



# A Foundation for Quality Improvement Systems

## State Licensing, Preschool, and QRIS Program Quality Standards

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### Introduction

State interest in program quality improvement systems is being driven by a desire to improve outcomes for children, especially children with high needs. States are also trying to make informed decisions about quality investments based on their effectiveness in achieving desired outcomes. Finally, efforts like the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge have focused attention on standards, tracking progress, and supporting State systems of program quality improvement. Using a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) framework, the Office of Child Care drafted benchmarks for State systems and they included new quality questions in the biennial Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) grantee plans.

This document has been developed to help inform States about current program quality standards found in licensing regulations, state-funded preschool program standards, and quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS). This examination of current standards that apply to varied types of early care and education programs can be used to guide development and improvement of those standards. This brief contains an overall summary and comparative analysis followed by separate sections for each of the following standard's content areas:

- Preservice Qualifications and Ongoing Professional Development;
- Curriculum and Learning Activities;
- Child Assessment;
- Children's Health; and
- Family Engagement.

Finally, this document includes issues for future consideration.

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**A note about the age range of settings and standards addressed in this document.** Licensing standards for centers and family child care can apply to children up to age 13; however, some States have separate licensing standards for school-age settings and preschool settings. Both State preschool standards and Head Start standards only apply to programs serving preschool children. National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) program accreditation standards apply to programs that serve at least 10 children from birth through kindergarten. National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) standards apply to family child care settings that meet licensing standards and therefore typically apply to settings that serve children up to age 13. **In order to do an accurate and realistic comparison of standards, this document focuses on program standards that apply to preschool children.**<sup>1</sup>

## Types of State Program Quality Standards

Program quality standards reflect the structure and practices of programs to provide safe, legal, and effective services to children. It is important to not confuse program standards with learning and development guidelines that describe what children need to know and be able to do, and standards for practitioners that describe what early childhood teachers/providers must know and be able to do to work effectively with young children.

**Program quality standards** describe the expectations for the characteristics or quality of early care and education settings.

States have developed several types of program standards—some are mandatory and must be met in order to operate legally and some are voluntary and typically reflect a higher level of quality. There are also sets of Federal program standards that apply to programs receiving payment from specific funding sources, such as the Federal Head Start Performance Standards. The purpose of this analysis is to compare the standards that are developed and monitored by State agencies. Head Start programs are monitored by the Federal government and meet the same set of standards in all States. The following are descriptions of the common types of program standards that are developed by States.

### Child Care Licensing Regulations

State **child care licensing regulations** help protect the health and safety of children in out-of-home care. Licensing is a process administered by State governments that sets a baseline of requirements below which it is illegal for facilities to operate, unless they are legally exempt from licensing. States have laws and statutes that give them the authority to regulate child care providers, regulations that include the minimum requirements with which facilities must comply, and policies to support the enforcement of those requirements.

**Licensing** is defined as permission from a State that is required to operate a child care facility, which includes meeting specific center or family child care standards. Some States may call their regulatory processes *certification* or *registration*; for purposes of this brief, the terms *licensing* and *licensed* are used to represent all regulatory categories.

The vast majority of States, including the District of Columbia,<sup>2</sup> license child care center and family child care (FCC) home settings. Only one State, Idaho, does not license child care facilities at the State level; however, some large cities and counties in Idaho have their own licensing programs. According to *The 2008 Child Care Licensing Study*,<sup>3</sup> 50 States license child care centers and 48 States license family child care homes.

Even though most States license center- and home-based child care facilities, not all child care providers are required to comply with the regulations. All States have **legal exemptions** from licensing. For child care centers, some common exemptions include facilities with small numbers of children in care, facilities operating part-day or for a small number of hours per week/day, preschool programs operated by public schools, and facilities operated by religious organizations. Licensing exemptions for family child care homes are based on the number of children served by the

<sup>1</sup>The analysis for this brief was conducted by reviewing program standards documents available on State Web sites and compiling information from several public sources. A list of sources is available in Appendix B.

<sup>2</sup>For purposes of this brief, the District of Columbia is included as a State. Idaho passed a law in 2010 to have statewide licensing, but has not yet implemented that law.

<sup>3</sup>*The 2008 Child Care Licensing Study* (2010), by NCCIC and the National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA), available at [http://www.naralicensing.org/Licensing\\_Study](http://www.naralicensing.org/Licensing_Study).

home. *The 2008 Child Care Licensing Study* reports that 10 States license family child care homes when one child that is not related to the provider is served. On average, States license FCC homes when 3 or 4 children are in care.

## Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

**Quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) standards** are used to assign ratings to programs that voluntarily participate in QRIS, which is a systemic approach used by a growing number of States to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care programs. These standards provide parents and the public with information about each program’s quality. States typically use licensing standards as the starting point or base of the system, upon which higher levels of quality standards are built. Currently, 25 States have a statewide QRIS; the remaining States are developing a QRIS or other quality improvement initiatives.

Every QRIS contains two or more levels, or tiers, of standards beyond licensing, with incremental progressions to the highest level of quality as defined by the State. Systems vary in the number of levels and the number of standards identified in each level. The types of standards that are used to assign ratings are based on research about the characteristics of programs that produce positive child outcomes. Early and school-age care and education programs that choose to improve their quality and meet the QRIS standards often receive supports (e.g., technical assistance, professional development) and financial incentives (e.g., tiered subsidy reimbursement, bonus payments and awards) to help them meet and sustain the higher levels of quality.

### National Program Standards

There are program standards set by the Federal Government, such as the **Head Start Program Performance Standards** and the requirements for programs receiving child care subsidy payments from the **Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)**. There are also standards set by national **accreditation** organizations. There are several accreditation systems for early care and education programs, but the most commonly used are the National Association for the Education of Young Children (center-based programs) and the National Association for Family Child Care (home-based programs).

## State-funded Preschool

According to the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), there are 41 States with **preschool programs**—educational programs for preschool-age (typically 3- and 4-year-old) children that are funded, controlled, and directed by the State.<sup>4</sup> These programs are often administered by the State’s Department of Education. In the research conducted for this brief, it was discovered that one State<sup>5</sup> included in NIEER’s report has suspended the funding for its preschool program. Therefore, this brief includes information about 40 States. Nine States (DC, IA, KS, LA, NJ, PA, SC, VT, WI) operate more than one preschool program.<sup>6</sup>

There tend to be three common settings for State-funded preschool programs—public schools, community-based child care, and Head Start—with most States providing preschool services in multiple settings. The vast majority of States fund public schools to provide preschool programs.

The States vary in the settings where there is the highest enrollment of children in preschool programs.<sup>7</sup> In most States, the highest enrollment is found in the preschool programs located in public schools. Seven States (CT, FL, GA, MA, NJ, PA, RI) have a preschool program in which the highest enrollment of children is in private child care centers.

In most States that fund a preschool program, those programs need to comply with more than one set of program standards: preschool funding standards, licensing regulations, and Head Start Performance Standards (if applicable). A few States require preschool programs to achieve levels in the QRIS as a requirement for preschool funding.

<sup>4</sup> *The State of Preschool 2010* (2011), by W. Steven Barnett, Dale J. Epstein, Megan E. Carolan, Jen Fitzgerald, Debra J. Ackerman, and Allison H. Friedman, at the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), available at <http://nieer.org/yearbook/>.

<sup>5</sup> Since the publication of NIEER’s 2010 Yearbook, Arizona has eliminated funding for its preschool program.

<sup>6</sup> DC, IA, KS, LA, NJ, PA, SC, VT, and WI operate more than one preschool program. In this brief, information is reported for only one program in these nine States. Information was collected for the program with the largest child enrollment.

<sup>7</sup> Enrollment data were compiled from *The State of Preschool 2010* (see citation above).

Preschool programs operating in public schools—where there is the highest enrollment of children—tend to have the fewest sets of requirements to follow, especially in the States that have licensing exemptions for public school programs. Private child care often have multiple sets of standards to follow, since most are required to be licensed and have to follow the preschool standards to receive that funding. Also, these programs can voluntarily participate in QRIS or accreditation and need to meet those standards.

## Comparison of Program Quality Standards

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### *Challenges for States*

The U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services have made a commitment to moving State early learning and development systems beyond the status quo through the Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC)<sup>8</sup> grant program. The program acknowledges the various funding streams, program standards, and requirements of child care, Head Start, and publicly-funded preschool programs, as well as the variations and strengths that each brings to the early learning and development system. The challenge States must address in the RTT-ELC competition is to “sustain and build on the strengths of these programs, acknowledge and appreciate their differences, reduce inefficiency, improve quality, and ultimately deliver a coordinated set of services and experiences that support young children’s success in school

and beyond.”<sup>9</sup> Competitive requirements include the development of a common set of statewide program standards that will help to align child care, Head Start, and publicly-funded preschool to create a more unified system, as well as the design and implementation of QRIS.

The unique challenges faced by States in establishing a common set of standards are the result of the complexity of interconnections among the types of program standards and their strengths and weaknesses. This comparison of State and National standards is limited to an analysis of the content of the standards and the types of programs to which the standards apply; it does not address implementation and issues of fidelity, quality assurances processes, and inter-rater reliability, for example. Thus this analysis looks at content alignment and the potential to coordinate or integrate learning and development services and does not explore implementation effectiveness or outcomes. The following are the assumptions and limitations of the current standards analysis:

- Multiple sets of standards can apply to a single program with potentially conflicting or overlapping requirements and monitoring procedures.
- Due to variations in State licensing rules, monitoring capacity, and enforcement practices, the QRIS “foundation” provided by licensing can greatly impact the content of QRIS standards and the system design. In many States QRIS standards increase expectations for quality programming where licensing standards are already strong; in some States the QRIS standards and design address weaknesses in the licensing regulations or monitoring system; in yet other States the QRIS standards supplement strong licensing requirements and effective monitoring systems, by adding areas of expected program performance. These State variations that result from each State addressing their unique needs make it difficult to compare QRIS across States and to establish national standards that reflect State norms.
- State-funded preschool standards also vary greatly within and across States. Staff qualifications, especially, may vary within a State by setting type or even auspice. Monitoring and enforcement of standards is typically not a regulatory function and so while standards for curriculum and family engagement, for example, may be high, there may be little systematic observation or review of program practice.
- Head Start Standards are national standards that apply to all Head Start and Early Head Start programs and partnerships within the States. They are enforced through the federal review and monitoring system. Head Start standards are noted in each section by highlighted text boxes, but are not included in the comparisons tables because they do not vary by State.

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<sup>8</sup> Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Application for Initial Funding CFDA Number: 84.412 issued August 22, 2011.

<sup>9</sup> Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Application for Initial Funding CFDA Number: 84.412 issued August 22, 2011, p. 6.

- No one set of standards represents all essential elements of quality. Each has areas of strength. All sets address some of the same aspects of quality. This comparison of standards informs our understanding of the common elements, areas of strength from which to build, and areas of relative weakness across all sets of standards.

## ***Definitions of Program Standards***

For quality improvement systems to provide a meaningful difference in the development and school readiness of most children, the State systems need to provide universal standards for health, safety, development, and family support that assure all children are protected from physical and emotional harm and are prepared for success in school and in life. Yet State standards vary widely in how well they establish a mandatory floor for quality, whether significant portions of providers are exempted, and how high their aspirations are for programs funded by the State or those at the highest level of the QRIS. The following defines the unique characteristics of the three types of State program standards reviewed in this analysis.

**Child care licensing regulations** cover the broadest content, the largest number of children ages birth to school-age, and largest population of providers in the States. Unless a program falls under one of the legal exemptions, it must comply with licensing regulations in order to operate legally in the States. Licensing regulations have a statutory basis, are detailed in their language for the requirements, and enforced in a consistent manner. States vary significantly in their levels of licensing enforcement and compliance monitoring. A State may have strong licensing requirements but lack the resources or support to monitor compliance or use negative sanctions. *The 2008 Child Care Licensing Study* (NCCIC and NARA, 2010) notes that the most common frequency of routine licensing inspections is once a year, with five States making routine licensing inspections three or more times a year and seven States monitoring once every 2 years or less.<sup>10</sup>

**QRIS** are built on a foundation of licensing—compliance with licensing requirements is often the first level of a QRIS or a prerequisite for participation. The content of QRIS standards is limited to areas with the most impact on the quality of the program, such as staff qualifications, curriculum and learning activities, family engagement, and so on. Health and safety is rarely included in QRIS standards, because those areas are strong in licensing requirements. The methods States use to assess quality vary. Some States organize their standards as building blocks—in order to reach a higher level of the standards, programs must meet all of the standards in the lower levels. There are QRIS that award a number of points to programs as they meet various standards. A total number of points is calculated and certain scores are required to reach each quality level. Point systems allow for flexibility in recognizing program strengths, and while an overall level of quality is noted, there may be variations in quality across programs since programs can reach the same rating or level by meeting standards or demonstrating different levels of proficiency for specific standards. States using building block systems require all programs at a certain level to meet the same standards and all the standards before a rating is assigned. QRIS apply to a broad population of early and school-age care and education providers, but actual participation varies greatly. According to the *Compendium of Quality Rating Systems and Evaluations*, QRIS participation ranges from 100 percent of licensed programs (if the first level of the QRIS is equal to meeting licensing requirements) to less than 10 percent of programs in the State.<sup>11</sup> Participation data can be an indicator of the degree to which the QRIS has been successful in building a system by fully engaging programs in the initiative (Child Trends and Mathematica Policy Research, 2010).

**Preschool program standards** set a high level of quality for programs that seek State funding—in most cases, teachers must have bachelor’s degrees, programs must use curricula that are aligned with learning and development standards, and children are assessed using specific tools and measures. However, only programs that apply for the funding or are specifically developed to provide preschool services meet those standards. Also, state-funded preschool programs only serve 3- and 4-year-old children (in some States it is only 4-year-olds). This review of States’ preschool standards found that they are typically not written as a set of stand-alone standards. They are often written as guidelines, rather than laws or regulations, as are licensing standards, or may simply be embedded in the requirements in States’ requests for proposals

<sup>10</sup> *The 2008 Child Care Licensing Study* (2010), by NCCIC and the National Association for Regulatory Administration, available at [http://www.naralicensing.org/Licensing\\_Study](http://www.naralicensing.org/Licensing_Study).

<sup>11</sup> *Compendium of Quality Rating Systems and Evaluations* (2010), by Child Trends and Mathematica Policy Research, for the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, available at [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/cc/childcare\\_quality/index.html](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/cc/childcare_quality/index.html).

for funding. In addition, further examination is needed to understand how States monitor preschool programs for compliance with these standards, how non-compliance is addressed, and how the public is informed.

## Applicability of State Program Quality Standards

All States have at least one type of program quality standards that apply to early care and education programs. As shown in Table 1, nearly all States, including the District of Columbia, have child care licensing regulations. The only State that does not have State licensing regulations—Idaho—does have a QRIS. Half of all States are implementing QRIS statewide; and more than three-quarters of States have a preschool program.

**Table 1: Number of States with Program Quality Standards**

Program Quality Standards	Number of States
Licensing Regulations	50
QRIS Standards	25
State-funded Preschool Program Standards	40

### Child Care Programs

All States have program quality standards that apply to center-based child care programs. However, a few States do not have standards that apply to FCC homes. Three States—Idaho, Louisiana, and New Jersey—do not have licensing regulations for FCC. Of the 25 States with a QRIS, all have standards that apply to centers. All except two—Louisiana and Mississippi—have QRIS standards for FCC homes.

Data in the NIEER Preschool Yearbook show that 29 States fund (either directly or through subcontracts with schools) private child care centers to operate preschool programs. In addition, seven States (Arkansas, California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Mexico, and New York) fund preschool programs in home-based settings.

### Public School Programs

#### Licensing Exemptions

There are some differences among States on the applicability of standards for early learning programs operated by public schools. As noted above, licensing regulations apply to all programs for young children in a State, unless that State has a **licensing exemption** for a specific type of program (i.e., drop-in care) or a program that operates in a certain way (i.e., part day). A common exemption from licensing is for programs operated by public schools or approved by the State department of education. According to *The 2008 Child Care Licensing Study*, 19 States have licensing exemptions for programs operated by public schools and an additional nine States exempt programs approved by State departments of education.

Of the 40 States with State-funded preschool programs, 39 fund public schools to provide that program. Seven States have a preschool program that operates **only** in public schools.

More than 60 percent of States with a state-funded preschool program do not require the preschool programs in public schools to meet child care licensing regulations. Of the 28 States with a licensing exemption for public schools, 25 operate a State-funded preschool program. Of the seven States that have a preschool program that operates **only** in public schools, five have a licensing exemption for public schools.

There are additional licensing exemptions that could apply to state-funded preschool programs. Eight States (Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Washington) operate part-day preschool programs and

**Figure 1**  
**Examples of Linkages Between State-funded Preschool and QRIS**

- **Delaware** has an alternative pathway to 5-star status in its QRIS for Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Childhood Assistance Programs (ECAP) that are in full compliance with Head Start Performance Standards. Meeting Head Start Standards is required for programs receiving preschool funding from ECAP.
- In **North Carolina**, all classrooms in the More at Four prekindergarten program must achieve and maintain a four or five star level license, and meet additional program requirements set by the Office of School Readiness. The rated license is North Carolina's QRIS.
- Community-based programs that receive **Pennsylvania** Pre-K Counts funding must have a Keystone Stars QRIS rating of Star 2 or higher.
- In **Vermont**, all programs that receive preschool funding must be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or have a 4 or 5 star rating.

have an exemption from licensing for programs that operate 4 or fewer hours per day. Arkansas and Louisiana have a licensing exemption for programs operated by religious organizations and fund faith-based programs to operate preschools.

### **QRIS and Preschool**

Given that **QRIS standards** are built on a foundation of licensing, it stands to reason that programs that are exempt from licensing may not be participating in QRIS in large numbers. No data currently exists about the participation of state-funded preschool programs, and specifically those in public schools, in QRIS. See Figure 1 for examples of States with specific linkages between their state-funded preschool programs and QRIS.

## **Content Areas of Program Quality Standards**

States' program quality standards contain some content and criteria that are the same or equivalent, resulting in standards that apply to programs set in center- and home-based child care facilities and public schools. Five content areas have been identified as being common in the different types of State program quality standards:

- Preservice Qualifications and Ongoing Professional Development;
- Curriculum and Learning Activities;
- Child Assessment;
- Children's Health; and
- Family Engagement.

These content areas represent key components that all programs serving young children should address. As defined above, program quality standards describe the expectations for the characteristics or quality of early and education settings. The common core address the skills and knowledge of the adults who care for and educate young children, the activities children engage in to maximize learning, assessment of children's progress, relationships with families, and the general health and well-being of children.

Table 2 shows the percentage of States that have program quality standards in the five common core areas. **With a few exceptions, the percentages are very high and confirm that these areas are common across States and types of program standards.**

**Table 2: Percentage of States With Standards in Content Areas**

Program Standards	Percentage of States With Program Standards				
	Professional Development	Curricula/ Learning Activities	Child Assessment	Family Engagement	Children’s Health
State-funded Preschool Programs	100%	100%	83%	83%	100%
QRIS for Center-based Programs	100%	96%	92%*	96%	68%*
QRIS for FCC Homes	100%	96%	39%	83%	26%
Licensing Regulations for Center-based Programs	100%	98%	6%	92%	100%
Licensing for FCC Homes	98%	92%	0%	85%	100%

\* Note: Many of the States that have these standards require programs to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

An all-state matrix at the end of this brief (see Appendix A) shows which sets of standards include each of the five content areas. Table 3 shows that in most cases States have content in at least two sets of standards. Only child assessment is found mostly in one set, which is typically the state-funded preschool standards. Child assessment is also the only content area where a large percentage of States do not have any standards.

**Table 3: Sets of Standards with Content Areas**

Sets of Standards	Percentage of States				
	Professional Development	Curricula/ Learning Activities	Child Assessment	Family Engagement	Children’s Health
Three sets of standards	39%	37%	4%	29%	25%
Two sets of standards	47%	49%	25%	47%	61%
One set of standards	14%	12%	53%	22%	14%
None	0%	2%	18%	2%	0%

The following sections provide an analysis of the content of States’ licensing regulations, QRIS standards, and state-funded preschool program standards in these five content areas.

### ***Preservice Qualifications and Ongoing Professional Development***

All States’ program quality standards require specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions for those working with children via approved training, credentials, or degrees. The **preservice qualifications** in program quality standards can include a specific number of training hours in specialized content, State or national credentials, or higher education degrees practitioners must complete prior to working with young children. **Ongoing professional development** is a set number of clock hours and/or credit hours of training or coursework required annually or within another specified timeframe required to remain qualified for a position. The content of this training is generally related to the care and education of young children and is completed through a variety of methods, such as adult education courses, college courses, conference workshops, distance learning training, and in-service training.

An analysis of States' standards reveals that **all** State licensing regulations, state-funded preschool programs, and QRIS include standards about preservice qualifications or ongoing professional development, and many include criteria for both. These data focus on the roles of classroom **teacher** and FCC home **provider**, since those were the roles common across all sets of standards. Licensing regulations and QRIS also have standards for center directors, but state-funded preschool standards do not.

Table 4 below and the following narrative summarize the analysis done on the content of these standards.

**Table 4: Percentage of States with Standards About Teacher/FCC Provider Preservice Qualifications and Ongoing Training**

Content in Qualifications and Professional Development Standards	Percentage of States with Program Standards				
	State-funded preschool	QRIS		Licensing	
		Center	FCC	Center	FCC
<b>Preservice Qualifications</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>55%</b>
Training in Early Childhood/School-Age Content	0%	42%	100%	100%	100%
State or National Credential	13%	71%	83%	24%	17%
Associate's Degree	8%	8%	22%	0%	0%
Bachelor's Degree	79%	67%	30%	6%	0%
<b>Ongoing Professional Development</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>98%</b>
At Least 15 Hours of Ongoing Training	88%	80%	87%	48%	39%

### **Preservice Qualifications**

All States, except one (New Mexico), have preservice qualifications for teachers in its **state-funded preschool program**. More than three-quarters of States require state-funded preschool program teachers to have bachelor's degrees. The remaining States require the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or an associate's degree. In 12 States, the state-funded preschool program has lower qualifications for teachers who work in programs operated by private child care centers. Typically the teachers in private child care programs are required to have a CDA or associate's degree, while the teachers in public school preschool programs are required to have bachelor's degrees.

All **QRIS** have standards for preservice qualifications for classroom teachers and FCC home providers. Of the 25 States with a QRIS that applies to child care centers, two-thirds include a bachelor's degree for classroom teachers as the standard for achieving the highest QRIS level. Only 30 percent of States with QRIS for FCC home providers have a bachelor's degree as the highest level. Most of those States have the CDA or a state credential as the highest qualification. All QRIS for FCC include training in early childhood/school-age content at the first quality level. Most QRIS for child care centers have the CDA or a state credential at the first level. QRIS also frequently require participation in professional development activities, participation in a State professional registry system, or achievement of a level on a State career ladder/lattice.

Only one-third of States have preservice qualifications requirements for center teachers in their **child care licensing regulations**. Most of those States require teachers to have training in early childhood/school-age content. A few require the CDA or a State credential. Only one State (Colorado) requires center teachers to have a bachelor's degree. More than half of States have preservice qualifications for family child care providers. Similar to requirements for center-based teachers, most States require providers to have training in early childhood/school-age content, and a few require the CDA or a state credential. A little more than half of States have these licensing requirements for family child care providers.

## **Ongoing Professional Development**

All States have requirements for ongoing professional development for classroom teachers in **state-funded preschool programs**. Almost 90 percent of state-funded preschool programs require teachers to complete at least 15 hours of ongoing professional development annually.

Teachers in Head Start/Early Head Start programs are required to complete **15 hours** of training annually to remain in compliance with the Head Start Performance Standards.

Nearly all have these requirements in **licensing regulations** for child care centers and family child care homes. Close to half the States require at least 15 hours in their licensing regulations for child care center teachers; and nearly 40 percent require at least 15 hours for family child care home providers. The average number of hours required by licensing for center teachers is 13.5; and the average number of hours for family child care providers is 12.

More than 60 percent of **QRIS** have standards for ongoing professional development. Some QRIS also include criteria on the number of hours of ongoing training, often using the number of hours required by licensing as the lowest level and incrementally increasing the number of hours across QRIS levels. More than 80 percent of QRIS that include ongoing training have standards for at least 15 hours of annual professional development at the highest quality level.

## ***Curricula/Learning Activities***

Planned learning activities need to be based on expectations for what children need to know and be able to do. Nearly all States' program quality standards support children's learning through the use of **curricula/learning activities** that are based on the State learning and development guidelines.

As shown in Table 5, all state-funded preschool programs include standards on curricula/learning activities. Only one QRIS (Maryland) does not. Wyoming is the only State that does not have curriculum/learning activities requirements in its child care center licensing regulations. Of the States that license family child care homes, all States except four (California, Nebraska, South Dakota, Wyoming) have requirements about curriculum/learning activities.

**Table 5: Percentage of States with Standards About Curricula/Learning Activities**

Content in Curricula/Learning Activities Standards	Percentage of States with Program Standards				
	State-funded preschool	QRIS		Licensing	
		Center	FCC	Center	FCC
<b>States with Curriculum/Learning Activities Standards</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>92%</b>
Written Plan of Daily Learning Activities	28%	54%	48%	88%	48%
Planned or Approved Developmentally Appropriate Curricula	65%	46%	38%	8%	5%
Curricula Aligned With Learning and Development Guidelines	78%	50%	48%	6%	5%
Multiple Developmental Domains	40%	25%	52%	82%	70%
Environment Rating Scale Used to Document Developmentally Appropriate Use of Curricula/Learning Activities	55%	71%	71%	0%	0%

Within the standards about curriculum/learning activities, the specific criteria that programs must meet vary widely depending on the type of program standards. For state-funded preschool programs, more than three quarters of States

require programs to use **curricula aligned with learning and development guidelines**. Half of the QRIS include this criterion, but less than 10 percent of State licensing regulations have this requirement.

Almost two-thirds of state-funded preschool programs require a **planned or approved developmentally appropriate curriculum**. Less than half of QRIS for centers, and nearly 40 percent of QRIS for family child care homes, include this criterion. Again, less than 10 percent of State licensing regulations have this requirement.

Close to 90 percent of State licensing regulations for child care centers, required a **written plan of daily activities**. Nearly half of States have this licensing requirement for family child care homes. Less than 30 percent of state-funded preschool programs require a written plan of daily activities.

More than two-thirds of QRIS use **environment rating scales** as a measure of the learning environment. In five QRIS, the ERS assessment is the only criteria pertaining to the learning environment in the QRIS standards.

In addition, more than 80 percent of State licensing regulations stipulate that the learning activities must **address multiple developmental domains**; 70 percent have this requirement for family child care homes. Only 25 percent of States with a QRIS for child care centers have standards that stipulate that learning activities must address developmental domains; however, more than half have this criterion for family child care homes. This occurs because there are States that require accreditation by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) in their QRIS. The NAFCC standards include criteria about developmental domains.

Lastly, several States **use environment rating scales (ERS)** to document and measure the learning environment for children. No States include this in their licensing regulations; however, more than half of state-funded preschool programs conduct these program assessments. More than two-thirds of QRIS use ERS as a measure of the learning environment. In five QRIS, the ERS assessment is the only criteria pertaining to the learning environment in the QRIS standards.

## ***Child Assessment***

**Child assessment** includes activities (observations, portfolio development, and appraisal of performance using multiple indicators) that measure and track a child’s learning and development. At the program level, the results inform classroom practice, curriculum development, and learning activities. Results are typically shared with parents and are also used to address the needs of individual children. At the policy level, results may be used to target program quality improvement activities, gauge progress, or inform decisionmaking. In addition, some States use child assessments to identify children eligible for special services, modify curriculum to meet the needs of individual children, and ease the transition for children and families from home to school.

Overall, more than 80 percent of States have program quality standards about **child assessment**. As shown in Table 6, more than 80 percent of the States with these standards have them in the requirements for state-funded preschool programs; more than half have them in QRIS. Only three States have standards about child assessment in child care licensing regulations. There are some States with requirements or criteria about child assessment in more than one set of standards—21 percent have them in both state-funded preschool requirements and QRIS.

**Table 6: Percentage of States With Standards About Child Assessment**

Content in Child Assessment Standards	Percentage of States with Program Standards				
	State-funded Preschool	QRIS		Licensing	
		Center	FCC	Center	FCC
<b>States with Child Assessment Standards</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>0%</b>
Assessment Results Shared with Families	64%	87%	78%	67%	0%
Assessment Tools Aligned with Learning and Development Guidelines	70%	9%	11%	0%	0%
Assessment Results Used to Individualize Curriculum or Improve Practice	58%	74%	44%	33%	0%

The States’ program quality standards about child assessment apply mostly to **state-funded preschool programs** and tend to include requirements for the use of specific assessment tools. It is also mostly in state-funded preschool programs that States require programs to use assessment tools that **align with learning and development guidelines**.

Nearly all of the States with a **QRIS** have standards regarding child assessment. Instead of requiring specific assessment tools, the QRIS tend to have criteria related to observing and documenting children’s development and using the results to inform families and improve practice. In addition, less than half of the QRIS States have written their own standards about child assessment; they tend to use National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) program accreditation as the source for these standards. Of the States that have written their own QRIS standards about child assessment, most apply those standards to both center-based programs and family child care home providers.

Most States with program quality standards about child assessment stipulate that programs must **share the results of the assessments with families**, and use the results of child assessments to **individualize curriculum or improve practice in the classroom**. These standards occur in both state-funded preschool program requirements and QRIS. As noted above, very few QRIS set criteria about the use of specific assessment tools. Only three States (Massachusetts, Nevada, Vermont) have standards about child assessment in **child care licensing regulations**, with two of those States requiring programs to share assessment results with families. One State has requirements about the use of assessment results to improve program practices. No States have requirements about child assessment for family child care homes in their licensing regulations.

### ***Family Engagement***

Program quality standards can promote **family engagement**, support families’ involvement with their children’s learning, and strengthen partnerships with families. Standards often include criteria about regular communication with parents that supports children’s learning and development and opportunities for parents to participate in children’s activities, parenting education activities, and activities that support social networking or connections.

Overall, nearly all States have program quality standards about family engagement, as shown in Table 7. Only one State does not have standards in this area. Also, nearly all of the States with a QRIS have standards about family engagement; again only one State does not. The percentages are high for family engagement standards for state-funded preschool and licensing regulations—83 to 92 percent of States have these standards—indicating that family engagement is considered an essential element of quality programming in most States.

**Table 7: Percentage of States With Standards About Family Engagement**

Content in Family Engagement Standards	Percentage of States with Program Standards				
	State-funded preschool	QRIS		Licensing	
		Center	FCC	Center	FCC
<b>States with Family Engagement Standards</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>85%</b>
Communication with Families	59%	91%	89%	98%	100%
Classroom Participation	56%	50%	53%	50%	15%
Parent/Family Education	41%	64%	58%	2%	0%
Social Networking and Events	12%	27%	32%	2%	0%
Parent-Teacher Conferences	56%	77%	63%	35%	5%
Parent Advisory Committees	32%	32%	11%	0%	0%
Family Input to Program and Curriculum	41%	45%	37%	15%	2%
Coordination of Services	18%	27%	21%	2%	0%
Home Visits	21%	18%	21%	0%	0%

Within the standards about family engagement, the most common criteria pertain to the **programs’ communication with families**. Ninety percent of QRIS include this criterion; while nearly 100 percent of state licensing regulations require child care centers and family child care homes to communicate with parents on a regular basis. Close to 60 percent of States have this requirement for state-funded preschool programs.

High percentages of state-funded preschool and QRIS program standards include criteria about **parent-teacher conferences**. One-third of States include parent-teacher conferences in their licensing regulations for child care centers; however only five percent have this requirement for family child care homes, where it may not be deemed necessary since parent-provider interactions occur daily

Large percentages of state-funded preschool program and QRIS program standards also include criteria about **educating parents** about child development, parenting skills, and other topics related to the care of their children. However, only one State has requirements about parent education in its licensing regulations. This may be viewed by States as a function of higher quality programs, not a basic health and safety requirement.

**Head Start/Early Head Start** programs are required to communicate and engage with families in many ways:

- Parents are invited to observe and participate in group activities.
- Activities are conducted to enhance parenting skills and support children’s learning and development.
- A minimum of 2 staff-parent conferences are required per year.
- Parents must be encouraged to participate in policy making.
- Parents are invited to participate in development of curriculum and activities.

Another common criterion in family engagement standards is about **parents volunteering to participate in classroom activities**. Half, and more than half, of States have these standards for state-funded preschool programs, and in QRIS and licensing regulations for child care centers. Only 15 percent of States have licensing requirements for family child care homes about parents volunteering in program activities.

In addition, state-funded preschool and QRIS standards often include criteria about programs **seeking input from families** on the curriculum and other program policies. Some States have standards about programs forming advisory groups of families and other community members as a mechanism for providing input. Only 15 percent of licensing regulations for centers include requirements on seeking input from families; and only two percent have this requirement for family child care homes.

It is interesting to note that about 20 percent of state-funded preschool programs and QRIS include standards about **home visiting** as a way for early care and education programs to communicate and form relationships with families.

### Child Health

Program quality standards protect the health and well-being for all children in early and school-age care and education programs. This is done by requiring programs to collect and track information about each child’s health status through physical exams, immunization records, and routine health checks. To further promote positive developmental outcomes, program quality standards can included an initial developmental screening of children and referrals for families as appropriate.

All States have program quality standards about children’s health. Table 8 shows that all state-funded preschool program standards and State child care licensing regulations include these standards. There are significantly fewer States that have standards about children’s health in QRIS. QRIS standards are built on a foundation of licensing and, as shown in Table 8, all States have child health standards in their licensing regulations for both child care centers and family child care homes. Of the States that do have these standards in QRIS, it is because they require programs to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) which has standards about children’s health. These States did not write their own health standards in their QRIS.

**Table 8: Percentage of States With Standards About Child Health**

Content in Child Health Standards	Percentage of States with Program Standards				
	State-funded preschool	QRIS		Licensing	
		Center	FCC	Center	FCC
<b>States with Child Health Standards</b>	100%	68%	26%	100%	100%
Obtain Documentation of Physical Exams	70%	0%	0%	60%	63%
Obtain Immunization Records	88%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Assist With Children’s Dental Care	78%	0%	0%	4%	4%
Conduct Developmental Screenings of All Children	85%	16%	17%	0%	0%
Provide Referrals to Families for Additional Health Services	53%	20%	22%	6%	0%

Within the standards for children’s health, the most common criterion for programs to meet is obtaining children’s **immunization records**. Licensing regulations in all States have this require for both child care centers and family child care homes. Nearly 90% have this requirement for state-funded preschool programs. No States have this in their QRIS standards.

Another common criterion for programs is obtaining **documentation of children’s physical exams**. More than two-thirds of state-funded preschool programs are required to maintain these records; while more than 60 percent of States have this requirement in their licensing regulations. Again, no States have this in their QRIS Standards.

**Head Start/Early Head Start** programs must do the following to promote child health:

- Obtain medical, dental, and mental health well-child records (must meet Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment [EPSDT] schedule) and immunization records (within 90 days).
- Conduct or obtain developmental screening in collaboration with parent (within 45 days).
- Conduct ongoing screenings.
- Use screening results to individualize program and make referrals.

While immunization records and physical exams are required in all or most State licensing regulations, there are areas where state-funded preschool program standards have more content. First, state-funded preschool programs are often required to assist with **children’s dental care** as part of the comprehensive services they provide to children and families. More than three-quarters of the state-funded preschool programs have this requirement. No States have this in their QRIS, but two States have requirements about children’s dental care in their licensing regulations.

Most state-funded preschool programs are required to conduct **developmental screenings** of all children in the programs. These screenings are used to quickly assess how children are developing and relate to the overall health care component of the program. There are four QRIS (Idaho, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Ohio) with standards about developmental screenings. No States have this requirement in licensing regulations.

Often the results of these screenings are shared with parents and more than half of state-funded preschool programs are required to make **referrals to families for additional health services** based on the results of the screenings. Less than one-quarter of QRIS have standards about referrals to families. Three States have requirements about referrals in their licensing regulations.

## Considerations for States

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The creation of the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development in ACF as a method to emphasize and coordinate early childhood services across the Office of Head Start, the Office of Child Care, and the Maternal and Child Health Bureau’s Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program as well as with the US Department of Education’s Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge program, signals a concerted and strategic federal effort to improve program quality and child outcomes, especially for children with high risks. The Office of Child Care’s 2011 work in reorganizing the technical assistance network, CCDF preprint, and benchmarks project to focus on key program areas—subsidy, quality, and workforce—within a systems framework clearly supports and aligns with goals of RTT-ELC. Those goals include establishing a common set of standards within a strong QRIS that apply across sectors and are built on learning and development standards; address parent engagement, health screening, and child assessment; support a stable and well-qualified workforce; and inform program improvements and close the school readiness gap through data collection and evaluation.

This brief focused on a critical element of a quality improvement systems framework: the content of program standards. Standards establish commonly agreed upon markers of quality that must apply to all settings and sectors to support the development and learning of the greatest number of children. In order to maximize resources that support a child’s learning regardless of setting, program standards must be aligned across the various types of programs or funding sources, such as licensed or regulated child care, Head Start/Early Head Start, state-funded preschool, and out-of-school-time programs for school-age children, in both centers and family child care homes. Standards must be designed to address the unique needs of special populations including English language learners, children with developmental delays, immigrant and migrant children, and the growing population of children living in poverty. Standards must also recognize and validate the primary role of parents as first teachers and the importance of parent-program engagement in children’s learning and development.

The alignment of standards can yield the following benefits:

- Provide consistency of quality across programs, e.g., definitions of quality will mean the same thing in a preschool program as in a family child care home.
- Improve outcomes for children participating in different programs at different times of the day and different periods of their life.
- Increase the number of children from low-income families who have access to quality programs that meet their needs.
- Give the early and school-age care and education workforce a clear pathway to professional development. Retention of providers and staff is more viable when they are not faced with conflicting requirements. Limited training and professional development opportunities can be targeted at common core standards for efficiency.

- Increase the number of providers who participate in a statewide quality initiative as they are able to see one clear path to meeting requirements and clear expectations regarding education/training.
- Allow for more efficient use of limited resources as funding for program improvements can be shared and targeted.

The analysis above provides clear indication that some level of alignment is already occurring in the content of State program quality standards. However, more work can be done to help States think through strategies for improving alignment that can maximize current resources and provide greater access to programs of comparable quality for all children. The following are some questions for States to consider as they review their current standards, develop new standards (for a QRIS, for example), and form partnerships across the various programs that serve young children:

- Are standards meeting the needs of children, especially children at-risk of poor academic and developmental outcomes?
- What programs serve the highest percentage of at-risk children? What data is currently available to tell you this or what data do you need?
- Are standards applicable to all, or multiple, sectors of the early and school-age care and education system?
- Given the large number of exemptions to child care licensing, are there gaps in basic health and safety that should be addressed?
- Are the standards based on current research? Have the standards been validated by an external evaluator?
- Do the standards adequately address or recognize the unique cultural and language needs of the State's various populations of children and families?
- How is the evidence for meeting standards defined? How is implementation of standards documented? What processes are in place to ensure that compliance monitors and quality assessors, raters, and technical assistance providers are fair, consistent, and accurate? Are there opportunities for shared monitoring responsibilities and reciprocity?

## Conclusion

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In conclusion, while there are some differences, the content of program standards is strong in the five common core areas—professional development, curricula/learning activities, child assessment, family engagement, and child health. Program quality standards have different purposes and should be enhanced and aligned across sectors so that those purposes lead to the best quality for all young children. Licensing regulations set a floor of mandatory health and safety requirements that all providers of early and school-age care and education follow. QRIS build steps to higher quality that licensed programs can achieve on a voluntary basis. Parents of children who are at risk of poor academic and developmental outcomes may choose to enroll their children in any number of sectors and settings. Alignment of program quality standards across sectors is a vital step in ensuring that all children have access to consistent quality care in their State.

## Appendix A

### *Program Standards Containing Content Areas in Each State*

State	Professional Development	Curriculum, Activities, Learning Environment	Child Assessment	Family Engagement	Health and Developmental Screening	Notes
AK	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	Preschool	Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All state-funded preschool programs are located in public schools.</li> </ul>
AL	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	Preschool	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State-funded preschool programs are located mostly in public schools, private child care centers, and Head Start (in order by child enrollment).</li> </ul>
AR	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State-funded preschool programs are located mostly in public schools, private child care centers, and Head Start (in order by child enrollment).</li> <li>QRIS standards apply to child care centers and family child care homes.</li> </ul>
AZ	Licensing	Licensing		Licensing—Centers only	Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arizona does not have a state-funded preschool program.</li> <li>Arizona is implementing a statewide QRIS in 2011.</li> </ul>
CA	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing—Centers only	Preschool	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most state-funded preschool programs are located in public schools. A small percentage of preschool programs are in private child care centers.</li> </ul>
CO	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS—Centers only	Preschool Licensing	Preschool QRIS—Centers only Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most state-funded preschool programs are located in public schools. Some programs are in Head Start and private child care centers.</li> <li>Colorado's QRIS awards points to programs that are accredited by NAEYC. NAEYC has standards about child assessment and health.</li> </ul>

State	Professional Development	Curriculum, Activities, Learning Environment	Child Assessment	Family Engagement	Health and Developmental Screening	Notes
CT	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	Preschool	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State-funded preschool programs are located mostly in private child care centers, public schools, and Head Start (in order by child enrollment).</li> <li>Assessment requirements are contained in NAEYC accreditation. State-funded preschool programs must be accredited or complete the process within three years of being awarded the funds, or be approved by Head Start.</li> </ul>
DC	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS—Centers only	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS—Centers only Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most state-funded preschool programs are located in public schools. Some programs are in Head Start and private child care centers.</li> <li>Accreditation is required to achieve the QRIS highest level. Center-based programs may choose to pursue NAEYC or another accreditation. NAEYC has standards about child assessment and health.</li> </ul>
DE	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	QRIS	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State-funded preschool programs are required to meet the Head Start Performance Standards. Head Start standards do not include child assessment.</li> </ul>
FL	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	Preschool		Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most state-funded preschool programs are located in private child care centers. Some are located in public schools.</li> </ul>
GA	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	Preschool	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State-funded preschool programs are located mostly in private child care centers and public schools (in order by child enrollment).</li> </ul>
HI	Licensing	Licensing		Licensing	Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hawaii does not have a state-funded preschool program or QRIS.</li> </ul>

State	Professional Development	Curriculum, Activities, Learning Environment	Child Assessment	Family Engagement	Health and Developmental Screening	Notes
IA	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS—Centers only	Preschool QRIS Licensing—Centers only	Preschool QRIS—Centers only Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Iowa has two state-funded preschool programs—Shared Visions and the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SVPP).</li> <li>SVPP has requirements for child assessment; Shared Visions does not.</li> <li>All SVPP are located in public schools.</li> <li>Iowa’s QRIS awards points to programs that are accredited by NAEYC. NAEYC has standards about child assessment and health.</li> </ul>
ID	QRIS	QRIS	QRIS	QRIS	QRIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>QRIS standards apply to child care centers and family child care homes.</li> <li>Idaho does not have a state-funded preschool program.</li> <li>Idaho does not have child care licensing at the State level.</li> </ul>
IL	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS—Centers only	Preschool QRIS—Centers only Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State-funded preschool programs are located in public schools, private child care centers, and Head Start (child enrollment unknown).</li> <li>Accreditation is required to achieve the QRIS highest level. Center-based programs may choose to pursue NAEYC or another accreditation. NAEYC has standards about child assessment and family engagement.</li> </ul>
IN	QRIS Licensing—Centers only	QRIS Licensing	QRIS—Centers only	QRIS Licensing	QRIS—Centers only Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accreditation is required to achieve the QRIS highest level. Center-based programs may choose to pursue NAEYC or another accreditation. NAEYC has standards about child assessment and health.</li> <li>Indiana does not have a state-funded preschool program.</li> </ul>
KS	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	Preschool	Licensing—Centers only	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most state-funded preschool programs are in public schools. There are programs in Head Start and private child care centers, but child enrollment is unknown.</li> </ul>

State	Professional Development	Curriculum, Activities, Learning Environment	Child Assessment	Family Engagement	Health and Developmental Screening	Notes
KY	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS—Centers only	Preschool QRIS—Centers only	Preschool QRIS—Centers only Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All state-funded preschool programs are in public schools.</li> <li>Accreditation is one of the criteria for the level 4 QRIS curriculum standards. Center-based programs may choose to pursue NAEYC or another accreditation. NAEYC has standards about child assessment, family engagement, and health.</li> </ul>
LA	Preschool QRIS—Centers only Licensing—Centers only	Preschool QRIS—Centers only Licensing—Centers only	Preschool	Preschool QRIS—Centers only Licensing—Centers only	Preschool Licensing—Centers only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Louisiana has three state-funded preschool programs.</li> <li>The information about child assessment requirements is for LA4—the program with the largest child enrollment.</li> <li>LA4 programs are located only in public schools.</li> <li>Louisiana does not license family child care homes.</li> </ul>
MA	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State-funded preschool programs are located mostly in private child care centers, public schools, and Head Start (in order by child enrollment).</li> </ul>
MD	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool Licensing	QRIS—Centers only	QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS—Centers only Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accreditation is required to achieve the highest level of the QRIS. Center-based programs may choose to pursue NAEYC or another accreditation. NAEYC has standards about child assessment and health.</li> <li>There are no requirements about child assessment for preschool programs. However, all children entering kindergarten each fall are evaluated to determine levels of school readiness using the Work Sampling System.</li> </ul>
ME	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS	Preschool QRIS Licensing—Centers only	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All state-funded preschool programs are located in public schools.</li> </ul>

State	Professional Development	Curriculum, Activities, Learning Environment	Child Assessment	Family Engagement	Health and Developmental Screening	Notes
MI	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	Preschool	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most state-funded preschool programs are located in public schools. A small percentage of preschool programs are in private child care centers and Head Start.</li> </ul>
MN	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing		Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State-funded preschool programs are required to meet the Head Start Performance Standards.</li> </ul>
MO	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	Preschool	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most state-funded preschool programs are located in public schools. A small percentage of preschool programs are in private child care centers.</li> </ul>
MS	QRIS—Centers only Licensing	QRIS—Centers only Licensing	QRIS—Centers only	QRIS—Centers only Licensing	Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>QRIS standards apply only to child care centers.</li> <li>Mississippi does not have a state-funded preschool program.</li> </ul>
MT	QRIS Licensing	QRIS Licensing	QRIS—Centers only	QRIS Licensing	QRIS—Centers only Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Montana does not have a state-funded preschool program.</li> <li>NAEYC accreditation is required to achieve the QRIS highest level for child care centers. NAEYC has standards about child assessment and health.</li> </ul>
NC	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool	Preschool QRIS—Centers only Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State-funded preschool programs are located mostly in public schools, private child care centers, and Head Start (in order by child enrollment).</li> </ul>
ND	Licensing	Licensing		Licensing—Centers only	Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>North Dakota does not have a state-funded preschool program or QRIS.</li> </ul>
NE	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing—Centers only	Preschool	Preschool	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State-funded preschool programs are located in public schools, private child care centers, and Head Start (child enrollment unknown).</li> </ul>
NH	QRIS Licensing	QRIS Licensing	QRIS—Centers only	QRIS Licensing	QRIS—Centers only Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NAEYC accreditation is required to achieve the QRIS highest level for child care centers. NAEYC has standards about child assessment and health.</li> <li>New Hampshire does not have a state-funded preschool program.</li> </ul>

State	Professional Development	Curriculum, Activities, Learning Environment	Child Assessment	Family Engagement	Health and Developmental Screening	Notes
NJ	Preschool Licensing—Centers only	Preschool Licensing—Centers only	Preschool	Preschool Licensing—Centers only	Preschool Licensing—Centers only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ New Jersey has three preschool programs. The largest program—Abbott—is located in private child care centers, public schools, and Head Start (in order by child enrollment).</li> <li>■ In the other two programs, most are located in public schools.</li> <li>■ New Jersey does not license family child care homes.</li> </ul>
NM	QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ State-funded preschool programs are located in public schools, private child care centers, and Head Start (in order by child enrollment).</li> </ul>
NV	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing—Preschools only	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Most state-funded preschool programs are located in public schools. A small percentage are in Head Start and private child care centers.</li> <li>■ Licensing regulations for preschools (not all child care centers) include requirements for child assessment.</li> </ul>
NY	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	Preschool	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ State-funded preschool programs are mostly in public schools, private child care centers, and Head Start (in order by child enrollment).</li> </ul>
OH	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS—Centers only	Preschool Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Most state-funded preschool programs are located in public schools. A small percentage are in Head Start and private child care centers.</li> </ul>
OK	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	QRIS—Centers only	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS—Centers only Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Accreditation is required to achieve the highest level of the QRIS. Center-based programs may choose to pursue NAEYC or another accreditation. NAEYC has standards about child assessment and health.</li> </ul>
OR	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing		Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ State-funded preschool programs are required to meet the Head Start Performance Standards.</li> </ul>

State	Professional Development	Curriculum, Activities, Learning Environment	Child Assessment	Family Engagement	Health and Developmental Screening	Notes
PA	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Pennsylvania has four state-funded preschool programs. Information is provided for Pre-K Counts.</li> <li>■ Most Pre-K Counts programs are in private child care centers. Some programs are in public schools and Head Start.</li> <li>■ Private child care programs that receive Pre-K Counts funding must have a Keystone Stars QRIS rating of Star 2 or higher.</li> </ul>
RI	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Most state-funded preschool programs are in private child care centers. Some programs are in public schools and Head Start.</li> </ul>
SC	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	Preschool	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Nearly all state-funded preschool programs are in public schools.</li> </ul>
SD	Licensing	Licensing—Centers only			Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ South Dakota does not have a state-funded preschool program or a QRIS.</li> </ul>
TN	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS—Centers only	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS—Centers only Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Most state-funded preschool programs are in public schools. A small percentage are in Head Start and private child care centers.</li> <li>■ Tennessee’s QRIS awards points to programs that are accredited by NAEYC. Center-based programs may choose to pursue NAEYC or another accreditation. NAEYC has standards about child assessment and health.</li> </ul>
TX	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing		Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All state-funded preschool programs are in public schools.</li> </ul>
UT	Licensing	Licensing		Licensing	Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Utah does not have a state-funded preschool program or QRIS.</li> </ul>
VA	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	Preschool	Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All state-funded preschool programs are in public schools.</li> </ul>

State	Professional Development	Curriculum, Activities, Learning Environment	Child Assessment	Family Engagement	Health and Developmental Screening	Notes
VT	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS—Centers only Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS—Centers only Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Vermont has two state-funded preschool programs—Act 62 and the Early Education Initiative (EEI).</li> <li>■ All Act 62 programs and most EEI programs are in public schools. Some EEI programs are in private child care and Head Start (in order by child enrollment).</li> <li>■ Vermont’s QRIS awards points to programs that are accredited by NAEYC. Center-based programs may choose to pursue NAEYC or another accreditation. NAEYC has standards about child assessment and health.</li> </ul>
WA	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	Preschool	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Most state-funded preschool programs are in public schools. There are programs in private child care centers and Head Start (in order by child enrollment).</li> </ul>
WI	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool QRIS Licensing	QRIS	Preschool QRIS Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All 4K preschool programs are in public schools.</li> <li>■ Wisconsin also has a state-funded Head Start program.</li> </ul>
WV	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	Preschool	Preschool Licensing	Preschool Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Most state-funded preschool programs are Head Start. There are programs in public schools and private child care centers (in order by child enrollment).</li> </ul>
WY	Licensing			Licensing	Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Wyoming does not have a state-funded preschool program or QRIS.</li> </ul>

## Appendix B

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### ***Sources Used for Analysis***

#### **State Program Quality Standards**

- The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education (NRC) Web site has all States' child care licensing regulations at <http://nrckids.org/STATES/states.htm>.
- *The 2008 Child Care Licensing Study* (2010), by the National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC) and the National Association for Regulatory Administration, provides a national compilation and analysis of the content of all States' licensing requirements at [http://www.naralicensing.org/Licensing\\_Study](http://www.naralicensing.org/Licensing_Study).
- *QRIS Quality Standards* (2011), by NCCIC, has links to State QRIS initiatives and quality standards.
- *The State of Preschool 2010* (2011), by the National Institute for Early Education Research, includes State data about state-funded preschool program standards at <http://nieer.org/yearbook/>.

#### **National Program Standards**

- *Head Start Program Performance Standards*, available at <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Head%20Start%20Program/Program%20Design%20and%20Management/Head%20Start%20Requirements/Head%20Start%20Requirements>.
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) program accreditation standards available at <http://www.naeyc.org/files/academy/file/AllCriteriaDocument.pdf>.
- National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) accreditation standards available at <http://ccrain.fl-dcf.org/documents/-99/631.pdf>.



**National Center on Child  
Care Quality Improvement**

877-296-2250  
[OCCQualityCenter@icfi.com](mailto:OCCQualityCenter@icfi.com)