

Children with Special Needs and Inclusion Practices in QRISs

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

Children with Special Needs and Inclusion Practices in QRISs, 2019

Inclusion practices are efforts to make early care and education settings equally accessible for children with identified or suspected delays, disabilities, or special medical needs. Unlike some other quality indicators, most QRISs embed provisions for children with special needs or inclusion practices across many domains of quality, such as curriculum and assessment, family and community engagement, and health and safety. QRISs often support programs by offering technical assistance (TA) that specifically focuses on inclusion practices or support for children with special needs.

This fact sheet provides a descriptive analysis of information gathered from the 2019 Quality Compendium¹ and details special needs and inclusion practices in all 44 QRISs, categorized by program type. In this fact sheet, you will also find information on the relationship between QRISs and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Quality Indicators on Children with Special Needs and Inclusion Practices

Child- or program-level information allows programs, providers, and QRISs to accommodate and plan to serve all children and their families. More than half of QRISs collect enrollment data² on children from programs participating in the QRIS, and 13 QRISs collect enrollment data from programs about children with special needs.

Despite the small number of QRISs that collect these data, 29 QRISs indicate that they have indicators about provisions for children with special needs in child care centers or family child care (FCC) settings (for example, accommodations in curriculum and program policies on inclusion).

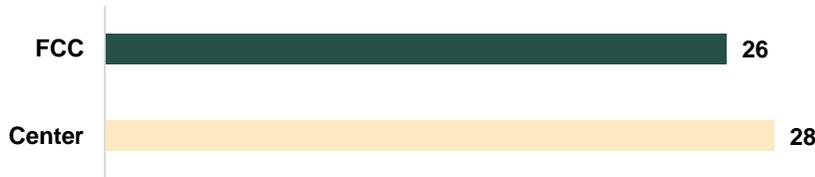
Figure 1 shows that 28 QRISs (64 percent, $N = 44$ QRISs) report indicators about provisions for children with special needs in centers, while 26 QRISs (59 percent, $N = 44$ QRISs) report indicators for provisions in FCC settings. Most QRISs (86 percent, $N = 44$ QRISs) have these provisions in both centers and FCC settings. Three

¹ The Quality Compendium was previously named the QRIS Compendium.

² Other child-level demographic options included in the Quality Compendium are data on families from low-income households and data on race and ethnicity.

QRISs (10 percent, $N = 29$ QRISs) have provisions only in centers, and one (3 percent, $N = 29$ QRISs) has provisions only in FCC settings.

Figure 1. Number of QRISs that Report Quality Indicators Regarding Provisions for Children with Special Needs for FCC Settings and Centers



Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on January 31, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>

Notes: $N = 44$ QRISs. Some are in multiple categories.

Features of Inclusion Quality Indicators

Data in the Quality Compendium are collected from QRIS administrators who may select from a list or fill in specific features about their QRIS. As shown in table 1, QRISs generally report more quality indicators for inclusion in centers, as compared with FCC settings. The feature most selected among QRISs is incorporating a written statement on inclusion for both centers (27 percent, $N = 44$ QRISs) and FCC settings (29 percent, $N = 42$ QRISs). About one-quarter of QRISs report that they do not have indicators related to inclusion practices for centers (27 percent, $N = 44$ QRISs) and FCC settings (27 percent, $N = 44$ QRISs).

Most QRISs categorized the features of their quality indicators that address inclusion as “other” for centers (52 percent, $N = 44$ QRISs) and FCC settings (60 percent, $N = 42$ QRISs). The majority of these systems noted that inclusion measures or provisions to accommodate children with special needs are embedded throughout their QRIS standards and appear across indicators.

Specifically, many centers (83 percent, $N = 23$ QRISs) and FCC settings (80 percent, $N = 25$ QRISs) stated that rated programs must demonstrate—through a checklist, written statement, or other means—that their curriculum and classroom environments are developmentally appropriate and can be adapted to serve children with diverse abilities. Five QRISs described a point system in which programs are awarded for demonstrating inclusion standards beyond the minimum requirements. Four QRISs reported that the indicators require or encourage provider trainings on inclusive classroom practices.

Table 1. Number of QRISs with Quality Indicator Features That Address Inclusion

Quality Indicator Features	FCC	
	Centers	Settings
Written statement on inclusion	8	5
Formal agreement with local education agency or early intervention provider	5	2
Individualized Education Plan or Individualized Family Service Plan reviews with staff and families	4	3
Suspension and expulsion prevention policy	3	1

	Quality Indicator Features	Centers	FCC Settings
Other	Developmentally appropriate curriculum and classroom	19	20
	Points awarded for meeting inclusion standards beyond minimum requirements	3	4
	Require or encourage participation in training on inclusion	5	4

Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on January 31, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>

Notes: *N* = 44 QRISs for centers; *N* = 41 QRISs for FCC settings, but *N* = 42 QRISs for FCC settings in the written statement on inclusion and other categories. Some are in multiple categories.

Features of Curriculum and Assessment Indicators

Eight QRISs (19 percent, *N* = 43 QRISs) indicated that their curriculum indicators address adaptations that are made for children with special needs in centers, and four specified that these adaptations are in FCC settings (9 percent, *N* = 44 QRISs). Examples of curricular adaptations may include modifying activity goals to meet the child where they are, altering materials to encourage participation, or another action to encourage inclusion.

More QRISs report that they have assessment indicators than curriculum indicators in both centers and FCC settings. Assessment results are formally shared with families in 16 QRISs (36 percent, *N* = 44 QRISs) in centers and 13 (31 percent, *N* = 42 QRISs) in FCC settings. A majority of QRISs (64 percent, *N* = 44 QRISs) report that assessment results are used to guide individualization.

Table 2. Number of QRISs with Features of Curriculum and Assessment Indicators That Address Inclusion

Curriculum and Assessment Indicators	Centers	FCC Settings
Curriculum: Adaptations for children with special needs	8 (<i>N</i> = 43)	4
Assessment: Formally share assessment results with families	16	13 (<i>N</i> = 42)
Assessment results guide individualization	28	29

Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on January 31, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>

Notes: *N* = 44 QRISs, unless otherwise noted. Some are in multiple categories.

Features of Developmental Screening Indicators

Developmental screenings can be helpful in identifying special needs to appropriately provide early intervention services and create an inclusive environment. Examples of developmental screenings that QRISs report in centers and FCC settings include the following:

- ◆ Ages and Stages Questionnaire
- ◆ BRIGANCE Early Childhood Screens
- ◆ Battelle Developmental Inventory
- ◆ Early Screening Inventories
- ◆ Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning
- ◆ Denver Developmental Screening Test
- ◆ Learning Accomplishment Profile–Diagnostic
- ◆ Parents’ Evaluation of Developmental Status

About one-third of QRISs have indicators for developmental screenings in centers (35 percent, $N = 44$ QRISs for infants and toddlers; 37 percent, $N = 44$ QRISs for preschoolers), and approximately one-quarter of QRISs have indicators for developmental screenings in FCC settings (23 percent, $N = 42$ QRISs for infants and toddlers; 26 percent, $N = 43$ QRISs for preschoolers), as shown in table 3. Few QRISs have specific indicators addressing the validity and reliability of the screening tool, family input, deadlines to complete the screening, and formal referral processes after the screening tool is used.

Table 3. Number of QRISs with Features of Developmental Screening Indicators That Address Inclusion by Centers and FCC Settings, by Children’s Ages

Developmental Screening Indicators	Centers Infants/Toddlers	Centers Preschoolers	FCC Settings Infants/Toddlers	FCC Settings Preschoolers
Ensure that specific developmental screening tools are approved for use.	15	16	10	11 ($N = 43$)
Require valid and reliable developmental or behavioral screening tools.	4	4	4	4
Require family input during screening processes.	3	2	3	3
Require screening be completed within a certain timeframe following the date of enrollment.	4	6	4	4
Ensure the formal referral process is guided by screening results.	3	3	4	4

Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on January 31, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>

Notes: $N = 43$ QRISs for centers, infants and toddlers, and preschoolers; $N = 44$ QRISs for FCC settings and infants and toddlers; $N = 42$ QRISs for FCC settings and preschoolers, unless otherwise noted. Some are in multiple categories.

Other Indicators That Address Inclusion

Table 4 highlights information on other indicators related to children with special needs and inclusion practices, including environment and interaction, partnership and engagement, and health and safety indicators. Few QRISs reported any of these indicators related to special needs and inclusion.

One QRIS (Learn & Grow, in Alaska) indicated that the quality of adult-adult interactions (for example, teachers with family members or teachers with specialists) is addressed through an indicator in their system, for FCC settings only.

Four QRISs (9 percent, *N* = 44 QRISs) report that they provide family advocacy resources for children with special needs in centers. Three QRISs (7 percent, *N* = 43 QRISs) report that they require special medical needs plans in centers. The QRIS for Duval County, Florida, is the only one that reported that they provide family advocacy resources and a special medical needs plan in FCC settings.

Table 4. Number of QRISs with Quality Indicator Features That Address Other Features of Inclusion

Inclusion Indicators	Quality Indicator Features	Centers	FCC Settings
Environment and interaction indicators	Adult-adult interactions	0	1
	Adaptations for children with special needs	2	3
Partnership and engagement indicators	Provision of family advocacy resources for children with special needs	4	1
Health and safety indicators	Special medical needs plan	3	1

Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on January 31, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>

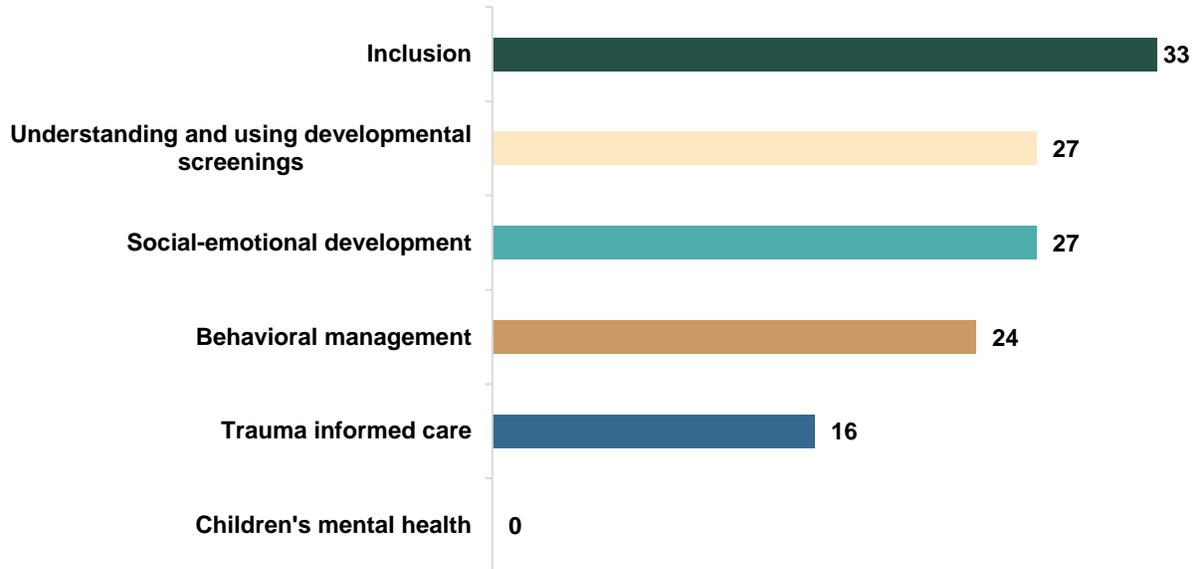
Notes: *N* = 43 QRISs for features of environment and interaction indicators in centers; *N* = 42 QRISs for features of environment and interaction indicators in FCC settings. *N* = 44 QRISs for features of partnership and engagement indicators in centers; *N* = 40 QRISs for features of partnership and engagement indicators in FCC settings. *N* = 43 QRISs for features of health and safety indicators in centers; *N* = 43 QRISs for features of health and safety indicators in FCC settings. Some are in multiple categories.

Technical Assistance

All 44 QRISs reported information on types of TA that are employed in their system. Figure 2 shows the number of QRISs offering TA in a variety of subjects related to special needs and inclusion. The most popular form of TA among QRISs is inclusion (75 percent). Most QRISs offer TA in social-emotional development (61 percent), understanding and using developmental screenings (61 percent), and behavioral management (55 percent). A

minority of QRISs offer TA on trauma-informed care (16 percent). None of the QRISs reported that they offer TA specifically about children’s mental health.

Figure 2. Technical Assistance Subjects Related to Special Needs and Inclusion



Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on January 31, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>

Notes: N = 44 QRISs. Some are in multiple categories.

Connections with IDEA

Participation of Programs Receiving IDEA Funding

Fifteen QRISs reported that programs in the QRIS serve children receiving IDEA funding. Of those, 12³ (80 percent) reported that QRIS participation is voluntary, and 3⁴ (20 percent) reported that participation is mandatory for programs receiving IDEA funds.

Figure 3. QRIS Participation Rules for Programs Receiving IDEA Funding



³ AZ, CA, DE, FL (Miami Dade), GA, IA, ID, MI, NJ, OR, SC, and VA.

⁴ LA, NM, and VT.

Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on January 31, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>

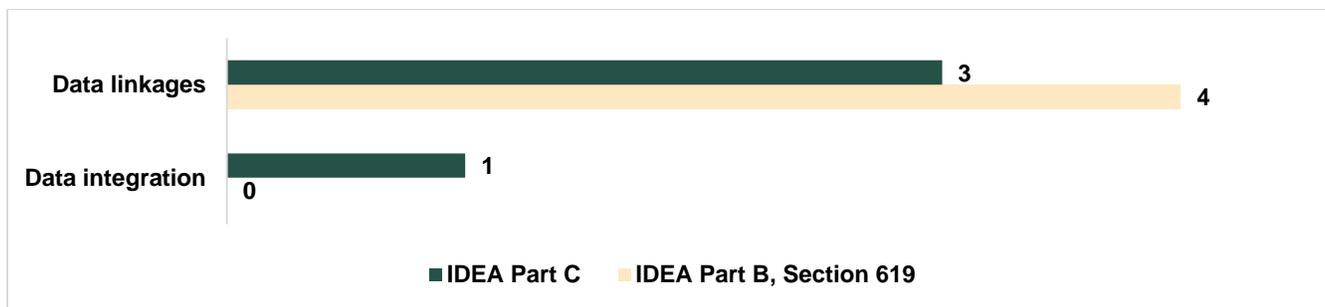
Note: N=15 QRISs.

Data Linkages with Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education

Part C of IDEA awards formula grants to states to support early intervention for children ages birth through 2 and their families. Through Part B, Section 619, of IDEA, this supplementary funding can continue until children enter kindergarten or elementary school.⁵

Some states have *linked* data systems in which data are housed in different agencies or databases but can be linked together by common data elements (for example, identification numbers or program names). Other states have *integrated* data systems. An integrated data system is overseen by multiple agencies or offices that contribute data about their programs. Four QRISs reported that they have data linkages with Part B, Section 619, and zero reported that their information is integrated in the state’s Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System. Similarly, three QRISs (7 percent) reported data linkages with Part C, and one (Quality Counts California) reported data integration.

Figure 4. Data Linkages and Integration with Early Intervention (Part C) and Early Childhood Special Education (Part B, Section 619)



Source: BUILD Initiative, & Child Trends. (2019). A catalog and comparison of quality initiatives [Data system]. Retrieved on January 31, 2020, from <http://qualitycompendium.org/>

Notes: N = 42 QRISs for data linkages; N = 41 QRISs for data integration. Some are in multiple categories.

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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