

**Connecticut Quality Rating and Improvement System Work Group [QRIS WG]**

**Progress Report 1: February 15, 2008**

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**Community Forum held**

A Community Forum to launch the development of a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) was held on the morning of February 7, 2008. Anne Mitchell and Louise Stoney, co-founders of the Alliance for Early Childhood Finance and national experts on the development of ECE/CC quality rating and improvement systems, presented the purpose and basic components of a state QRIS, the experiences and choices made by other states and the benefits a QRIS can impart to children, families and the ECE community. A diverse assembly of 150 stakeholders had the opportunity to exchange ideas and information around the concept of a QRIS for Connecticut. A summary of the input collected at the forum is attached.

**Work Group convened**

A QRIS Work Group (WG) under the auspices of the Early Childhood Research & Policy Council was convened to deliberate on the core components of a QRIS in the Connecticut context and provide recommendations to the Early Childhood Education Cabinet. The 26 members of the Work Group were selected to represent the diverse stakeholders and constituencies that will potentially participate in and benefit from a QRIS in Connecticut. Most Work Group members were present at the morning forum and continued to meet throughout the afternoon and all day on February 8 to begin the development process. A list of QRIS WG members is attached.

**Purpose & Charge**

The QRIS WG is charged by the Early Childhood Education Cabinet to recommend a plan to implement a Quality Rating and Improvement System in Connecticut.

This work is specified in Connecticut statute 07-03 section 20 which states:

*"The ECE Cabinet established under section 10-16s of the general statutes, as amended by this act, shall develop minimum standards and a range of higher standards of quality for all early care and education programs receiving state funding. Not later than December 31, 2008, and annually thereafter, the cabinet shall report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-14a of the general statutes, on the plan developed in accordance with this section to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies, education, human service and higher education and employment advancement."*

In order to meet the 2008 delivery date, a recommended plan will be presented to the Governor's Early Childhood Research & Policy Council (ECRPC) by September 2008 and to the Early Childhood Education Cabinet by October 2008. In order to ensure a shared and consistent perspective on the evolving recommendations, the QRIS WG will communicate regularly with the ECRPC throughout the process.

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### **Community Information & Involvement**

The QRIS WG intends to provide a model of honorable, open and respectful deliberations. In order to keep stakeholders fully informed of the work as it progresses, and to build community consensus around the recommendations made, the following strategies will be implemented:

- A QRIS Information Network that is open to anyone in Connecticut interested in this work has been established. QRIS WG staff will communicate with this network via e-mail and will post information about the developing plan on the Cabinet website. Contact Jessica Andrews at [jessica.andrews@ct.gov](mailto:jessica.andrews@ct.gov) if you would like to be added to the Network list.
- QRIS WG members commit to communicating proposals and decisions to the constituencies they represent in order to solicit input and feedback from a broad array of individuals and groups as recommendations are developed.
- Two additional Community Forums will be held before September 2008 to report progress and continue to build on an open exchange of information and ideas.
- A brief progress report will be disseminated to the QRIS Information Network and posted on the Cabinet website after each CT QRIS WG meeting.
- CT QRIS WG meetings will be open to the public. In order to allow work to progress at the pace required to meet reporting requirements, non-members are invited as observers and will have a limited opportunity to comment at meetings.

### **CT QRIS WG Meeting Schedule**

Tuesday, March 4

Thursday, April 3

Thursday, May 8

Thursday, June 5

Thursday, July 10

Thursday, August 14

Thursday, September 11

(Thursday, October 16, as needed)

All meetings will be held at the Graustein Foundation in Hampden, CT from 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM. QRIS WG members have committed to regular attendance.

### **Support for the CT QRIS WG**

- ◆ The Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) provides administrative, logistical, and management support to the ECRPC and will provide this type of support to the Work Group.
- ◆ ECE Cabinet staff, Joyce Staples, Interim Project Manager and Jessica Andrews, will provide direct support for planning and preparation, communication, writing and other staff functions.
- ◆ Reeva Sullivan Murphy, a State Technical Assistance Specialist from the National Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC) funded by the Federal Child

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Care Bureau will be facilitating QRIS WG meetings, helping to record and compile recommendations and providing information and planning support. NCCIC services are donated to the process by Peter Palermino of the Department of Social Services.

### **Recommended Goals of QRIS** (*QRIS WG consensus on 2.8.08*)

- To improve the well-being of children in CT
- To achieve high quality across ALL early care and education programs in all areas of CT by providing:
  - financial and other resources to programs to continually improve;
  - information to parents so that they can make educated decisions; and
  - a common system of accountability for ALL public agencies and funders.

### **Recommended Guiding Principles** (*QRIS WG consensus on 2.8.08*)

The CT QRIS will

- create a meaningful and commonly accepted understanding of ECE and CC quality;
- be a reliable, trustworthy and dynamic system with high integrity;
- coordinate the existing ECE System in CT to strengthen and simplify the regulatory and monitoring environment;
- promote parental buy-in and public investments by ensuring the integrity of the quality assessments and information it provides;
- advance the availability of high quality ECE and CC programs for all children and particularly for children most at risk;
- support alignment across all ECE and CC sectors and reduce redundancy for community participants in these; and
- provide reliable information about the quality of ECE and CC programs and the resources available to support continuous quality improvement to policy makers to inform decision making at all levels.

### **QRIS WG Agreements as of 2.8.08**

The QRIS WG agreed on the following:

Details related to group structure, processes for decision making, information sharing and gathering and other matters related to working effectively together.

#### **Recommendations:**

The QRIS will encompass programs serving all children birth through age twelve. The first phase will focus on children birth to age five; phase two will focus on children five – nine years of age.

*The Early Childhood Education Cabinet and  
the Governor's Early Childhood Research & Policy Council*

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The QRIS will be designed for all **center** settings including those that are regulated, those that are exempt from regulation and those that are operated by public schools; and for all regulated **home-based** child care settings, commonly called family child care homes.