

Family and Stakeholder Engagement

Creating authentic partnerships between families and early care and education providers is a goal for early childhood systems. Family engagement is fostered using multiple strategies, several of which are included in the Quality Compendium. First, most quality rating and improvement systems (QRISs) include quality indicators that promote family engagement practices in early care and education programs such as supporting two-way communication, holding parent-teacher conferences, and connecting families with community resources and services. The agencies and partners that administer a QRIS also develop campaigns to inform families and other stakeholders about different elements of a QRIS (for example, program ratings, quality improvement services, and so forth).² This fact sheet describes in greater detail the QRIS family-engagement indicators and stakeholder-engagement campaigns implemented in 2017.

This fact sheet is one of a series about the state of QRISs in the United States. As of 2017, there are 44 fully operational QRISs in the United States.¹ Data are from the [Quality Compendium](#), a catalog of the QRISs operating in the United States as of December 31, 2017.

Family Engagement Indicators

Family engagement is defined as an ongoing partnership developed through meaningful interactions between a child's family, early care and education providers, and the community.³ Across the QRISs in the U.S. in 2017,⁴ 34 (79 percent) included quality indicators related to family engagement practices for center-based programs, and 31 (74 percent) included family engagement indicators for family child care programs.

In the Quality Compendium, "family partnerships and engagement" indicators are defined as "the involvement of families in the program operations, ranging from parent advisory board to periodic family surveys."⁵ Indicators shared in the Quality Compendium include four general categories of practices: collaborative activities, family feedback, communication, and community resources and family support.⁶ QRIS representatives provided information about whether their system has an indicator or multiple indicators that reflect these four family engagement practices.

¹ States with a QRIS: AK, AR, AZ, CA, CO, DC, DE, FL (three localities), GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KY, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MT, NC, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, TN, TX, UT, VA, VT, WA, and WI. While most QRISs operate at the state level, three represent separate counties in Florida (Duval, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach). The California QRIS, while represented in the Quality Compendium as one system, is implemented at the county level and does not include all counties in the state.

² The Child Care and Development Fund requires states to provide consumer education and a consumer-friendly website. The public awareness campaigns described in this fact sheet are one subset of these state activities. The Quality Compendium does not collect full details about consumer education and websites in states; thus, details about these important activities are not included in this document.

³ Child Care Aware of America (2015). *The state of family engagement in quality rating and improvement system efforts* [Research brief]. Retrieved from <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/ncase-resource-library/state-family-engagement-quality-rating-and-improvement-system-efforts>

⁴ Of the 44 QRISs with data available in the Quality Compendium, 43 reported indicators for center-based programs, and 42 reported indicators for family child care programs.

⁵ Retrieved from the Quality Compendium Glossary at <https://qualitycompendium.org/glossary/data-options-glossary-terms>.

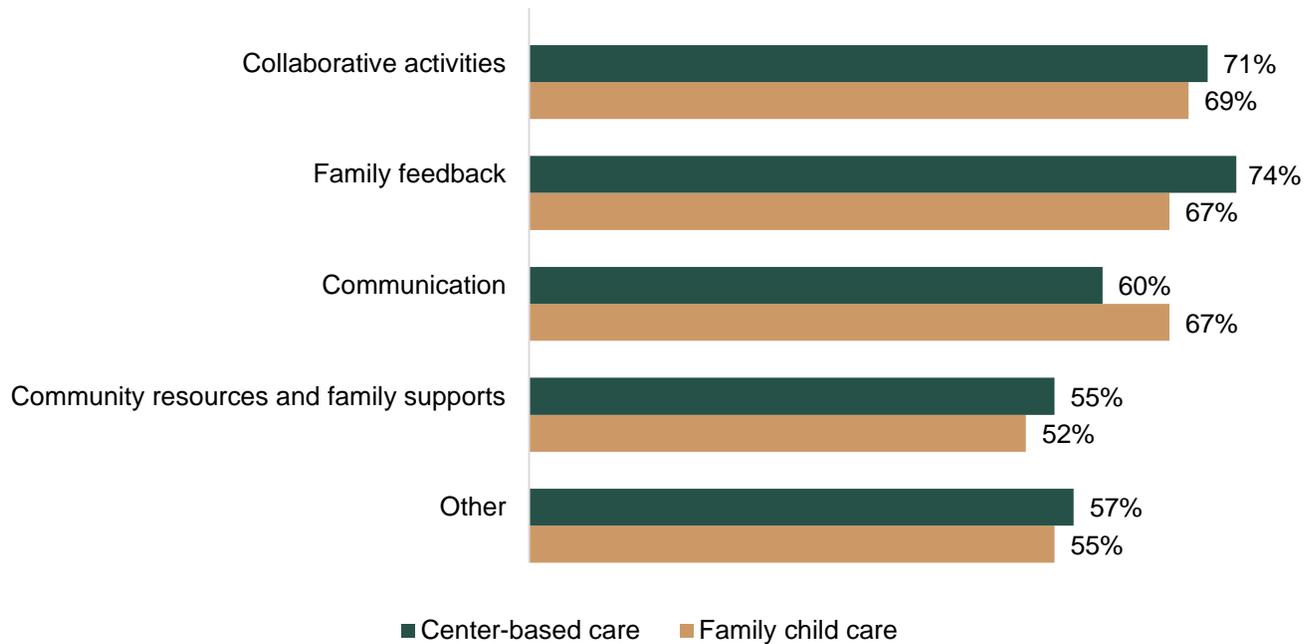
⁶ Child Care Aware of America (2015).

1. **Collaborative activities:** Providers can promote positive family engagement by providing multiple opportunities for families to participate in the program, for example, through social events, volunteer opportunities, parent-teacher conferences, and other strategies for fostering a welcoming environment. Most QRISs include indicators related to collaborative activities for center-based programs (30 QRISs; 71 percent) and family child care programs (29 QRISs; 69 percent).
2. **Family feedback:** Early care and education providers support family engagement when they are knowledgeable about the goals and needs of the children and families they serve. This knowledge may be supported by gathering information from families in a variety of ways, such as surveys, exit interviews, and family-needs assessments. Most QRISs include indicators related to gathering family feedback for center-based programs (31 QRISs; 74 percent) and family child care programs (28 QRISs; 67 percent).
3. **Communication:** Regular and reciprocal communication between providers and families promotes family engagement. Family engagement practices that support communication may include using multiple means of communication (for example, social media, email, print, and so forth), providing parent handbooks, and communicating with families in their preferred language. Many QRISs include indicators that relate to communication with families for center-based programs (25 QRISs; 60 percent) and family child care programs (28 QRISs; 67 percent).
4. **Community resources and family supports:** Early care and education programs can serve as a critical link between families and community resources. Practices may include supporting families during transitions (for example, when their child is beginning preschool or kindergarten), circulating a list of community resources, and sharing information about child development based on families' needs. About half of QRISs include indicators related to these practices for center-based programs (23 QRISs; 55 percent) and family child care programs (22 QRISs; 52 percent).

The Quality Compendium also includes an option for QRIS representatives to describe other types of family engagement indicators that did not appear to fall into the four common categories. Over half of QRISs included descriptions of “other” family engagement indicators for center-based programs (24 QRISs; 57 percent) and family child care programs (23 QRIS; 55 percent). In most cases, the descriptions of these other features provided further detail about a particular family engagement strategy promoted in the QRIS, such as using the Strengthening Families framework or naming a specific community resource.

Figure 1 summarizes the percentage of QRISs that include each category of family engagement indicators, by program type.

Figure 1. Family Engagement Indicators for Center-Based and Family Child Care Programs



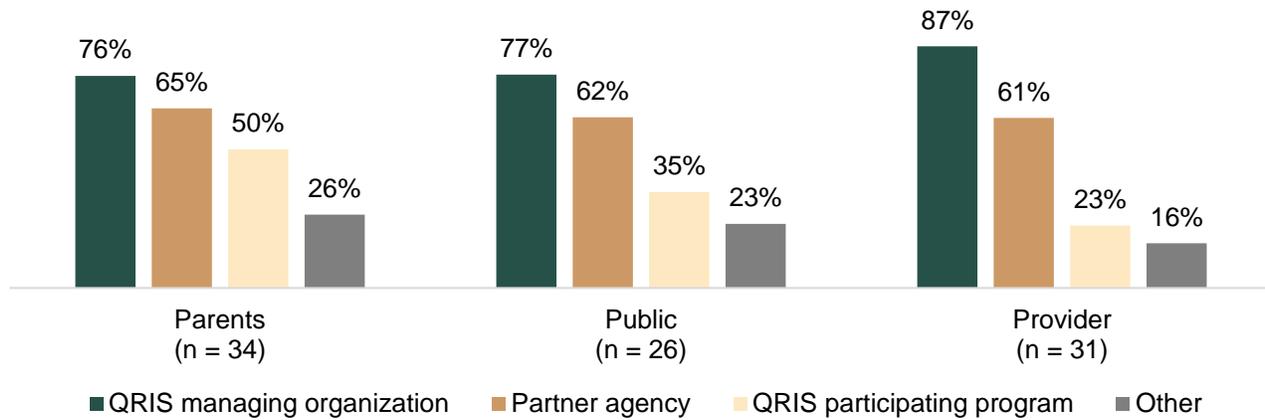
Source: Analysis of data retrieved from BUILD Initiative. (2017). Quality compendium [Online tool]. Retrieved from <https://qualitycompendium.org/>
 Note: 42 QRISs reported information on family engagement indicators for center-based and family child care programs.

Stakeholder Engagement Campaigns

Early childhood systems also use stakeholder engagement campaigns to raise awareness and engage stakeholders in topics such as QRIS program ratings, the quality improvement process, and information about quality early care and education. The Quality Compendium collects information about these campaigns' target audiences (for example, parents, providers, and the public) and the types of agencies that deliver the campaigns' key messages. QRIS-participating programs play a unique role in engagement campaigns because they may be the target audience of a campaign, and they may deliver key messages to parents or other providers.

Most QRISs have campaigns that target parents (34 QRISs; 77 percent) and providers (31 QRISs; 70 percent), and over half (26 QRISs; 59 percent) target the public. Different organizations create and deliver these campaigns to target audiences. Across all audiences, most campaigns are implemented by the QRIS managing organization. QRIS managing organizations are more likely to target providers (27 QRISs; 87 percent), whereas programs participating in QRIS are more likely to target parents (17 QRISs; 50 percent) rather than the public (9 QRISs; 35 percent) (see figure 2).

Figure 2. Agencies Providing Stakeholder Engagement Campaigns by Target Audience

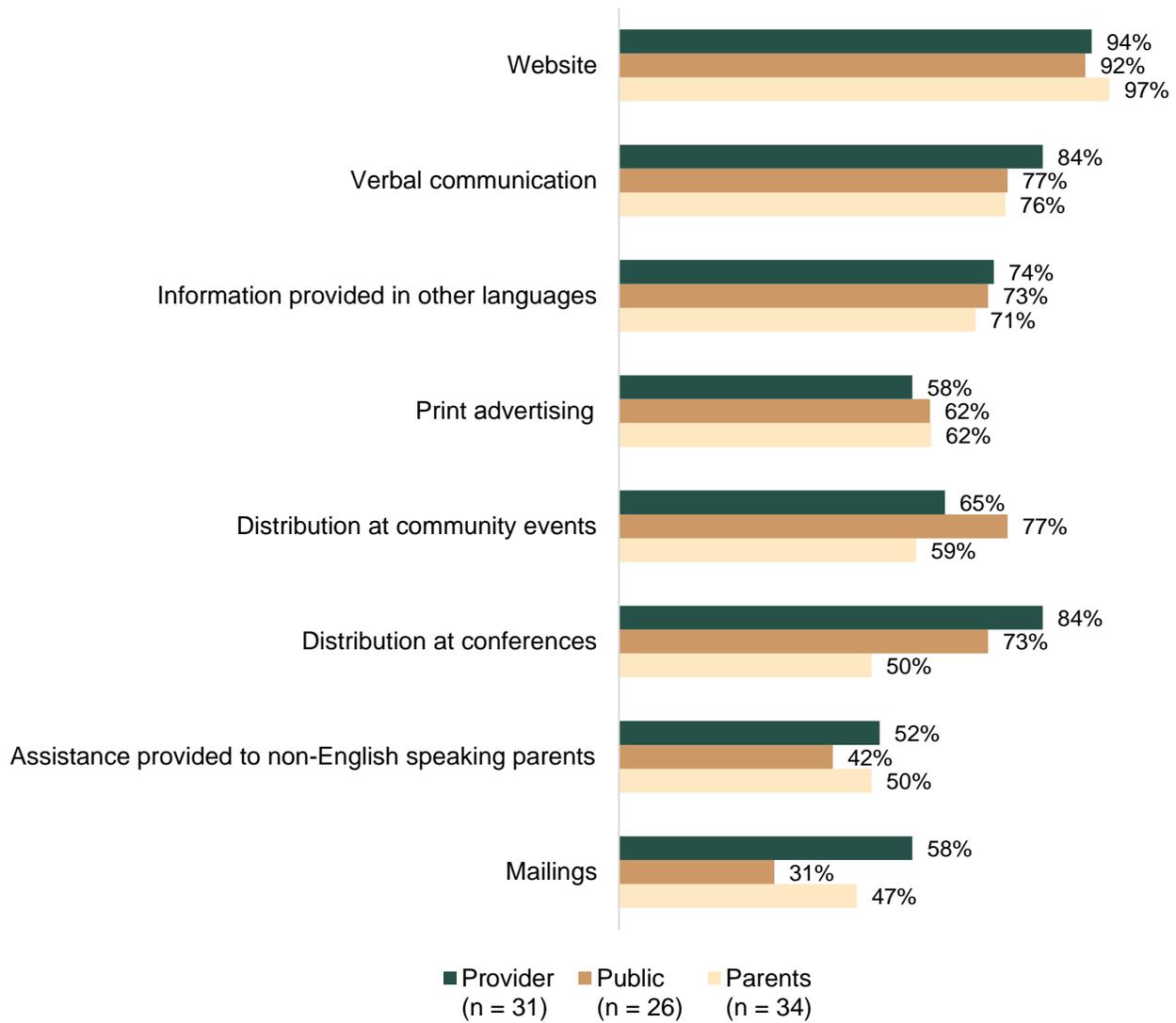


Source: Analysis of data retrieved from BUILD Initiative. (2017). Quality compendium [Online tool]. Retrieved from <https://qualitycompendium.org/>

Note: 44 QRISs reported information on public awareness campaigns.

A variety of methods are used to reach target audiences. Websites are the most commonly used method (92 to 97 percent of QRISs, depending on target audience). Verbal communication, providing information in other languages, print advertising, distribution at community events, and distribution at conferences are also used regularly (see figure 3).

Figure 3. Stakeholder Engagement Campaign Methods by Target Audience



Source: Analysis of data retrieved from BUILD Initiative. (2017). Quality compendium [Online tool]. Retrieved from <https://qualitycompendium.org/>
 Note: 44 QRISs reported information on stakeholder engagement campaigns.

Additional Resources

- ◆ *Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework for Early Childhood Systems Series* (2018), by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, guide to understanding the collaborative relationship between parents and early childhood systems, programs, providers, family caregivers, and community service providers to promote positive, enduring change for children, families, and communities.
<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/parent-family-and-community-engagement-framework-early-childhood-systems-series>
- ◆ *Key Indicators of High-Quality Family Engagement for Quality Rating and Improvement Systems* (2018), by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, is a research-based resource for QRIS administrators, implementing partners, other early childhood care and education leaders, and technical assistance professionals. It may be used to inform efforts to design or revise existing quality assurance systems.
<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/key-indicators-high-quality-family-engagement-quality-rating-and-improvement-systems>

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 to school age. The ECQA Center is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance

9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22031

Phone: 877-296-2250
Email: QualityAssuranceCenter@ecetta.info

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