first time we got that right, but we got to it very quickly based on the expertise and experience of everyone that we talked to and that worked on it with us. And you'll see one of the financial indicators—for example, there is one about program quality and program finance—but there is a very—there is an additional indicator in that financing piece about practitioner support and that it's—that there's sort of—we embedded almost like a hierarchy in here, and the first one is you give somebody a bonus after they take a course or sort of a one time thing, but a higher level of practice, which I will admit, I think is primarily—it's the aspirational point here for most of us, is some sort of sustainable, systematic financing over time. And we know that's an aspirational goal for the field, but part of our point in putting this document together was to be able to try to figure out a pathway from where we are now, which is more like a one-time bonus world, to the ideal world we hope to get to. So that was—I hope when you look at this you'll be able to see that as part of why we did it. And the final thing that I would mention is the Office of Child Care and Office of Head Start jointly fund our National Center on Professional Development Workforce, they are working on a tool, a compensation and access tool to help States walk through decisions that they face about investments and what balance goes to professional development initiatives versus compensation versus retention initiatives and to think that through. That will be forthcoming I think later this year, later 2013.

I am going to say that we do need more research in this area. Some of the seminal research on the workforce, many of which have been conducted by the Center for Child Care Employment at Berkeley, they have noted in many studies that work conditions, benefits, training, the professionalization of the workforce, as well as leadership plays a big role in retaining the workforce. One of the new projects that OPRE has just funded is going to be looking at leadership in early childhood programs; it's going to be done mostly through Head Start programs and the role of leadership in creating that culture of quality and support for the people working in these programs. So stay tuned because we're trying to understand better what makes the most difference.

Next question, and I probably—I don't know if we'll get to all of them but we probably have time for one or two more.

Anya Reed: Okay, this one is for Melanie. Melanie, they wanted you to elaborate on who you were referring to when you were speaking of stakeholders and partners?

Melanie Brizzi: We have a very wide range of stakeholders, and it includes families, child care programs, other community partners, Child Welfare, Education, both are two and four-year institutions of higher learning, the Food Program, pretty much the stakeholders are—if you can identify them as being involved in some way, we ask and seek their participation as a stakeholder. Our partners are a smaller

group of individuals who are really responsible for the daily operations, the strategic planning, and the project implementation, and they include, for example, the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children, the Indiana Association for Child Care Resource and Referral, the Department of Education, Purdue University, who conducts our evaluations. So that's a very small—much smaller group of individuals who are really working daily on the QRIS.

Anya Reed: Next question. Okay. This one says we in Iowa have only 52 percent of our parents choosing regulated child care last year. I greatly value all of the work on QRIS. But it doesn't matter how quality the programs are, parents do not use them. What are your recommendations to encourage more parents, especially low-income parents, to choose regulated quality child care facilities?

Shannon Rudisill: I mean, this is Shannon, I'll start, and I'm sure Linda will want to say something. One of the things that we've been trying to work very hard at, and I'll admit that we're sort of in learning evolution here is, when you look at Ivelisse's data that she brought towards the end about consumer education, and it showed that a lot of people would use information if only they had it. We've been thinking about that, and one thing that we've been talking with States a lot about is in fact the Child Care Subsidy Intake process, and the fact that we have 1.7 million kids every month getting a child care subsidy, it's frequently running through a sort of work support benefits office. But that means—a lot of times I see States and we're funding these big public engagement campaigns, and we're trying to find people, and maybe they're taking the bus, but we know where 1.7 million of them are having some interaction and that's with the child care subsidy system.

So I think that we could look for those touch points, that's something that I'm sort of continuing to ask people to work on, and we've had quite a few conversations with Child Care Aware of America to honor our system as well, about where we know that the families are when they're making the choices, can we get that information to them at that time? And that would be QRIS information, but it might also be in fact licensing information. We've tried to start a conversation, sort of a beginning conversation with the States around licensing information. We're starting to think about when a parent is choosing a child care provider and, for example, the State license for the subsidy system, does anybody provide them the licensing compliance report of that provider, or do they explain that the provider they're about to choose is not licensed, and what that means, namely no one is going to go here and inspect so you need to thoroughly check it out, don't assume there has been a background check, don't assume we've inspected.

So I think that that's one area, and I'm happy to have such a large audience on this audio conference, because I think that the subsidy system is sometimes not thought of in a way that it could be in terms of being a point of contact for parents. And we're also thinking a lot about technology and Web site and trying to make it almost automatic that if parents who are choosing child care would look up the State licensing information on the Web, which we have a very large trend, I almost can't keep up with the number because it's growing so fast as a number of States are putting their licensing reports on the Web. It's really exploded at this point, where I think we'll get to the vast majority here in a year or two. Linda, I know you want to add.

Linda Smith: Yeah, and I do want to add some things on a broader policy level. We are very interested in this issue, and I think part of the reason that parents aren't selecting higher quality has also to do with the value of the subsidy, the value of the voucher that they get, and the fact that there can be large gaps between the value of what they get and the cost of higher quality care, and we know that. So we've

been spending quite a bit of time here looking at the subsidy levels, the value of them, looking at that in the context of what's happened over time with the Federal budget. And what we are now looking and observing is, is that, while the amount of funding going into CCDF and into subsidies has remained relatively flat since about 2002, it still has a number of children. And so you know that something had to give in that situation, so probably it's the value of the vouchers going down relative to the cost of care, which we know has gone up. And so we're spending a lot of time here looking at that, thinking about how we begin to turn around that trend so that parents really can purchase high-quality care in this system. Because it won't do us any good to have measured and have high-quality care out there if the value of what the parents are getting from the Federal or the State governments doesn't get them to that end result. That's not a real right now answer, but I just wanted people to know that we are thinking about it and trying to figure out as we move forward with any initiatives and funding that we do that we tie quality and cost as two of the primary reasons that parents made choices, not just because—it is in—and I agree with what Shannon said, sometimes they just really don't know what it is. But if they did know what it was, could they access it is the second question that we're trying to examine right now. So I think that's a standby on that one, we're looking at it, and looking at where we go in any future budget and in things that we propose, how do we close that gap. I think finally, as I alluded to, we're interested now in looking at the cost of care versus the market rate of care, because the cost of care is—the market rates are probably deflated to be honest with you, because of what I suggested earlier, and so the market rate isn't really reflective of what it costs now to actually do higher quality care. And that's another thing that we are beginning the conversations here with shifting our thinking from a market cost to a cost of quality and we've spent some time looking at that. I know that's a long-winded answer to that question, but I think we would—as you ponder these questions out there, offer us any thoughts that you have on that would be very helpful to us.

Yeah, and I will say finally, it's interesting to me, because that mix of choices varies widely from State to State. And I think that that's an interesting thing to look at, because sometimes it's just all about parents' preference. Well, parents are making the preferences in an environment that includes the amount of money that is available, includes the regulatory environment, includes the information environment, and so I don't think that parents in one State where we have most people choosing unregulated care actually have preferences that dramatically different than parents in another State where almost everybody is using regulated care. So I think that's why it's a really—you've heard several different elements of the context that we're putting around the parents' choice, and our thoughts about how we can influence that and work together on that.

So one more question for—all right, one last question!

Anya Reed: Okay, this one is, will there be applications for States to become one of the next eight pilot States for the BQI project?

OCC Staff: So Peggy, I'm going to let you give the detailed answer. I think that we have States in mind based on our dialogue with our States and our TA planning, but that doesn't mean that we don't want to have this available for folks' use. Do you want to say what the plans are specifically?

Peggy Ball: Yes, thank you. As I mentioned before, we're considering States who have a functioning QRIS, because it helps them in using this process. And those who haven't had an opportunity to participate in a Topical Learning Table, and those who are willing to actually go through this self-assessment and strategic planning process will give—will also give consideration to States who have a

readiness and capacity, who think that they have the time to commit to this work. So I mean, we're thinking approximately 10 States; it might be more States than that. We certainly want to accommodate as many of the States who want to go through this process, because the feedback we got from the original pilot is people found it very helpful just to sort of get a look at their infrastructure, and where the pieces were, and what they might work on, just as Melanie. Melanie did a great job of describing how it helped her. So we want to pick States who can find this as helpful as she did.

Linda Smith: Okay. So this is Linda Smith and I get the honor of closing this session out, and I want to start by thanking everyone who joined the call and the webinar and for everything, and for the excellent questions, and you've given us even more to think about and we really appreciate that. I just want to restate a few things about QRIS and where we are. I want to—I'm sure that I wasn't in for the earliest part of this, but I do know that Shannon had to have said that one of our primary goals is to get more low-income children and higher quality. And we are very concerned about what we're talking about here at the end about the quality of care offered to our lowest income children and our poorest families, and so always keep that in mind as we work on this. I think the parent transparency piece is a big issue, and I know that we're learning more about that, and we do need as we build these systems to focus on what information are we really giving parents and how are we helping them understand quality, because I think they look to us in our professional world and in State government and Federal government to really help them with that, and they don't really know sometimes.

I've had so many conversations with parents about—they assume their providers know, do, are all of these things, and we really do need to assume our responsibility along those lines. I want to restate the fact that, and Ivelisse makes some points here that, that this is—we do see QRIS as a pathway to—a framework under which—through which we provide a pathway for programs to improve their quality. And that we can't just think that QRIS is in and of itself the end goal, it is not; it is a pathway to improve things for parents and providers, and I want to keep stressing that fact that sometimes we go out there and we hear this and we think, well, QRIS by itself won't get us anywhere. And I put that in the context also of the issues around professional development, and some of you brought those up. Some of the issues that continue to plague us about the teacher preparations, the workforce preparations, the turnover, etcetera, they are as important as building this framework. And so how we move people within the system, from one level to another, and what that means is as important as just having a framework, and I want us to not lose sight of that.

I think that we continue to hope that we're going to learn lessons more and more, especially from The Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge States, but from all those States; Indiana is a great one. I've visited that program, it's a phenomenal example of where we're going with QRIS, and we need to learn from each other so we aren't repeating our mistakes. And that's our goal, in fact, with having these webinars and this one in particular. So I think I want to just close by saying that we are interested—Shannon, I'm sure, has told you that the Secretary of HHS priority—she and Shannon and I go quarterly and brief this to the highest levels here at HHS, and we have done that to the White House PPC and the OMB. And so there is a lot of interest in it. We continue to watch the work you're doing and be grateful for it, and continue to just ask you to keep us informed of questions that you have, ways that we can help, things that you need from us at the Federal level, in any way, shape, or form that can help make this work move along and support you in what you do. So I think with that, I would just say thanks again for joining the webinar and please pass along any other questions and comments that you have, because we're—it's a work in progress. So thank you and have a very nice day!

**The first 10 minutes of the webinar were not recorded due to speaker issues.*