

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

Progress Report 3: April 3, 2008

Joyce Staples reported that the Early Childhood Policy and Research Council (ECPRC) had convened in March as planned and accepted responsibility for formulating and costing out recommendations for a CT QRIS. The Council formed a QRIS Guidance Committee comprised of David Nee, Mary Ann Hanley, Robert Rader and Janice Gruendel which will provide ongoing facilitation, guidance and feedback to the QRIS WG and report to the ECPRC on the progress of the emerging recommendations. Judy Goldfarb and Nancy Dower were selected by the WG to serve on the Guiding Committee to represent the voice and deliberations of the WG.

Joyce also reported that the contract with the Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) to provide administrative, logistical, and management support in finalized but the search continues for a dedicated Project Manager. The position was recently offered to an excellent candidate who decided not to take it. More prospects are being interviewed. Well qualified individuals interested in the position should contact Joyce Staples at the Children's Cabinet. Jim Farnam and Gretchen Deans of CERC provided support for the small group sessions at the April meeting. CERC's expertise in strategic planning, marketing and communications will be available to the WG in the coming months.

David Nee, Executive Director of the Graustein Fund, Co-Chair of the ECPRC and leader of the QRIS Guidance Committee, attended part of the meeting to speak with the WG about the role of the Guidance Committee and their commitment to work with the WG in a clear, open and mutually respectful way with a common vision and shared goals.

As a means of communicating about the QRIS work in Connecticut and gathering input and feedback from constituency groups, several of the organizations represented on the CT QRIS Work Group conducted independent QRIS information forums in March using materials adapted from the Louise Stoney/Anne Mitchell presentation made at the Children's Cabinet Community Forum in February. They reported to the WG about the forums and handed out summaries of input they received at the April meeting. This input will inform ongoing deliberations of the WG. Judy Goldfarb at the Hartford Area Child Care Collaborative held a forum in Hartford on March 20. A coalition of the Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children (CAEYC), the CT Head Start Association and The DSS Director's Group held a series of four forums across the state. Information about the forums is available from each sponsoring organization. The Cabinet will make this available to the public through links on the Cabinet website to the websites of each organization.

Reeva Sullivan Murphy of NCCIC presented a proposed Work Plan to the full WG. This was discussed and further developed in small group sessions. The WG accepted this as a dynamic document to support maintaining focus on the full scope of the work while

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setting specific goals and tasks for each meeting. A copy of the current draft of the CT QRIS WG Work Plan is attached.

The next Community Forum is proposed for late May. The National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC), as part of the support it provides to Connecticut DSS on behalf of the Federal Child Care Bureau will help to arrange a presentation by two states who have already implemented a QRIS. The WG agreed that Pennsylvania was one of the states they felt could be most informative and also proposed Indiana and North Carolina as other states with promising models. The WG proposed several factors that should be considered in choosing model states: strong licensing standards; a robust professional development system; strong or increasing provider participation; effective improvement strategies; including Family CC Home providers in the system and including cultural competence in the standards or program improvement strategies. Reeva Murphy will begin contacting states to see who is available to present information to Connecticut in May and Gretchen Deans will plan the logistics of the event. There was some discussion about providing an opportunity for members of the community to attend a presentation in the evening.

The WG reached consensus on a number of recommendations developed in the small group sessions.

DRAFT Recommendations

04.03.08

The CT QRIS will use “ **building blocks**” system to develop standards and assign quality ratings.¹This means that all participating programs will have to meet the same set of specified quality criteria to achieve each level of quality and will not be rated at any level without achieving all of the requirements for that and all preceding levels.

CT QRIS assessments and monitoring functions will not be done by the same person who provides support for continuous quality improvement (CQI). That means that professionals who assess or rate programs will not be the same individuals who help programs plan and implement continuous quality improvement.

Assessors/raters may provide information and clarifications about the general QRIS requirements and processes but may not advise programs on how individual programs advance quality.

In order to **match programs to the most appropriate training and technical assistance (T&TA) and fully support CQI**, CT QRIS will implement a **three step process** for programs that have been rated:

¹ For purposes of simplicity, consistency and specificity of requirements this method has been selected at this point in the process. The WG will revisit this decision as the standards themselves emerge to determine if it remains the best option for Connecticut. A discussion of this issue may be found in the United Way Success by 6 publication “Stair Steps to Quality” by Anne Mitchell (p23-25).

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

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1. Proactive outreach and information to newly rated programs on the supports that are available to them to help them move to the next level of quality;
2. Quality improvement planning that includes individualized technical assistance, incentives and other CQI supports; and
3. Ongoing support and assistance for implementation of the program's quality improvement plan.

Advancing and maintaining quality in early care and education requires increased investments. **Financial investment** in the CT QRIS and early care and education in Connecticut **must be sufficient** to build and sustain quality programs for all children.

The CT QRIS will establish and provide **a consistent array of financial incentives AND a system of coordinated quality improvement supports** for **ALL participating programs** both those that enter voluntarily and those that enter as a condition of state funding.

A consolidated and uniform rate structure aligned with quality ratings in the CT QRIS will be established for all programs receiving state funding from any source. Current rates will be the minimum starting point and programs demonstrating higher quality will receive higher rates.

The next meeting of the CT QRIS WG will occur on Thursday May 8, 2008 from 9 AM – 4:30 PM at the Graustein Fund offices in Hamden.