

Program Participation

This fact sheet is one in a series about the state of quality rating and improvement systems (QRISs) in the United States. As of 2019, there are 44 fully operational QRISs in the United States. Data are from the Quality Compendium, a catalog of the quality initiatives and QRISs operating in the United States as of December 31, 2019.

Program Participation in QRISs in 2019

The numbers and types of programs participating in a QRIS are key indicators of system functioning. However, participation rates, as well as the density of participation (the percentage of eligible programs participating), vary depending on factors such as

- ◆ the length of time the system has been operational,
- ◆ whether QRIS participation is voluntary or mandatory,
- ◆ which types of programs are eligible to participate, and
- ◆ incentives for participation.

This fact sheet updates the participation fact sheet from 2017 and summarizes information from the Quality Compendium¹ on program participation in 2019 by program type and quality level.² This document also summarizes the types of data that QRISs collect on child demographics.

Total Participation

Across the 42 QRISs that reported participation data in 2019, there were 92,441 total rated programs. This is an increase from 86,199 total rated programs in 2017. The median number of rated programs per QRIS is 1,305, and the range of rated programs is between 111 (Utah) and 11,285 (Illinois).

QRISs vary in their number of years of operation, which is often related to the number of rated programs. The oldest reported QRIS is in New Mexico (1997), and the newest is in Utah (2019). Program eligibility and participation rules in a QRIS may vary by program type and the funding streams that programs receive. QRISs may have voluntary participation, or they may mandate participation for some or all providers.

Appendix A lists each QRIS and indicates whether programs

- ◆ may participate voluntarily,

¹ The Quality Compendium was previously named the QRIS Compendium.

² In 2019, Quality Compendium data were changed to enable comparison across QRISs. For details on these changes, please see the 2019 Participation Data Changes Spreadsheet on qualitycompendium.org.

- ◆ are enrolled at the first level (if they are licensed),
- ◆ must participate if the program serves children receiving subsidies, or
- ◆ must participate if the program receives other funding streams (for example, state prekindergarten funding).

QRISs that enroll licensed providers at the first level typically consider participation at the higher levels of the QRIS as voluntary.

Density of Participation

Density of participation measures the percentage of eligible programs participating in a QRIS. Density is calculated by dividing the number of rated programs by the total number of eligible licensed center-based and licensed family child care (FCC) programs within the state or locality (see Appendix A).

Ten QRISs automatically enroll licensed center-based programs and licensed FCC programs at the first level. Each of these QRISs reports having a participation density of 100 percent. However, these QRISs may also track the density of programs that are rated at the higher levels of the QRIS to indicate the proportion of programs engaging in quality improvement activities.

Eighteen QRISs offer voluntary participation to licensed center-based programs and licensed FCC programs. Of these, 16 report density of participation, which ranges from 2 percent (New York) to 93 percent (Duval County, Florida) for licensed center-based programs and 1 percent (New York) to 80 percent (Ohio) for licensed FCC programs.

The average participation density across all QRISs is higher than the average participation density across the subset of QRISs with voluntary participation (see Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of Average Density between All QRISs and the Subset of QRISs with Voluntary Participation, 2019

QRIS Type	Average Density Across All QRISs ^a	Average Density Across QRISs with Voluntary Participation
Licensed centers	63% (N = 40)	39% (N = 16)
Licensed FCC programs	51% (N = 39)	21% (N = 16)

Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on March 27, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>

Notes: Not all QRISs report density in the Quality Compendium.

^a The density metrics in this column are comparable to those collected in 2017.

Ten QRISs automatically enroll licensed center-based programs at the first level. Twelve require participation for those serving children receiving subsidies. Eleven require participation for those receiving other public funding.³

Ten QRISs enroll licensed FCC programs at the first level. Ten require participation for those serving children receiving subsidies. Ten require participation for those receiving public funding.⁴

³ Seven QRISs have overlapping requirements and require participation of licensed center-based programs serving children receiving subsidies and other public funding.

⁴ Six QRISs have overlapping requirements and require participation for licensed FCC programs that serve children receiving subsidies and other public funding.

Participation by Program Type

Licensed center-based programs are eligible to participate in all 44 QRISs (100 percent), while licensed FCC programs are eligible to participate in 42 QRISs (95 percent; see Table 2). In addition, Head Start and Early Head Start are eligible to participate in 33 QRISs (75 percent).

Table 2. Number of QRISs in Which Various Program Types Participate, 2019

Program Type	Number of QRISs Participating	Percent of QRISs
Licensed child care centers	44	100%
Licensed FCC homes	42	95%
Head Start and Early Head Start	33	75%
School-based early childhood programs	28	64%
School-age programs	20	45%
Legally license-exempt centers	8	18%
Tribal early childhood programs	3	7%
Legally license-exempt homes	2	5%

Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on January 20, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>

Note: N = 44 QRISs.

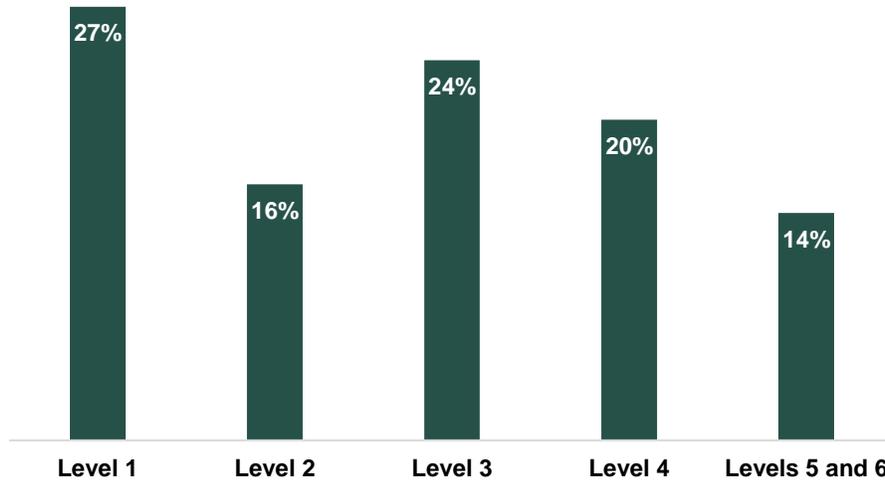
Number of Ratings by Quality Level

The number of programs with QRIS ratings differs across quality levels. QRISs have different numbers of quality levels, ranging from 3 to 6. Of the 44 QRISs, 26 (59 percent) have 5 or 6 levels of quality. Twelve (27 percent) have 4 levels of quality, and six (14 percent) have 3 levels of quality. For the purposes of this report, data from QRISs with 6 levels are combined with data from QRISs with 5 levels.

Of the 26 QRIS rating systems with 5 and 6 levels, 24 reported data about QRIS ratings. Among the 24 QRISs with 5 or 6 levels, there are a total of 43,726 licensed center-based and FCC programs with ratings. The highest proportion of these programs across all 24 QRISs is at the first level of quality (27 percent). The lowest proportion of programs are rated at levels 5 or 6 (14 percent; see

Figure 1).

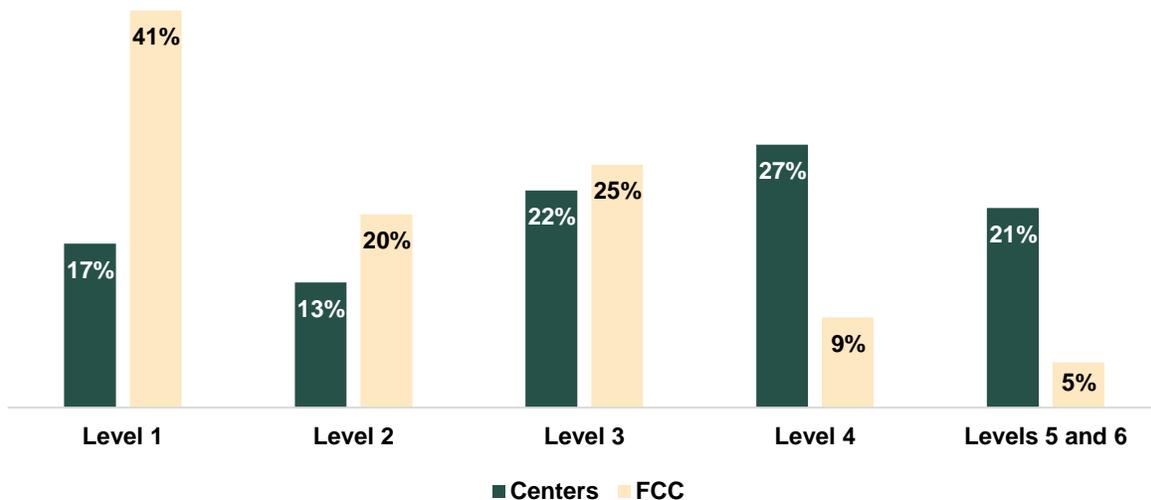
Figure 1. Percentage of Licensed Center-Based and FCC Programs at Each Quality Level in All 5- and 6-level QRISs, 2019



Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on March 27, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>
Note: N = 24 QRISs.

Of 5- and 6-level QRISs, FCC programs had a higher percentage of programs at levels 1, 2, and 3 than centers. Center-based programs had a higher percentage of programs at levels 4 and 5 or 6 than FCC programs (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Percentages of Programs at Each Quality Level in 5- and 6-Level QRISs, by Program Type, 2019

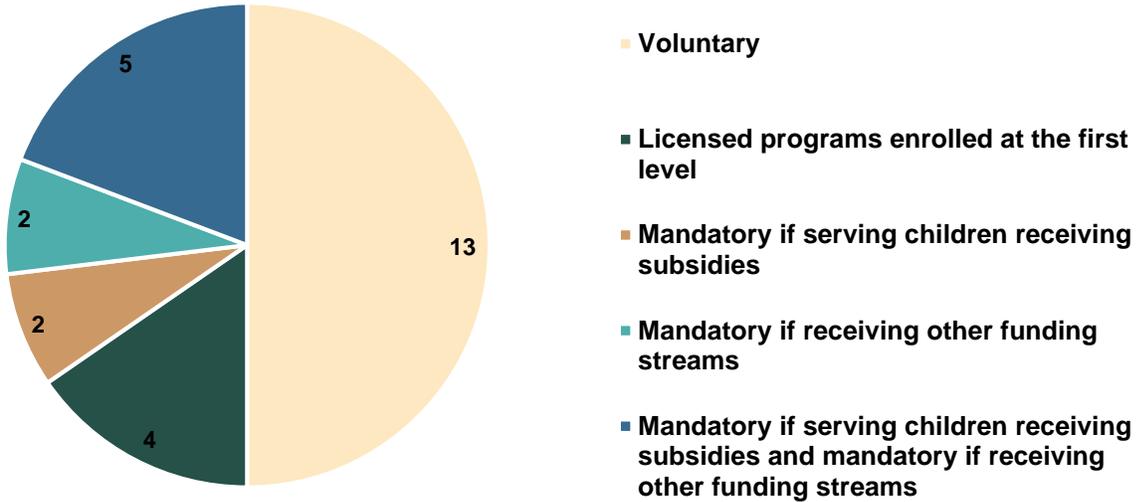


Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on March 27, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>
Note: N = 24 QRISs reporting center data and 23 QRISs reporting FCC data.

Across the 26 QRISs with 5 or 6 quality levels, 13 (50 percent) have voluntary participation rules, and 9 (35 percent) have a requirement based on funding stream. They require participation for programs serving children receiving subsidies or for programs receiving other funding streams (see

Figure 3).

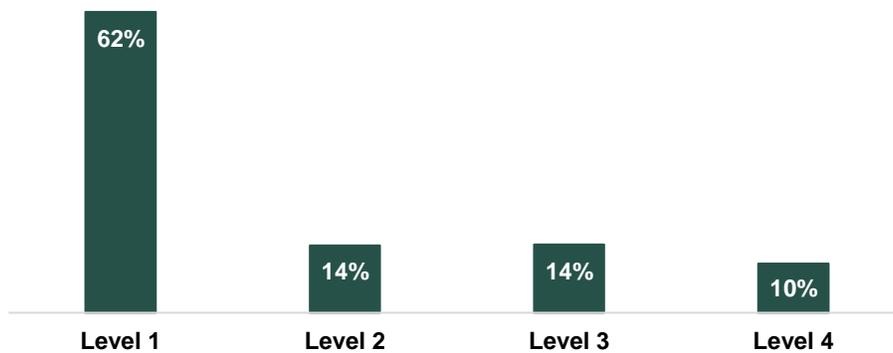
Figure 3. Number of 5- or 6-level QRISs with Each Participation Rule, 2019



Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on May 28, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>
Note: N = 26 QRISs.

Of the 12 QRISs with 4-level rating systems, 11 reported data about QRIS ratings. There are a total of 31,447 licensed center-based and licensed FCC programs with ratings among the 12 QRISs with 4 levels. Most programs are at the first level of quality (62 percent) while smaller percentages of programs are at the second, third, and fourth levels of quality (14, 14, and 10 percent, respectively; see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Percentage of Licensed Center-Based and FCC Programs at Each Quality Level in All 4-level QRISs, 2019

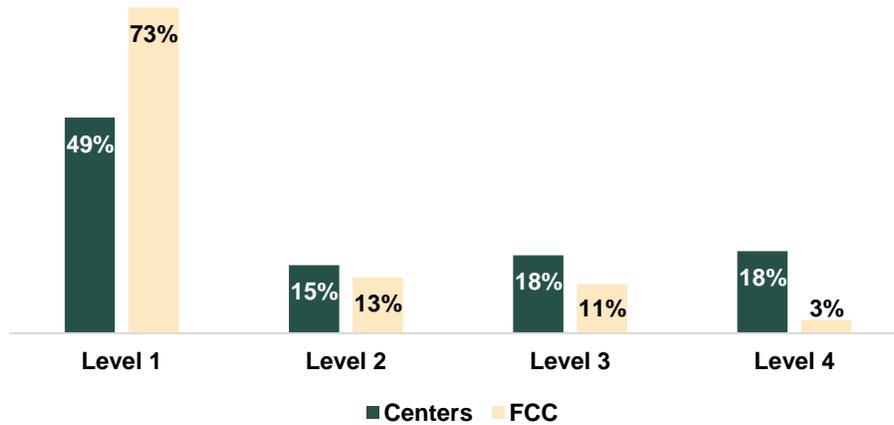


Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on March 27, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>
Note: N = 11 QRISs.

Of 4-level QRISs, FCC programs had a higher percentage of programs at level 1 than centers. Center-based programs had a higher percentage of programs at level 4 than FCC programs (see

Figure 5).

Figure 5. Percentages of Programs at Each Quality Level in 4-level QRISs, by Program Type, 2019

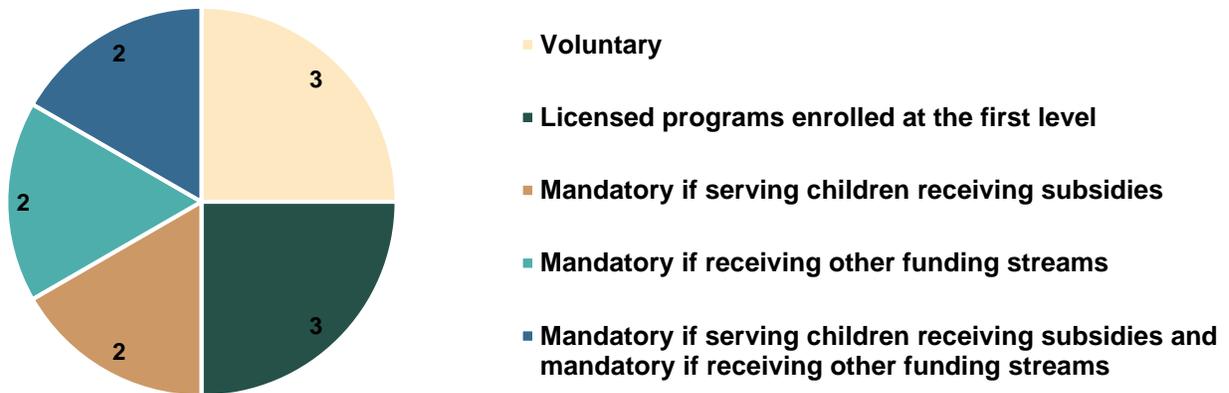


Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on March 27, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>

Note: N = 11 QRISs reporting center data and 10 QRISs reporting FCC data.

Across the 12 QRISs with 4 levels of quality, 6 (51 percent) have a participation requirement based on funding stream, 3 (25 percent) have voluntary participation rules, and 3 (25 percent) enroll licensed programs at the first level (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Number of 4-level QRISs with Each Participation Rule, 2019



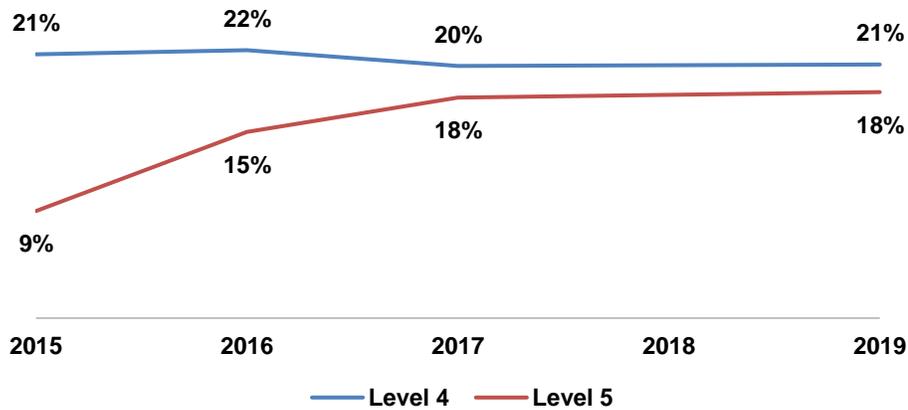
Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on May 28, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>

Note: N = 12 QRISs.

While ratings are more common at lower levels of quality compared with higher quality levels, average program ratings at higher quality levels (in other words, the average percentage of programs at levels 4 and 5 for all program types across QRISs) have increased over the past 5 years. Between 2015 and 2019, the average

percentage of programs at level 5 increased from 9 percent to 18 percent, while the percent of programs at level 4 remained steady (see Figure 7).⁵

Figure 7. Average Percentage of All Programs Rated at Levels 4 and 5, 2015–2019⁶

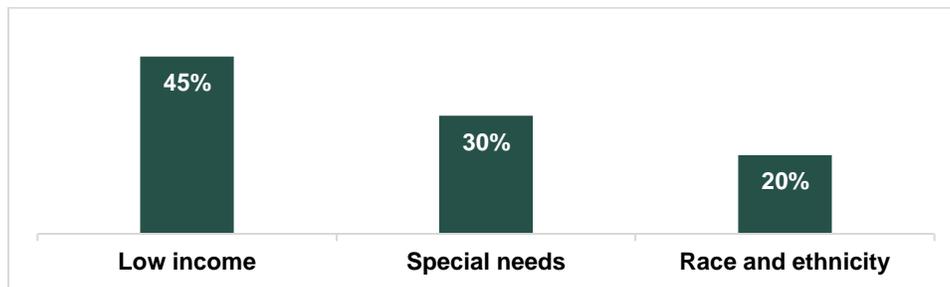


Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on March 27, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>

Participation Data Collected on Child Demographics

While program-level data provide an overview of QRIS participation across the country, some QRISs collect participation data on the children being served in rated programs. Of the 44 QRISs reporting this information, 27 (61 percent) collect child-level participation data. As shown in Figure 8, 20 QRISs (45 percent) collect data on children from low-income families, and 13 QRISs (30 percent) collect data on children with special needs. Additionally, a small percentage of QRISs collect data on children’s race and ethnicity (9 QRISs, 20 percent).

Figure 8. Types of Child-Level Demographic Data Collected by Quality Initiative, 2019



Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on January 20, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>

Note: N = 44 QRISs.

Of the 27 QRISs that collect participation data on children, 8 (30 percent) collect data at least once per year, 10 (37 percent) collect data 3 to 4 times per year, and 6 (22 percent) collect data every month.

⁵ Data were not collected during 2018.

⁶ In the 2016 and 2017 QRIS fact sheets on program participation, this chart depicted the average *number* of programs at levels 4 and 5, rather than the average *percentage* of all programs rated at these levels, over time. The figure was updated to focus on trends over time in the proportion of programs rated as high-quality, rather than simply increasing the number of programs at higher levels.

Appendix

Appendix A. Licensed Program Participation Rules and Densities Across QRISs, 2019

State or Locality	Licensed Center-Based Program Density	Licensed Center-Based Program Participation Rule	Licensed Family Child Care Program Density	Licensed Family Child Care Program Participation Rule
Alaska	41%	Voluntary	31%	Voluntary
Arizona	35%	Voluntary	10%	Voluntary
Arkansas	63%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies	49%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies
California	24%	Voluntary	5%	Voluntary
Colorado	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level
Delaware	84%	Mandatory if receiving other funding	20%	Mandatory if receiving other funding
District of Columbia	48%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies	49%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies
Florida (Duval)	93%	Voluntary	76%	Voluntary
Florida (Miami-Dade)	84%	Voluntary	16%	Voluntary
Florida (Palm Beach)	NR	Voluntary	NR	Voluntary
Georgia ^a	48%	Voluntary	29%	Voluntary
Idaho	20%	Voluntary	4%	Voluntary
Illinois	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level
Indiana	89%	Mandatory if receiving other funding	71%	Mandatory if receiving other funding
Iowa	48%	Voluntary	23%	Voluntary
Kentucky ^b	60%	Mandatory if receiving other funding	50%	Mandatory if receiving other funding
Louisiana	NR	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies Mandatory if receiving other funding	n/a	n/a

State or Locality	Licensed Center-Based Program Density	Licensed Center-Based Program Participation Rule	Licensed Family Child Care Program Density	Licensed Family Child Care Program Participation Rule
Maine	66%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies Mandatory if receiving other funding	48%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies Mandatory if receiving other funding
Maryland	69%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies	39%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies
Massachusetts	41%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies Mandatory if receiving other funding	57%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies Mandatory if receiving other funding
Michigan	63%	Mandatory if receiving other funding	42%	Mandatory if receiving other funding
Minnesota	42%	Voluntary	15%	Voluntary
Montana	44%	Voluntary	19%	Voluntary
Nebraska	NR	Voluntary	NR	Voluntary
Nevada	NR	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies Mandatory if receiving other funding	NR	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies Mandatory if receiving other funding
New Hampshire	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level
New Jersey	3%	Voluntary	2%	Voluntary
New Mexico	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level
New York	2%	Voluntary	1%	Voluntary
North Carolina	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level
North Dakota	41%	Voluntary	7%	Voluntary
Ohio ^a	59%	Voluntary	80%	Voluntary
Oklahoma	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level
Oregon	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level

State or Locality	Licensed Center-Based Program Density	Licensed Center-Based Program Participation Rule	Licensed Family Child Care Program Density	Licensed Family Child Care Program Participation Rule
Pennsylvania	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level
Rhode Island	79%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies Mandatory if receiving other funding	83%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies Mandatory if receiving other funding
South Carolina	51%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies	26%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies
Tennessee	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level
Texas	15%	Voluntary	3%	Voluntary
Utah	34%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies	n/a	n/a
Vermont	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level	100%	Licensed programs enrolled at the first level
Virginia	30%	Voluntary	15%	Voluntary
Washington	47%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies Mandatory if receiving other funding	40%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies Mandatory if receiving other funding
Wisconsin	84%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies Mandatory if receiving other funding	69%	Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies Mandatory if receiving other funding
Total	Voluntary = 18 QRISs Licensed programs enrolled at the first level = 10 QRISs Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies = 12 QRISs ^c Mandatory if receiving other funding = 11 QRISs ^c		Voluntary = 18 QRISs Licensed programs enrolled at the first level = 10 QRISs Mandatory if serving children receiving subsidies = 10 QRISs ^c Mandatory if receiving other funding = 10 QRISs ^c	

Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on March 27, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>

Notes: “n/a” stands for “not applicable,” and “NR” stands for “not reported.”
a OH and GA’s QRISs are transitioning to require programs serving children receiving subsidies to participate. This policy was in full effect for both states in July 2020.

b KY's QRIS profile was last updated in 2017.

c Seven QRISs have overlapping requirements and require licensed centers to participate if they serve children receiving subsidies and if they receive other funding. Louisiana does not include licensed family child care programs in the QRIS, so there are six QRISs with overlapping requirements for licensed FCC programs.

The National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance (ECQA Center) supports state and community leaders and their partners in the planning and implementation of rigorous approaches to quality in all early care and education settings for children from birth through age 12. The ECQA Center is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

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