

# Dream BIG

Full  
Report

for our  
youngest  
children

California Early Learning  
Quality Improvement System  
Advisory Committee



# **CAEL QIS Final Report**

## **(11/23/10)**

**Draft**

**California Early Learning Quality Improvement System Advisory  
Committee**



**2010**

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## Acknowledgments

This CAEL QIS Advisory Committee’s *Final Report* reflects the work of Advisory Committee members (listed below) ; early learning and care program staff; child care licensing officials; county superintendents of education; local child care planning council and child care resource and referral leaders; First 5 California and county commission representatives; higher education representatives; California Department of Education (CDE) Child Development Division (CDD) staff; California Comprehensive Center (CA CC) staff and nationally known experts and content specialists who shared their knowledge about the components of quality early learning and care programs and the implementation of quality rating and improvement systems. Financial support for CAEL QIS was provided by First 5 California, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the California Department of Education. The report also reflects the input of over 5000 participants at the Advisory Committee, Subcommittee meetings, and public hearings. Participating agencies and organizations are included in Appendix A. We appreciate the major contributions of expertise, time, resources, and commitment from all the individuals that are represented in this work.

### CAEL QIS Advisory Committee Members

The CAEL QIS Advisory Committee is a broadly based, diverse group with the following 13 members appointed in accordance with statute:

Language from Senate Bill 1629, Chapter 307	Committee Members
(1) The Superintendent of Public Instruction or his or her designee	1. <b>Jack O’Connell</b> , Superintendent; and designees: Geno Flores and Gavin Payne, Chief Deputy Superintendents of Public Instruction; and Camille Maben, Director, Child Development Division.
(2) The Secretary of Education or his or her designee	2. <b>Bonnie Reiss</b> and Glen Thomas, Secretaries of Education, and designees: Kathryn Radtkey-Gaither Undersecretary of Education; and Anne McKinney, Deputy Secretary of Education.
(3) The President pro Tempore of the Senate or his or her designee	3. <b>Dave Gordon</b> , Superintendent, Sacramento County Office of Education
(4) The Speaker of the Assembly or his or her designee	4. <b>Joan Buchanan</b> , Assembly Member; Sarah Tomlinson, designee
(5) The Director of the Department of Finance or his or her designee	5. <b>Ana Matosantos</b> , Director; Jeannie Oropeza, Program Budget Manager, designee.
(6) The Director of the Department of Social Services or his or her designee	6. <b>John A. Wagner</b> , Director; Venus Garth, Branch Chief, designee.
(7) The Governor shall appoint two representatives	7. <b>Dennis Vicars</b> , Chief Executive Officer, Human Services Management Corporation/PACE 8. <b>Celia C. Ayala</b> , Chief Executive Officer, Los Angeles Universal Preschool
(8) The Chairperson of the California Children and	9. <b>Kris Perry</b> , Executive Director, First 5 California

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Families Commission or his or her designee

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(9) The Senate Committee on Rules shall appoint two representatives from the early care and education community, one who is a program administrator of a child development program funded by the department, and another who is a caregiver for infants and toddlers

10. **Cliff Marcussen**, Executive Director, Options – A Child Care and Human Services Agency
11. **Consuelo Espinosa**, Infant/Toddler Specialist, WestEd

(10) The Speaker of the Assembly shall appoint two representatives, one from the early care and education community who has experience with English learners, and one who is a local educational agency teacher who teaches kindergarten

12. **Yolie Flores**, Board Member, Los Angeles Unified School District (resigned June 2010)
  13. **Toby Boyd**, Kindergarten Teacher, Elk Grove Unified School District
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- Data Systems for Program Improvement and Research
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# CAEL QIS Final Report Draft

## I. BACKGROUND

The charge of the California Early Learning Quality Improvement System (CAEL QIS) Advisory Committee (hereafter referred to as the “Advisory Committee”) is to develop a systemic plan to promote school readiness and other positive child outcomes by improving the quality of early learning and care programs for children from birth to five years old. As required by legislation (Senate Bill [SB] 1629, Chapter 307, Statutes of 2008) report, *Dream Big for Our Youngest Children*, describes the Advisory Committee’s recommendations, with input from nearly 300 organizations, for a new quality rating structure for early learning and care programs, as well as necessary quality improvement support systems across the broad array of early learning and care programs.

### What Is a Quality Rating and Improvement System?

A Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is a uniform set of ratings, graduated by level of quality, to assess and improve early learning and care programs. Objective ratings help families identify programs, guide providers in making improvements, and give policymakers a basis for designing technical assistance. A comprehensive QRIS provides workforce development, financial incentives, and other supports to improve quality. Twenty-three states have already adopted these systems statewide, and California is one of at least 20 more states in the process of planning such systems. California is a leader in proposing a QRIS that purposefully links improvements in program quality with child outcomes, including school readiness.

### Why Develop a Quality Rating and Improvement System?

More than million children ages birth to five currently attend some type of out-of-home early learning and care setting in California. What is striking is that, according to the Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO), no statewide system measures the quality of these early learning and care programs (LAO, 2007); and even the basic licensing system has out-of-date standards and one of the lowest inspection rates in the country.

### Quality Programs Improve Outcomes for Children, Including Reducing the Achievement Gap

The good news is that quality early learning and care programs can help improve children’s readiness and school success, with higher test scores, better attendance, and reduced grade-level retention (Reynolds et al., 2007; Karoly & Bigelow, 2005). Other

- California is home to approximately 3.2 million children ages birth through five years old (Children Now, 2010).
- Fifty-two percent of the babies born in California in 2008 were Latino, 27 percent white, 6 percent Asian, and 5 percent black (California Department of Public Health, 2008).
- English learners constitute 40 percent of California’s kindergartners (California Department of Education [CDE], 2009).
- Half of the children birth to age five in California are likely to qualify for free or reduced-price lunch when they enter kindergarten (CDE, 2009).
- More than half of the third graders in California do not meet state educational standards in English language arts, and one child in three does not meet standards in mathematics

lasting benefits include higher rates of school completion, greater likelihood of attending college, and greater lifetime earnings (Ramey et al., 2000; Lally, Mangione, & Honig, 1988). By reducing grade retention, use of special education and welfare, and involvement in crime, these quality programs are estimated to save from \$4 to \$17 for every dollar invested (Reynolds et al., 2007; Schweinhart, 2004; Karoly & Bigelow, 2005).

Lasting positive impacts have been found for large-scale public early learning and care programs as well as for intensive programs implemented on a small scale (Pianta et al., 2009). Based on such findings, Nobel laureate economist James Heckman (2006) concludes that early intervention programs for disadvantaged children are a better investment than remedial programs for older children. Of particular interest, given the demographics in California, is that high-quality preschool programs have been found to benefit especially those Latino children whose mothers have little education, have low incomes, and are linguistically isolated (Karoly et al., 2008).

While the benefits are less dramatic for children from more advantaged backgrounds, attending a quality preschool program is associated with higher achievement in elementary school for children in all income groups (Gormley & Phillips, 2005). The educational benefits of quality programs to non-disadvantaged preschool-age children are substantial, perhaps 75 percent as large as those for low-income children (Pianta et al., 2009). Quality infant and toddler care, whether provided exclusively by parents or by other caregivers, influences brain development and hence lays the foundation for all future learning (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

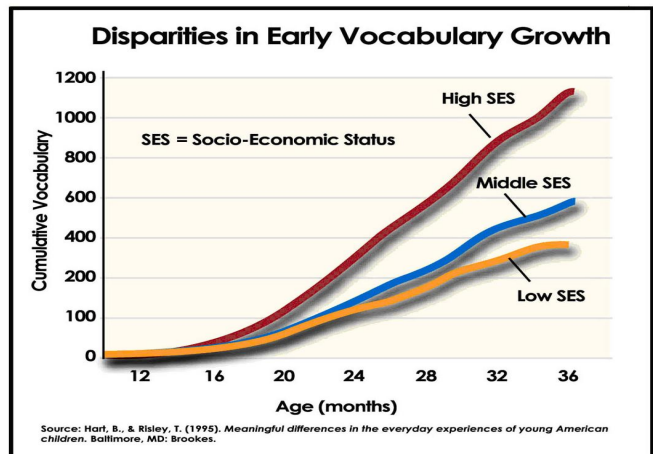
### Only Quality Programs Improve Child Outcomes

Only quality programs produce these improved child outcomes, however. There is no evidence that the average preschool program produces benefits in line with what the best programs produce. (Pianta et al., 2010). Poor-quality programs may actually harm children, leave already disadvantaged children further behind, and thereby exacerbate

#### Roots of the Achievement Gap

- Roots of the achievement gap start long before children enter kindergarten
- A major indicator for later school success is language and early literacy development, and disparities in early vocabulary growth between children from low socioeconomic status (SES) and high SES families can manifest themselves in children as early as 16 months of age.
- Differences in language, social, and pre-mathematics skills are apparent when children enter kindergarten, and the children who start school behind tend to stay behind (Cannon & Karoly, 2007).

#### Disparities in Early Vocabulary Growth, Per Socioeconomic Status



Source: Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2007). *A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy: Using Evidence to Improve Outcomes in Learning, Behavior, and Health for Vulnerable Children.*

the achievement gap (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2002; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Gilliam & Zigler, 2000, 2004; Phillips, 2010).

### **Shortfalls in Program Quality Affect All Income Groups**

Unfortunately, shortfalls in the quality of early learning and care programs currently affect children in all income groups in California. Based on onsite observations of 251 centers serving preschool-age children in the state, the quality of services is mixed, at best (Karoly et al., 2008), with problems ranging from alarming deficits in basic health and safety to shortfalls in teaching and learning:

- If quality is measured by the kind of instruction in thinking and language skills that are most closely linked to school readiness, *85 to 90 percent of the disadvantaged children shown to derive the greatest benefit from a quality preschool program are not enrolled in such a program.*
- Programs serving all income groups fall short on measures of the quality of teacher instruction.

In an earlier study using similar methodology, researchers found that nearly half of the infant and toddler programs provided poor quality care (Helburn, 1995). While the research was conducted some years ago, it remains one of the most comprehensive studies conducted to date and includes a California-based sample. Not only were many of the programs unsafe, but also they did not provide warm and sensitive care or build on the “teachable” moments that occur each day.

Thus, California urgently needs to improve the quality of early learning and care program settings serving over a million children birth to age five in California, and to offer technical assistance and incentives for improvement by: 1) developing a quality rating system that builds on the features of our most effective programs; and 2) redesigning the quality improvement and safety monitoring systems affecting one in three children birth to age five in California.

### **Legislative Charge**

A broad partnership created the legislation that established the 13-member Advisory Committee and called for the creation of a QRIS. The legislation was sponsored by Senator Darrell Steinberg, with principal coauthor Assembly Member Dave Jones. A wide range of child advocacy, educational, and civic groups supported the legislation, which was signed into law by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. More than 4000 staff, advocates, and stakeholders joined the CAEL QIS development process over the past two years (see Appendix A), and the Advisory Committee appreciates the contribution of such broad and diverse expertise. The momentum will continue as CAEL QIS transitions to the California State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (ELAC).

SB 1629 requires the Advisory Committee to report to the Legislature and the Governor on the following four tasks related to the development of a QRIS:

1. An assessment and analysis of the existing early care and education infrastructure, including other state and local early learning quality improvement systems
2. The development of an early learning quality rating scale for child development programs, including preschool as well as programs for infants and toddlers
3. The development of a funding model aligned with the quality rating scale for child care and development programs
4. Recommendations on how local, state, federal, and private resources can best be utilized to complement a statewide funding model as part of a comprehensive effort to improve the state's child care and development system

CAEL QIS builds on the work envisioned by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell's P-16 Council in 2007, which noted that any effort to close the achievement gap must begin with a system that includes high-quality preschool and other early learning and care programs. Governor Schwarzenegger's Committee on Education Excellence (2008) called for a comprehensive early childhood system as a foundation for school reform, noting that a culture that puts students first should start with its youngest children.

In this report, the assessment and analysis of the existing early learning and care infrastructures are addressed in Section II and in Appendices B, C, and D. Section III and Appendix E describe the proposed design for the early learning quality rating scale and the work on the funding model, with additional information on the resources to complement the model provided in Appendix J.

### **Goals of California's Early Learning Quality Rating and Improvement System**

The major goal of California's QRIS is to increase the number of programs that have the features shown to improve child development outcomes, including readiness for school and success in life. The QRIS is a model of continuous program improvement that will be linked to child outcomes through pilot projects and ongoing research and evaluation. Based on the experience with quality early learning systems in states and communities across the nation (Mitchell, 2009), and with the support of current federal policy and resources encouraging the development of such systems, a QRIS has the potential to:

- Effectively improve child outcomes and reduce the school readiness gap by improving the quality of early learning and care programs.
- Use standardized program assessment tools to objectively and consistently rate early learning and care, including the quality of teacher effectiveness and caregiver interaction with young children, across the wide span of licensed center and licensed home-based early learning and care settings.
- Provide objective ratings of early learning and care settings to families in a clear, easy-to-understand format.
- Increase family and public awareness of the characteristics of early childhood educational program quality that promote better outcomes for children.
- Implement research-based recommendations related to improvements in teacher preparation and effectiveness that affect child development and school readiness outcomes.

- Serve as the basis for technical assistance to help programs improve.
- Link per-child reimbursements for publicly supported programs, financial awards, and non-financial benefits for all participating programs to quality standards thereby creating incentives for programs to improve.
- Improve accountability and transparency for public investments.

## **Defining High-Quality Programs: Key Features and Outcomes**

A QRIS design must begin with a definition of high-quality early learning and care. Based on syntheses of more than 40 years of research (Zigler, Gilliam, & Jones, 2006; Jacobson, 2004; Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1999; Jorde-Bloom, 1988), key features of high-quality programs that improve child outcomes for all children include:

- Intensive education (e.g., small classes, low ratios, regular attendance) that assures young children receive consistent, individualized attention over an extended period of time
- A learning environment with adequate physical space, equipment, and materials in which teachers interact responsively with children and help develop their social-emotional, thinking, and language skills
- Family involvement and services in a culturally and linguistically responsive manner
- A “curriculum” or plan of activities that engages young children, is based on research and age-appropriate expectations, and is aligned with state educational policy
- Adequate numbers of well-trained, qualified staff, with compensation sufficient to limit turnover and promote continuity of care
- Commitment to continuous quality improvement based on measures of teacher performance and children’s progress
- Program directors who understand child development; provide leadership and recruit, train, and support staff; and manage the fiscal and legal responsibilities

## **II. WHAT ARE THE KEY POLICY OPPORTUNITIES?**

Based on its assessment of California’s existing early learning and care infrastructure, the Advisory Committee identified several major policy changes needed to raise more programs to a level of quality sufficient to promote school readiness. Key opportunities for policy change include:

- **Address weaknesses in health, safety, and quality review processes and phase in appropriate oversight for the early learning and care system.**

California currently has multiple early learning and care “systems” administered with great variability in standards and far too little oversight.

- The state has three early learning and care “systems”: Title 22 licensed facilities, Title state-contracted child development programs, and the federally administered Head Start, as well as a publicly funded “non-system” of license-

exempt care. Only two of these “systems” (Title 5 and Head Start) have standards that are designed to promote child development or school readiness.

- Publicly supported license-exempt care is not subject to any monitoring or even initial inspection; state oversight is limited to background and criminal record checks through the TrustLine Registry.
- Separate agencies are charged with program oversight. The Department of Social Services (DSS) administers Title 22 licensing, the CDE conducts Title 5 reviews, and the federal government monitors Head Start.
- With the exception of Head Start, none of these programs is monitored or rated with sufficient frequency by trained, objective reviewers to ensure that standards are met.

Based on a recent national study of oversight and regulation, California’s Title 22 licensing system ranks 46th in the nation (National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies [NACCRA], 2009). Only 30 percent of programs are required to be inspected annually in California, as compared to 50 to 100 percent in most states (DSS, 2010; Karoly, 2009); and currently, licensing inspections have halted due to budget constraints. As a result of a reduction in resources, Community Care Licensing may be unable even to meet the requirement to conduct thorough inspections of facilities every five years. Each inspector has an average caseload of 169 settings, far more than the nationally recommended ratio of 50:1 (NACCRA, 2009). To improve the monitoring of health and safety in centers and family child care homes, DSS has proposed a new compliance protocol. This protocol would restore annual inspections of centers and biennial inspections of family child care homes by reducing the number of items assessed and raising licensure fees by 10 percent.

California’s licensing standards need to be updated to reflect effective practice and research. Compared to nationally recommended standards, California’s licensing requirements are lenient in several important areas. The center requirements allow considerably larger-than-recommended staff-child ratios, do not require staff to complete any annual training and do not require any post-secondary degree for lead teachers (NACCRA, 2009). Other important issues include developing a common definition of the age span for “infant,” changing the definition of “toddler” to 18 to 36 months, recommending health and safety training annually, and developing appropriate nutrition requirements for family child care homes. Title 5 standards for state-contracted child development programs come much closer to meeting nationally recommended standards. However, as a result of cutbacks in budget and staffing, on-site reviews of Title 5 programs by CDE staff are limited to urgent situations; hence oversight is primarily limited to a paper review of program compliance.

In this report, the Advisory Committee proposes a quality rating structure that integrates the above multiple sets of standards into one coherent, evidence-based system. To improve the frequency of reviews and link programs to technical assistance and other quality improvement incentives, coordination of current licensing and programmatic reviews with the QRIS should be explored. While it is important to separate regulatory activities designed to enforce compliance from the provision of technical assistance, some streamlining in the monitoring of health, safety, and quality issues is essential.

- **Provide objective ratings of programs for families and policymakers by establishing unified statewide quality standards.**

Studies show parents value high-quality child care, but they often do not spot shortfalls (Barraclough & Smith, 1996; Wolfe & Scrivner, 2004; Cryer, Tietze, & Wessels, 2002). According to the *Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study*, families rated centers nearly twice as high as did trained assessors on such key elements as health, safety, and staff-child interaction (Helburn, 1995). These findings highlight a need for easily accessible, objective ratings about the safety, health, and quality of the early learning taking place in these settings where children spend up to 11 hours per day.

The state funds child care resource and referral programs in every county to provide information to parents on the range of services available and tips on how to look for quality programs (*California Education Code*, Section 8212). However, there is no objective quality rating system upon which to base the information and referrals. Parents need access to these ratings to make wise choices on behalf of their children and families, and policymakers need the ratings to hold programs accountable and to invest in quality improvement efforts.

In Section III of this report, the Advisory Committee recommends a system for standardized assessments to rate the early learning and care settings. The information should be made available to families in a clear, easy-to-understand format. Consideration should also be given to posting licensing inspection findings and quality ratings online for easy parent access, as recommended by the LAO (2007) and the NACCRA (2009).

- **Pilot the quality review system and design incentives to support the system.**

Good policy dictates conducting a pilot of the proposed quality review system before attempting statewide implementation. Participation will be voluntary during the pilot and the initial period of statewide implementation. The major non-financial incentive for a privately funded program to participate is the publicity associated with marketing a high-quality rating. However, virtually all states with a QRIS also employ various financial incentives to encourage programs to participate in the system and to help them improve their quality (see Appendix D). These incentives range from tiered reimbursement rates (higher subsidies for publicly funded programs that meet higher standards), to tax credits for parents who choose high-quality settings, to program grants to support quality improvements.

Unfortunately, in California, current reimbursement rates for state-funded programs provide little financial incentive to improve quality. In fact, the state currently has what might be called a reverse tiered reimbursement system, typically offering higher voucher payments for programs that are only required to meet minimal licensing standards than for state-contracted programs that are held to higher Title 5 child development program standards. In California, license-exempt providers, who are not required to meet any standards, have typically received nearly the same per-child reimbursement as licensed family child care providers, thereby providing little incentive

for home-based providers to seek licensure. A provision in the 2011 state budget limits license-exempt providers to 80 percent of the licensed family child care rate, but California still provides higher payments for license-exempt providers, as well as less oversight, than do many other states. Some states require at least initial visits to license-exempt providers receiving public payments, while others do not provide any subsidies to unlicensed settings (National Child Care Information Technical Assistance Center [NCCIC], 2008).

This report provides some preliminary information on the cost of various incentives in other states with QRISs, but estimating the cost and efficacy of the different incentives in California will require further work best conducted as part of the proposed pilots (see page 17 for a description of the pilots). However, an urgent need exists to correct the current financial disincentives in publicly funded early learning and care programs. Such a correction would logically accompany, but need not wait for, the full implementation of a QRIS.

- **Strengthen the links between early educator professional development and effective teaching to improve child outcomes.**

Effective early educators, whether in a center or family child care home (FCCH) setting, help young children grow and learn, observe children's progress, encourage curiosity and creativity, and keep families involved in their children's development. For children birth to age three, "teaching" and "care giving" typically occur simultaneously; and the manner in which the adult listens to and responds to the infant or toddler is a key indicator of the quality of the early learning and care (Lally, 2009).

Although there is broad agreement that understanding child development and engaging in effective interaction with young children are central to the capacity of quality early learning and care programs to improve child outcomes, most early educators lack sufficient professional development and academic training in child development (Whitebook et al., 2009). Recently, some studies have not found the expected added value in a bachelor's (BA) versus associate's (AA) degree training, nor in any other form of training, such as non-degree in-service training (Early et al., 2007). However, researchers do not conclude that higher education and in-service training are unimportant. On the contrary, as indicated by University of Virginia researcher Robert Pianta and colleagues (2009) in a recent review of preschool research, the early learning and care programs found to achieve dramatic improvements in child outcomes all have well-paid, highly qualified teachers with strong supervision. There is no evidence that programs without these attributes can achieve a fraction of the same results. The much-touted Tulsa pre-kindergarten program, for example, employs fully qualified public school teachers and pays public school salaries. In addition, the program is coupled with a curriculum focused on literacy and accompanied by focused professional development. What the researchers are saying is that higher education for early educators needs to focus more on the desired child outcomes, and that degree-bearing courses need to include more observation of early educators in the classroom, with ample time for feedback on their effectiveness in interacting with young children.

While many early educators in both center and FCCH settings want to pursue further education, they cannot easily attend college during normal business hours because they already work full-time. Courses are needed at a variety of day and evening hours, in convenient locations, and using online technology. As at all levels of education, policymakers are struggling to determine the best ways to prepare teachers who can promote children’s well-being and learning, such as supplementing formal education with coaching and training models. Moreover, early educators in preschool settings typically earn about half of what kindergarten teachers earn (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009); and turnover is high, hovering around 30 percent per year (Phillips, 2010).

California needs to build on innovative projects and commit to statewide access to an articulated pathway through higher education based on early educator competencies; equitable compensation and environments; and research- and data-driven professional development practices, policies, and resource allocations that link effective teaching and learning relationships to child outcomes. This section provides a timeline for completing this pathway.

- **Establish a statewide evaluation system to determine the impact of early learning and care programs on child outcomes.**

California does not track children’s enrollment in early learning and care programs across the wide range of program settings, and hence these data cannot be linked to children’s school readiness and achievement in kindergarten through grade twelve. Establishing a unique child identifier for children enrolled in early learning and care programs would help to understand patterns of enrollment and to link these data with trends in child outcomes in elementary through higher education. While rigorous quasi-experimental studies would be needed to determine causal effects, tracking the enrollment data would improve the accountability and transparency of the public’s investments. Also, the child, family, and program data sets need to be connected to better determine the most effective early learning practices for California’s diverse population of young children.

### **III. PROPOSED DESIGN OF CALIFORNIA’S QRIS**

#### **1. The Quality Rating Structure**

##### **Non-Weighted Block and Five-Tier System**

The proposed QRIS establishes a cohesive set of quality standards for all early learning and care programs. The Advisory Committee approved a non-weighted block system for the rating structure’s basic design. In a block system, all the quality criteria in each tier need to be accomplished to obtain that rating, and the criteria included in each tier build on those in previous blocks. Unlike a point system, where providers may meet some but not all criteria for a particular tier, a block system structure promotes more consistency in the meaning of the ratings and makes it easier for families to understand and compare ratings.

In addition, the Advisory Committee approved five tiers for each element. Tier 1, with some additions, is roughly modeled after Title 22 licensing standards, Tier 3 parallels the Title 5

child development program standards, and Tier 5 is similar to nationally recommended standards, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation standards and the National Institute for Early Education Research quality benchmarks. The top tier represents a level of quality to which the Advisory Committee hopes programs will aspire, with the expectation that only a minority will attain the higher tiers initially. Over time, the QRIS will motivate and assist centers and family child care homes in moving up the tiers to achieve higher ratings.

## **Five Quality Elements**

As shown in the table on page 16, the Advisory Committee approved five quality elements for the rating structure: ratios and group size, teaching and learning (measured by Environment Rating Scales [ERS], and alignment with the *California Preschool Learning Foundations*, *California Infant/Toddler Learning & Development Foundations*, and the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework*), family involvement, staff education and training, and program leadership. The elements included in the quality rating structure are limited to those most closely linked through research and effective practice to improved outcomes for children. The selected elements are also proxies – or leading indicators – for the many additional factors that are important for optimum child development. By limiting the number of items to be “rated” and, therefore, the cost of the quality rating process, the QRIS would attempt to preserve resources and allow more emphasis on the support systems and technical assistance for quality improvement.

The Advisory Committee approved a five tier rating structure that integrates:

- Cultural and language competence (using the definition developed in conjunction with the *Early Childhood Educator [ECE] Competencies*; see Appendix B for more detail)
- Children with special needs
- Nutrition, health, and physical activity

These important characteristics need to be embedded into each quality element and all aspects of professional development, family involvement, and technical assistance, as well as other supports for quality improvement. California’s QRIS envisions early learning and care programs that support the many cultures and languages of California’s children and families, are fully inclusive of children with special needs, and promote the healthy growth and development of young children.

## **2. Elements of the Rating Structure**

The following section summarizes the decisions made on the five quality elements, and it briefly describes the related policy statements and considerations for each element. For more detail on the work of the five subcommittees, including the subcommittee meeting highlights, see <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/sb1629committee.asp>.

## Ratios and Group Size for Centers and Family Child Care Homes

Staff-child ratios represent complex issues in developing the QRIS. Providing sufficient individual attention to young children in a stimulating – though orderly – setting is a key quality indicator. Evidence suggests that a relatively high ratio of adults to children may be especially important for infants and toddlers (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). However, staff-child ratios, like teacher and provider education requirements, are key factors affecting the cost of early learning and care, and therefore these factors must be considered in tandem.

**Ratio and group size for centers:** For infants in the highest two tiers, the Advisory Committee proposes more stringent staff-child ratios similar to those recommended by NAEYC and the Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC).<sup>1</sup> For preschool-age children, however, the proposed staff-child ratios generally follow Title 22 licensing requirements in the first two tiers. The ratios maintain Title 5 and Head Start child development program requirements in the higher three tiers, allowing for more emphasis on stronger educational requirements for program directors and early educators to improve quality.

**Group size:** The number of children in a group is often considered to be as important to the overall quality of a program as are staff-child ratios. Title 22 licensing regulations currently do not have group size requirements. In the proposed rating structure, all five tiers would have a limitation on group size. For infants in Tiers 3 and 4 and for all age groups in Tier 5, group size would indicate the maximum number of children in an individual classroom. For infants in Tiers 1 and 2, and for toddlers and preschool children in Tiers 1 to 4, group size may be defined as “well-defined spaces” in a larger room. In Tiers 3 to 5, programs would either have to meet the Title 5 child development program requirements, or a research-based alternative of 10:1 and group size of 20 children, assuming higher teacher education qualifications, such as those being implemented in Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

**Ratio and group size for family child care homes:** The proposed rating structure uses current Title 22 licensing criteria as ratio and group size criteria for family child care homes (FCCH). Keeping FCCH ratio and group size constant also assumes increased staff qualifications to improve program quality.

## Teaching and Learning

As stated earlier, the proposed quality rating structure will measure a few key criteria for each element, with the understanding that these criteria serve as proxies – or key indicators – for the many important attributes that affect program quality. The teaching and learning quality element has two criteria:

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<sup>1</sup> WestEd’s PITC recommends primary care ratios of 1:3 or 1:4, in groups of 6 to 12 children, depending on the age (2010); NAEYC recommends 1:4 for infants up to 15 months of age in a group of 8 children; a 1:4 ratio for toddlers ages 12 to 18 months and 1:6 ratio for those up to 36 months with a group size of 12.

- The quality rating structure should ensure that all tiers include an adequate measure of teacher-child interaction, which is one of the factors most strongly related to improved child outcomes.
  - The entry level of the QRIS will require self-assessments using the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) to measure structural quality and teacher/provider-child interaction. The ERS are a group of scales including the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale –Revised (ECERS-R) to assess programs for children ages two to five, the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R) for programs serving children up to age two-and-a-half, and the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised (FCCERS-R) for home-based child care settings. Each set of scales has items to evaluate the physical environment, materials, basic care, curriculum, the interaction between early educators and children; and opportunities for learning and development. The ERS, first published in 1980, have demonstrated reliability and validity, and are used in most other states that have QRISs. Additional tools may be needed to adequately assess and improve program facilities.
  - Higher levels of the rating structure would focus in more depth on teacher-child interaction, with independent assessments using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) or the Program Assessment Rating Scale (PARS) at Tiers 4 and 5. The CLASS is an assessment tool with demonstrated reliability and validity that is particularly noted for its capacity to assess the quality of teacher instruction for preschool-age children; it is now being required by the federal government to evaluate the quality of Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Developed by PITC, the PARS measures the early educator’s responsiveness to children ages birth to three.
- Alignment with the *Foundations* and *Frameworks* serves as a proxy for curriculum, child assessment, developmental and health screenings with appropriate referrals, inclusion of children with special needs, and cultural and language competence. The *Foundations* and *Frameworks* contain these (and other) program quality criteria and are also aligned with kindergarten standards. (Additional information on these resources is provided on page 20.)

The use of the ERS family of tools, Title 22 licensing requirements, and the *Foundations* and *Frameworks* will together address the following proposed “Nutrition Criteria”:

- Meals and snacks meet the Child Care Food Program (CCFP) requirements (for centers).
- Meals and snacks are served at regular times.
- Children have access to water throughout the day.
- Menus are posted.
- The program decides what is offered; the child decides what to eat and how much.
- Meals are served family style; adults sit with children during meals.

In addition, orientation to the CCFP's nutrition guidance and state nutrition standards will provide nutrition criteria. Beginning with Tier 1, programs will be encouraged to participate in the CCFP. Representatives from nutrition programs and from health and mental health consultant organizations provided input on criteria important to nutrition, health/mental health, and physical development, and they continue to support including additional criteria.

## **Family Involvement**

Incorporating parent and family engagement is a critical component of California's proposed QRIS. It is the interaction between the child's family and early learning and care setting, whether center or FCCH, that promotes the best developmental and child outcomes. For example, the Chicago Child-Parent Centers found that family engagement is an essential component of a high-quality early learning program, related to more positive student outcomes and associated with greater family involvement in the elementary school years (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999).

Family involvement has been linked to school readiness, school performance, academic achievement, and social and emotional development. Studies have found that *all* families, regardless of income or educational level, or ethnic or cultural background, are important in supporting children's learning and investing in children's school success. Indeed, research suggests that family participation in education is twice as predictive of students' academic success as family socioeconomic status. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that regardless of family income or cultural background, children whose parents are involved in their education are more likely to achieve higher grades and test scores, have more consistent school attendance, demonstrate better social skills and self-esteem, show improved behavior, and adapt well to the school environment (Coughlan et al., 2009; Henderson and Mapp, 2002). Therefore, it is essential to establish widely available opportunities for families to become involved in their children's early learning and care settings; work collaboratively with schools, centers, and family child care homes; and develop partnerships with early educators so that young children receive the full benefit of the programs and are prepared for kindergarten and future school success.

The five tiers of the proposed family involvement quality element focus on relationship building, shared goals, and family demographics. These partnering strategies extend and deepen in intentionality and variety as programs advance through the five tiers. Early learning and care programs need a full range of options and opportunities for family engagement, so families can choose the type of engagement activities based on their priorities.

The family involvement element integrates three components of effective partnering to do the following:

- Develop partnering relationships with families and recognize the primacy of family.

- Address diversity; acknowledge the differences of culture and family values and practices.
- Build trusting relationships that grow out of shared knowledge.

The Advisory Committee proposes using the ERS measure for family involvement and the Title 22 licensing requirements related to family engagement as proxies for the family engagement element of the rating scale.<sup>2</sup> The Advisory Committee recommends including family education topics appropriate to the community beginning at Tier 2 and topics appropriate to transition planning at Tier 3. Cultural and language competency must be integrated into all family involvement strategies. For more information on effective strategies for encouraging family involvement, with an emphasis on cultural and language competency and assisting families who have children with special needs, see Appendix H.

### **Staff Education and Training**

The Advisory Committee approved tiers for early educator professional development, with consideration of ECE Competencies and the professional development delivery system. The intent is to acknowledge the extensive research indicating that early educators with degrees and appropriate training in the field are a standard component of the high-quality programs that have been found to increase school readiness and improve children’s achievement in elementary school. Degrees alone are not a panacea, however.<sup>3</sup> As indicated above, both degree-bearing and in-service training need to focus more on the kind of interaction between the early educator and child that has been found to promote school readiness across domains. Promoting teacher effectiveness calls for a mix of strategies, including ongoing support for learning, rewarding work environments, and equitable compensation. As indicated earlier, program observations are also needed to assess teacher effectiveness.

Staff education and training criteria vary at each tier of the QRIS, encompassing the following components:

- Formal education – credit-bearing courses, including degrees and credentials. Coursework in early childhood education requires a “C” or better grade.
- Practical experience – credit and non-credit bearing professional practice experiences, such as reflective practice, internships, college practicum experiences, and fieldwork.

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<sup>2</sup> Family Involvement tiers reference ECERS subscale “Parents & Staff,” item 38; ITERS subscale “Parents & Staff” item 33; and the FCCERS subscale Parent & Provider, item 35.

<sup>3</sup> Well-qualified teachers are an important element of high-quality programs, although levels of education need to be accompanied by equitable pay, meaning commensurate with the level of education. Research indicates that centers that offer equitable compensation are better able to recruit and retain well-educated staff. Other factors that contribute to high-quality programs include high caliber curriculum, intensive education (i.e., small classes, low teacher/student ratios), steady attendance, measurements of teacher performance to guide training to improve teacher effectiveness, and helping teachers learn to measure children’s progress to inform their efforts to promote student progress (Barnett & Ackerman, 2006).

- Ongoing professional development – credit or non-credit courses and seminars, including coaching and mentoring.

With respect to teacher qualifications, the proposed design gradually advances teacher educational qualifications by tier. QRIS “staff education and ongoing professional development” criteria apply to all lead teachers as the proxy for the education and professional development of staff in the early learning and care program.

### **Program Leadership**

Early learning and care directors are responsible for personnel and fiscal management, oversight of the program’s curriculum, and educational leadership for staff and families. For program leadership, the program director’s educational and professional experience will serve as the proxies related to the establishment of effective administrative policies and procedures, leadership development, staff compensation, support for professional development, and program evaluation. Program leadership involves a wide array of knowledge and skills in administration, staff management, and understanding of policies and processes. The quality rating structure uses the program director’s qualifications as a proxy for these multiple skills, recognizing that the effectiveness of this measure will need to be evaluated.

The Program Administration Scale (PAS) is designed to reliably measure the leadership and management practices of center-based early childhood organizations. The Business Administration Scale (BAS) measures management practices and quality of care in family child care settings. Both scales are highly correlated with program director qualifications and are helpful tools for technical assistance, though they are not appropriate for rating all programs. The Advisory Committee also recommended using other administrative rating tools, such as the coordinated management review the CDE uses to monitor Title 5 child development programs, as well as NAEYC materials, to improve program leadership. Ensuring a process for measuring the effectiveness of program leadership is critical to ensuring that an early learning and care program contributes to improved child outcomes.

Each center should identify the “program director,” defined as the person who administers and/or manages a center or program.<sup>4</sup> For purposes of assessing program leadership, family child care homes will use the staff education and training element and will not be asked to also meet the program leadership element criteria

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<sup>4</sup> McCormick (McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, 2009) states that policymakers should heed the following advice for early child care program directors: (1) Support the use of the federal Child Care and Development Fund quality set-aside funds and Head Start training and technical assistance dollars for director leadership training; (2) encourage institutions of higher education to expand early childhood administration courses and degree programs; (3) create incentives for early childhood administrators to enhance their professional qualifications and attain a state or national director credential; and (4) ensure that organizational measures of program administration are included in system reform efforts, such as quality rating and improvement systems.

for the program director. However, the BAS instrument may be used as a self-study resource and for technical assistance for family child care providers.

### **Next Step: Preventing Redundancy in Program Reviews**

To guard against duplication in program reviews, the Advisory Committee proposes exploring agreements with accreditation agencies and other entities, such as Head Start and Title 5 programs, that conduct validated performance reviews. The purpose of this policy is to prevent duplication of effort and save expenditures on multiple procedures, such as environmental ratings. In addition, this process may trigger a review of current interagency program monitoring processes to provide for similar reciprocity, given the redundant aspects of many early learning and care program reviews, including Title 5 reviews and Title 22 licensing inspections. Ultimately, of course, preventing redundancy in program reviews raises the larger question of the relationship of Title 22 licensing inspections and QRIS monitoring. The Advisory Committee recommends piloting various approaches to achieve efficiencies, from coordinating the two processes to possibly experimenting with combining them.

The QRIS will set the standards for quality in each tier. Third party accreditation and validated performance reviews will be used in conjunction with tiers but not incorporated into the tiers. Accrediting agencies will be encouraged to map their quality criteria to California's QRIS. Reciprocity with part or all of the QRIS, such as the ERS and CLASS/PARS reviews, will be considered with time-limited memoranda of understanding. The agency requesting reciprocity will be required to pay for any related costs.

It is important to stress that the quality rating system and support systems will be field tested over the next several years under the leadership of, and with support from, ELAC (see page 17). The intention is also to eventually create a California-specific quality rating tool so that California does not depend on proprietary tools and is able to develop a resource that reflects California's priorities and resources. The Advisory Committee anticipates that ELAC will review these recommendations as more data, information on effective practices, and stakeholder input become available. However, the key decisions here provide the essential foundation for moving forward to test implementation of the QRIS design.

CAEL QRIS BLOCK SYSTEM: TIERS AND ELEMENTS

Quality Elements	Tier 1		Tier 2		Tier 3		Tier 4		Tier 5	
	Ratio	Group Size	Ratio	Group Size	Ratio	Group Size	Ratio	Group Size	Ratio	Group Size
Infant (Center):	4:1	12	4:1	12	3:1 4:1	12 8	3:1 4:1	12 8	3:1	9
Toddler (Center): Ratio varies depends on definition of toddler & whether toddlers are grouped with infants	4:1	12	4:1	12	4:1	12	4:1	12	4:1	12
	Toddler is defined as 12-24 months in Tier 1, and it is assumed that toddlers are included with infants.		If a toddler is defined as 18-30 months, a ratio of 6:1 is allowed in Tier 2.		Toddler is defined as 18-36 months.		Toddler is defined as 18-36 months.		Toddler is defined as 18-36 months.	
Preschool (Center):	12:1	24	12:1	24	8:1 10:1	24 or 20	8:1 10:1	24 or 20	8:1 10:1	24 or 20
Family Child Care Homes:	The Advisory Committee approved using current Title 22 Licensing Criteria as QRS Ratio and Group Size Criteria.									
<b>Teaching and Learning</b>										
a. Environment Rating Scale(s) - ECERS, ITERS, FCCERS	<b>Facilitated self assessment.</b> <i>Includes a one-on-one facilitated training after self-assessment completed. No requirement for score level.</i>	<b>Facilitated peer assessment.</b> <i>Includes a one-on-one facilitated training after peer-assessment completed. No requirement for score level.</i>	<b>Independent assessment.</b> <i>All subscales completed and averaged to meet overall score level of 4.0. Self assessment with CLASS (Centers) or PARS (FCCH) measure teacher/child interactions in alternating rating periods.</i>	<b>Independent assessment.</b> <i>All subscales completed and averaged to meet overall score level of 5.0. Plus CLASS (Centers) or PARS (FCCH) to measure teacher/child interactions in alternate rating periods.</i>	<b>Independent assessment.</b> <i>All subscales completed and averaged to meet overall score level of 6.0. Plus CLASS (Centers) or PARS (FCCH) to measure teacher/child interactions in alternate rating</i>					
b. Alignment with Early Learning Foundations and Frameworks	<b>Awareness.</b> Have a copy of and receive orientation on Foundations and Frameworks. <b>Education Plan:</b> Program has Philosophy Statement	<b>Exploring integration of the Foundations and Frameworks</b> <b>Education Plan:</b> A developmentally, culturally, linguistically appropriate (DCLA) curriculum	<b>Developing competency in integrating Foundations and Frameworks.</b> <b>Education Plan:</b> Social, emotional, cognitive, and physical domains in: <b>Lesson plans linked to developmentally, culturally, linguistically appropriate (DCLA) child assessments.</b> <b>Professional Development</b> plan for Foundations and Framework	<b>Building competency in integrating Foundations and Frameworks.</b> <b>Education Plan:</b> Social, emotional, cognitive, and physical domains in: <b>Lesson plans linked to developmentally, culturally, linguistically appropriate (DCLA) child assessments.</b> <b>Professional Development</b> plan for Foundations and Framework	<b>Fully integrating Foundations and Frameworks</b> <b>Education Plan:</b> Include all domains of learning in an integrated fashion in: <b>Lessons plans</b> linked to developmentally, culturally, linguistically appropriate (DCLA) child assessment.					
<b>Family Involvement:</b> Environmental Rating Subscale ("Parents & Staff") (ECERS, ITERS, FCCERS)	<b>Communicate with Parents</b> a. ERS: Facilitated self-assessment b. If subscale item is less than '3', an improvement plan is developed c. Title 22 Center requirements. d. Comparable Title 22 FCCH requirements	<b>Educate Parents and Receive Information</b> a. ERS: Facilitated peer-assessment b. If subscale item is less than '3', an improvement plan is developed c. Topics offered in support of subscale. Provisions for parents, indicators for family information and/or education may include topics such as: how children learn at home and in ECE; developmental levels and brain development; physical activities and nutrition	<b>Involve Parents</b> a. ERS independent assessment b. ERS average score of 4; when subscale item is less than 4, a quality improvement plan will be developed. c. Provider has a written transaction plan which is activated when a child moves into another child care setting or into kindergarten.	<b>Engage Parents</b> a. ERS independent assessment b. ERS average score of 5; when subscale item is less than 5; a quality improvement plan will be developed.	<b>Partner and Advocate with Parents</b> a. ERS independent assessment b. ERS average score of 6; when subscale item is less than 6; a quality improvement plan will be developed.					
<b>Staff Education and Training**</b>										
<b>Education</b>	<b>Center:</b> 12 units of ECE <b>FCC:</b> 15 hours of health and safety	<b>Center:</b> 24 units of ECE (core 8) <b>FCC:</b> 12 units of ECE (of core 8)	24 units of ECE (core 8) and 16 units of General Education (same as Title V and current Child Development Teacher permit)	AA degree in ECE <b>OR</b> 60 degree- applicable units, including 24 units of ECE OR BA in any field plus 24 units of ECE (similar to a Master Teacher in Title 5 Programs or new (October 2011) Head Start Requirements	BA/BS degree in ECE (or closely related field) with 48+ units of ECE OR Masters degree in ECE					
<b>Experience</b>	Title 22 teacher with 6 months experience	One year of experience	Two years of experience	Two years of experience	Two years of experience					
<b>Professional Development</b>	21 hours per year	21 hours per year	21 hours per year	21 hours per year	21 hours per year					
<b>Program Leadership***</b>	12 units core ECE (early childhood education, child development, family/consumer studies, or related field), 3 units administration, 4 years experience	24 units core ECE, 16 units GE (General Education), 3 units administration, 1 year management or supervisory experience Self-study with PAS or BAS	AA degree with 24 units core ECE, 6 units administration, 2 units supervision 2 years management or supervisory experience Continuous improvement through a PAS or BAS action plan	BA with 24 units core ECE, 15 units management, 3 years management or supervisory experience Continuous improvement through a PAS or BAS action plan	MA with 30 units core ECE including specialized courses, 21 units management, or Administrative Credential Continuous improvement through a PAS or BAS action plan					

## **IV. HOW THE QRIS WILL WORK**

### **Pilot Projects to Field Test the QRIS**

Implementing a QRIS is complex. Among the 23 states that have already implemented such systems, many strongly recommend that it is vital to conduct a field test or pilot prior to implementing the system statewide. The Advisory Committee recommends, and the new ELAC obtained funds to support, a three-year pilot before embarking on statewide implementation.

The pilot projects will provide an opportunity to explore the efficacy of various methods for recruiting early learning and care programs to volunteer to participate in the rating process; assess the costs and benefits of various approaches to conducting the program quality reviews and providing technical assistance; and establish statewide data parameters for ongoing research and evaluations that inform continuous program improvement efforts and link the QRIS to child outcomes. Other factors to study for QRIS participation include investigating phase-in timelines for public and private early learning and care programs; checking the effectiveness of communication with programs, providers, and families; and studying the length of time programs stay on or move up tiers given the standards for each tier and varying levels of incentives and support. Strong evaluation will be central to the success of pilot projects and to the QRIS when fully implemented.

The Advisory Committee's initial ideas for pilot projects are to encourage a range of counties (or regions) to participate by providing support for a balanced distribution of program and provider characteristics, such as public and private, urban and rural, infant-toddler and preschool, and established and new to QRIS. As explained in Appendix C, California already has a number of models for quality rating and improvement systems that have been established at the county level as well as other regional quality improvement initiatives.

For the QRIS pilot projects, criteria for selection should also include:

- Willingness to implement and assess the QRIS rating scale and systems of support with fidelity
- Agreement to participate in the evaluation
- Capacity to leverage local resources, including expertise and funding
- Demonstrated partnerships across a range of programs and providers and support systems

### **Participation and Phase-In**

The Advisory Committee proposes a three-year pilot of the QRIS, including sufficient time for planning and evaluation, followed by a phased-in implementation over five or more years. The vision is that the participation in the QRIS will initially be voluntary, then required for publicly funded programs and ultimately for all licensed programs, with appropriate funding and incentives provided. The vision is that participation in the

quality rating structure will be open to licensed center-based programs, a small category of license-exempt centers meeting specific requirements, and licensed family child care homes. (See Glossary for definitions.) License-exempt providers will have access to technical assistance, professional development, and support to obtain licensure, although they will not be eligible to obtain ratings. When fully implemented, the plan is for ratings to be linked to both financial and non-financial incentives for improvement.

In the interim prior to statewide implementation, the Advisory Committee proposes that all early learning and care programs for California's youngest children be encouraged to implement as many of the proposed QRIS quality improvement recommendations as possible, although limited public financial resources are available to support participation initially. Programs, associations, and communities can work to improve program quality in some, or all, of the quality rating structure elements and support systems while building on local improvement efforts, commitment, and resources. The proposed phase-in plan is a guide for statewide testing and implementation and is not intended to limit local leadership and momentum for early learning quality improvement.

### **Oversight and Conduct of Ratings and Reviews**

Partnerships among multiple federal, state, and local agencies are essential to successfully implement California's QRIS. The Advisory Committee envisions that the QRIS would use a combination of local and state oversight to maximize expertise and resources. The QRIS ratings would be done at the county level (or regional consortium). The CDE would provide oversight and assurance of statewide consistency (e.g., inter-rater reliability). In addition, state oversight functions would need to safeguard against conflicts of interest between the entities conducting ERS assessments and program reviews to establish ratings and those providing technical assistance (TA) designed to help improve ratings. State oversight also would include establishing an appeals process for technical issues, such as administrative errors. The qualitative aspects of the QRIS program reviews (i.e., ERS and CLASS or PARS) would not be subject to appeal. When assessing a classroom using an ERS, the Advisory Committee recommends that the independent assessors have knowledge of, and experience with, the type of setting being reviewed (infant/toddler care versus family child care or preschool center-based care).

Annual program reviews involving independent ERS, CLASS, or PARS assessments are expensive, and it is important to give programs sufficient time to institute improvements between assessments. Thus, initial ideas for QRIS oversight suggest conducting the assessments every two to three years. Some programs, such as those with Title 22 licensing violations and key staff turnover, might trigger more frequent QRIS ratings. If possible, it would be advisable to use the pilot projects to check the cost and relative impact on program quality improvement of conducting QRIS ratings at one-versus two- or three-year intervals.

## V. PROPOSED SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

### Technical Assistance to Help Programs Improve

Because one of the chief purposes of a QRIS is to support quality improvement, TA is a major focus of the system. Based on the concerns about the quality of programs identified in the RAND study (Karloly et al., 2008) and *Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study* (Helburn, 1995), merely rating programs without providing TA resources will not foster continuous program improvement and better outcomes for children served by early learning and care programs. While the Advisory Committee's work focused on the rating structure's design, the Committee approved actions to guide the TA that will accompany the rating structure to form a complete QRIS by providing a pathway for improvement.

Upon entry into the QRIS, every early learning and care program will be offered information to explain the ratings and an opportunity to develop a "quality improvement plan" in collaboration with TA staff. The plan will provide direction on how to improve quality in the areas of concern to the program, and, if desired, offer clear direction on how to qualify to move up to the next tier. While entry-level programs will require the greatest support, TA will also be available to help programs maintain their current tier, particularly at the higher levels. California will build on existing TA expertise and effective delivery strategies using the resources of early QRIS model programs and early learning and care associations. To avoid conflicts of interest, different groups, or at least separate parts of organizations, will provide QRIS ratings, ERS, and program reviews; and conduct TA. For example, with sufficient safeguards, TA could be provided through different administrative groups but not necessarily separate agencies, since in some regions few agencies have sufficient expertise.

Prior to implementation, administrators will examine local TA models that have experience with assessing and providing technical assistance to programs. Administrators will explore the use of reciprocal reviews and TA to build a QRIS learning community that strengthens program leadership and invites ownership. TA will be available for license-exempt providers to help them prepare for licensure and to support them in providing information to families on child development.

The TA will be a strengths-based approach that uses coaching and mentoring for continuous quality improvement. The coaching model is client-driven, beginning with a baseline QRIS assessment of the early learning and care program. The QRIS coaches need to have (or acquire) training in specific skill areas. Statewide oversight is needed to monitor QRIS coaches' credentials and evaluate the effectiveness of their approaches. TA resources will focus on improving: (1) the quality of "teaching and learning," primarily to improve outcomes for children; and (2) operational considerations, such as leadership, program and human resources management, and program resources.

During the pilot test phase, it will be important to build on statewide TA networks and local TA resources as described in Appendix B. Maximizing the use of technology (such

as Webinars and teleconferences) will facilitate broader participation and dissemination of information. In addition, the pilot phase will be an important time to examine options for selecting an “honest local broker” to identify regional and local TA resources without posing a conflict of interest.

### **Building on California’s Early Learning Resources**

California has developed some important documents to help early learning and care programs improve child outcomes, and the QRIS will build on these resources. The resources described here are designed to be developmentally, age, and culturally/linguistically appropriate while also linking with kindergarten standards. Thus, they provide a platform for a continuum from birth to age eight. The resources include the following:

- *California Infant/Toddler Learning & Development Foundations* provide a comprehensive understanding of young children’s learning and development during the first three years of life. The *Foundations* outline key knowledge and skills that most children can achieve when offered the kinds of interactions, guidance, and environments that research has shown to promote early learning and development. The *California Preschool Learning Foundations* describe the knowledge, skills, and competencies that children typically attain at around 48 and 60 months of age when they participate in a high-quality preschool. The *Preschool Foundations* are research-based, link to the kindergarten standards, and encompass the kindergarten through grade twelve content standard areas with important additions for social-emotional development and dual-language learners.
- The *California Preschool Curriculum Frameworks*, released in 2010, are companion documents to the *Foundations*. The *Frameworks* include information on the environment and experiences to support each learning domain, suggested interactions with children and families, and teaching strategies in a format that allows early educators to reflect on their teaching practices. Local programs can choose specific curricula that will define a sequence of integrated experiences, interactions, and activities to help young children reach specific learning goals. Currently, fewer than half of the three- and four-year-old California children attend programs that use a specific curriculum based on child development research (Karoly et al., 2008).
- The *Early Childhood Educator Competencies* describe core knowledge, skills, and dispositions of early educators serving children birth to age five. The *Competencies* define the content of professional preparation and ongoing development, and include the skills to be culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate when working with young children and their families. The *Competencies* address the goal of developing and retaining a competent, diverse, and stable workforce in a variety of program settings. The *Competencies* will provide levels of content (to be determined) for ongoing professional

development, and they will be aligned with the *California Preschool Learning Foundations* and the *Infant/Toddler Learning & Development Foundations*.

- California's *Desired Results Developmental Profile-2010 (DRDP-2010)* for typically developing children, and *DRDP-Access* for children with disabilities and other special needs, represent key components of the state's efforts to improve the quality of early learning and care programs by focusing on child outcomes. These observation-based assessments are being aligned with the *Foundations*. The *Desired Results* system also includes a family-based assessment in the form of an annual family survey and a program-based assessment using the Environment Rating Scales.
- The *DRDP-School Readiness* tool provides kindergarten teachers with valid and reliable measurements of children's development in key domains of school readiness (English-language development, self and social development, self regulation, language and literacy development, and math development) and supports the transition of children from preschool to kindergarten. The pilot phase occurred from April to June 2010, and the tool is being field tested from August 2010 to June 2011. This resource could be included in the QRIS assessment of child outcomes.

These early education resources, training materials and programs, and delivery systems, including Web access, are already available for use in public and private programs and by license-exempt providers. To encourage more widespread use of the *Foundations*, *Frameworks*, *DRDP*, and related training materials, the Advisory Committee recommends broad dissemination and training for both public and private early learning and care programs through pre-service and in-service professional development systems.

### **Workforce Development to Promote Effective Teachers**

The primary workforce development challenge is to set up a support system to provide training to an already experienced workforce coming from very diverse educational backgrounds. One of the strengths of the existing workforce is that licensed family child care providers and center teachers are ethnically diverse and similar in demographics to the population of children they serve (Whitebook, 2009). However, the workforce's level of training varies widely from basic health and safety certification to higher education degrees in early learning and care. Currently, the federal Head Start program is the only early learning and care program in California that requires an AA or BA degree for teaching staff.

California needs timelines with systemic support for an articulation and transfer process within and among colleges and universities, systemwide and college-cohort data, and policies and funding that support student success to improve degree completion. The state needs to build on the efforts of community colleges to align courses and link them with state university courses to create a pathway toward two- and four-year degrees,

without creating dead ends for the early learning and care workforce. The extent of the issue is illustrated in a recent analysis indicating that 70 percent of degree-seeking community college students had not completed a certificate or degree, or transferred to another college or university six years after initial enrollment (Moore and Shulock, 2010).

### **Competencies and Courses: Content of Education and Ongoing Professional Development**

The Advisory Committee approved the following policies and considerations for building on the progress of current quality improvement projects and accelerating statewide accessibility, accountability, and coherence through the following steps:

All members of the higher education community, including the regents, presidents, deans, and faculty, need to ensure the completion of work by the following timeline so that the early learning and care workforce can effectively provide learning opportunities for young children and meet program requirements. These objectives and timelines became more readily achievable with the recent passage of SB 1440 (Padilla) that created a clear pathway for community college students transferring to the California State University system.

1. By **2012**, the *Early Childhood Educator Competencies*, which include the early learning *Foundations*, will be developed into a common and comprehensive course of study that is reflected in courses for AA and BA degrees and delivered statewide. Credit-bearing courses are required for degrees.
2. Using the statewide common and comprehensive course of study based on the *Early Childhood Educator Competencies*:
  - (a) By **2013**, all California community colleges that offer early learning and care programs incorporate the “core eight” classes and additional courses to reflect the designated lower division *Competencies* into their degree programs.
  - (b) By **2014**, all California State University, University of California, and private higher education institutions that offer early childhood education programs align these courses to a common and comprehensive course of study across the two- and four-year degree system.
3. By **2015**, a clear and accessible system of demonstrating the *Early Childhood Educator Competencies* equivalency for courses will be developed and publicized, including clear criteria and deliverables. This system includes courses taken from out-of-state and foreign institutions and non-Western Association of Schools and Colleges accredited institutions, as well as competencies developed through professional practice.

### **Strategies to Encourage Family and Community Involvement**

The QRIS pilot projects provide an opportunity to further plan and test the broad outreach and communication needed for QRIS success. The Advisory Committee

received the Engagement Subcommittee’s draft plan (Appendix I), and the information provided here reflects this plan.

The draft communication plan is organized by three target groups: (1) families; (2) programs and providers; and (3) stakeholders and the general public. For each group, the plan provides implementation strategies, sample messages, ideas for templates, and systems and groups that can provide outreach and information. Local agencies and organizations need to have open access to information through a state agency Web-linked platform that will also encourage and reward participation by early leaders in the pilot phase and throughout QRIS implementation. A sample of the ideas for outreach and communication include:

- Establish a brand for the QRIS that informs and promotes quality early learning and care programs. For example, some states use keys or stars. Templates could be developed for common QRIS messages that could be individualized to the needs of local agencies to distribute to various target groups. Templates could be provided for Web sites; flyers; posters; brochures; video presentations; public service announcements; advertisements; and scripts for phone tree messages, twitters, e-mail blasts, text messages, and social networks.
- Ask state, county, and local agencies and organizations currently working with families to assist with disseminating information to families, stakeholders, and the community and with collecting feedback. This involvement could include training spokespersons or obtaining trainers from local organizations. It is particularly important to include messengers who speak the language of the families and who are trusted sources of information.
- Seek corporate and agency sponsors and secure expert assistance to develop branding, templates, and a public outreach plan. Partnering with marketing classes through colleges and universities via practicum projects and putting QRIS information into the First 5 “Kit for New Parents” could be explored.

### **Data Systems to Track Progress**

A QRIS has great potential to help provide the data on the effectiveness of early learning and care programs in improving child outcomes and reducing the achievement gap. The vision is as follows:

The California Early Childhood Education (ECE) data information system, as a component of the QRIS, will provide timely, accessible, and appropriate birth to age five data regarding children, families, teachers/providers, programs, and funding to support continuous program improvement leading to increased articulation and better outcomes for children in California. To ensure a high-caliber California QRIS, the data information system will provide data to policymakers, consumers, and the public for purposes of strategic planning, resource management, research, and improved accountability. Major focus will be placed on leveraging existing data systems to eliminate duplicative reporting and collection and improve data quality to:

- Measure school readiness.

- Establish more efficient program management and administrative functions.
- Improve teacher and provider effectiveness.

The Advisory Committee identified nine key principles for an early learning and care data system: (1) confidential; (2) useable and practical; (3) accessible and interoperable; (4) respects current databases and builds on them; (5) transparent; (6) includes and connects child, family, teacher and provider, and program data; (7) provider-friendly; (8) easily adaptable and can grow and change over time; and (9) dynamic.

The first steps in developing the data information system are to develop a unique child identifier and assess the needs for and current data collection processes used by programs serving young children. The unique identifier is essential to facilitate following children's progress in kindergarten through grade twelve, and to see if enrollment in early learning and care programs appears to be associated with improved school readiness and student achievement. The Advisory Committee approved a method to provide a unique student identifier for children in early learning and care programs by using the registration number located on the birth certificate. This low-technology solution would also enable providers to go back to the common source to identify a child. Almost all children have birth certificates with a unique number, including children born outside of the United States, so very few children would need to receive an alternate unique number.

### **Initial Work to Develop a Financial Model for California's QRIS**

Establishing a QRIS involves multiple financial issues. The tasks of developing a funding model aligned with the QRIS and recommending how resources can be utilized to complement that model are outlined here, but they will need to be fully developed through the ELAC. The Advisory Committee developed a report that describes: (1) an analysis of costs for the proposed QRIS; (2) possible incentives to motivate provider and staff participation in the system, as well as to provide resources for quality improvements; (3) possible sources of financial and non-financial resources to implement a QRIS; and (4) a funding model that matches QRIS costs with possible funding streams. In addition, the CDE prepared a matrix of existing state and federal resources for early learning and care. These resources are included in Appendices G and J.

- **Cost analysis:** The Advisory Committee recommends that the cost analysis continue under ELAC, using the National Child Care Information Center cost calculator and other tools. This cost calculator can be "populated" with California-specific data. It then estimates costs in several broad areas, producing an annual cost for each area and a total statewide annual estimated cost. The cost calculator can be downloaded at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/>.
- **Incentives:** Financial and non-financial incentives need to be part of the "portfolio" of systems to support continuous program improvement. Incentives need to reimburse

providers for the added costs to participate in a QRIS; motivate providers to participate; provide funds to affect specific quality improvements identified in the QRIS quality improvement plans; and motivate child development center teachers, assistant teachers, directors, and other staff members to seek professional development to improve outcomes for children, expand skills, and achieve higher quality tiers. Further study needs to be conducted, including focus groups and pilot testing of: (1) the most effective type of incentives for various outcomes; (2) the optimal and most cost-effective dollar level of financial incentives; and (3) the most effective frequency of payments.

- **Developing a funding model with progressive build-out:** Potential finance mechanisms for the QRIS include existing funding streams that most closely match probable QRIS costs, partnerships with local entities that can provide both financial and non-financial resources, and utilization of state and federal early learning and care projects and programs as cost-effective vehicles to support quality improvement among licensed family child care providers and small centers.

The report (see Appendix J) identifies state, local, and federal funding streams, as well as opportunities to develop partnerships with First 5 state and county commissions, foundations and businesses, professional associations and networks, and state and federally funded projects. It will be important to examine how to: (1) adapt and incorporate, when possible, existing funding streams to support the QRIS pilot and implementation phases; and (2) partner and collaborate on pilot projects for funding, services, relationships, and local expertise.

## **VI. Next Steps for Quality Improvement Through a QRIS**

The next steps to develop California's QRIS are to progressively implement, and continuously improve, a strategic framework that builds on the strengths of California's existing early learning and care infrastructure; is informed by evidence-based practices; and makes the best use of existing, as well as new, resources. This report concludes the Advisory Committee's official role, and its work will continue under the auspices of ELAC. The Governor's Executive Order (S-23-09) in November 2009 established ELAC as the first step in making California eligible for federal funds available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to support improvements in early learning and care. The Council's membership includes the 13 members of the CAEL QIS Advisory Committee, plus additional members. ELAC's first success was to develop an application, approved in September 2010, for federal funds to support improvements in early learning and care. Projects include a statewide strategic plan, QRIS pilot projects, an early learning and care data system assessment and analysis, and *Early Childhood Educator Competencies* implementation projects.

The federal government recently issued policy directions that support California's QRIS, including stronger health and safety standards for early learning and care settings, implementation of a statewide QRIS, effective professional development for the adults working with young children, and strengthened program integrity. California is well-

positioned for additional resources. Success will depend upon our public leaders' commitment and our own dedication to garnering the public support necessary to champion the phased implementation and continuous improvement of the QRIS to ensure optimal early learning outcomes for all California children.

## Glossary

1. The Child Care Food Program, part of the federally- and state-funded Child and Adult Care Food Program, provides financial assistance to licensed child care centers and family child care homes in order to improve the nutrition and diets of children under the age of 13 and to promote healthy eating habits in children.
2. California Child Care Resource and Referral Network (CCR&RN) is a membership organization composed of Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) programs in California which elect to join the CCCR&RN. The CCCR&RN is a nonprofit and holds several contracts from the California Department of Education to provide services to parents seeking child care and training and other services to child care providers in home settings.
3. Local California Child Care Resource and Referral Programs are funded in every county to maintain up-to-date databases with information about licensed child care providers in centers and family child care homes; help parents understand their child care options, including providing information about the TrustLine Registry for license-exempt providers; work to increase the supply and quality of child care; and educate the community and local policy makers about child care issues and concerns.
4. California Early Learning Quality Improvement System (CAEL QIS) is the term used in Senate Bill {SB} 1629 Steinberg-Chapter 3078, Statutes of 2008 for a system to improve outcomes for children and promote school readiness by improving the quality of early learning and care programs for children from birth to age five.
5. California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) is a longitudinal data system used to maintain student-level data such as demographics, course data, discipline records, assessments, staff assignments, and other information for state and federal reporting.
6. California Longitudinal Teacher Integrated Data Education System (CALTIDES) will be a new, comprehensive system jointly developed by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) and the California Department of Education (CDE). The system will integrate existing databases to support the retention of longitudinal data to meet federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and other state reporting requirements, to facilitate assignment monitoring, and to conduct high quality program evaluations.
7. California School Age Families Education (Cal-SAFE) is designated to increase the availability of support services necessary for enrolled expectant/parenting students in order to improve academic achievement and parenting skills and to provide a quality early learning and care program for children. This program replaces the Pregnant Minors Program (PMP), the School Age Parenting and Infant Development (SAPID) Program, and the Pregnant and Lactating Students (PALS) program.
8. California State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (ELAC) is the term used by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in Executive Order (S-23-09) to establish a council that meets the federal requirements for a State Advisory Council to qualify for funds available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to support improvements in early learning and care.

ELAC will make recommendations to improve the state's policies and practices, including the implementation of the CAEL QIS, in ways that will lead to better child outcomes.

9. Child Protective Services, a component of the Children and Family Services Division of the California Department of Social Services, is the major state system for intervening in cases of reported or suspected child abuse, neglect, and exploitation in California. When a referral is received, the social service staff is obligated to investigate the claim by obtaining facts from the person making the referral. Emergency Response staff determines if an in-person response is indicated.
10. Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is an observation instrument developed to assess classroom quality in preschool through third-grade classrooms. The CLASS consists of three domains (emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support) that incorporate 10 dimensions of teacher-student interactions.
11. Early Educator is the term used in the CAEL QIS Final Report for center-based staff and licensed family child care providers serving children birth to age 5. "Early educators" perform multiple roles, serving as teachers, caregivers, and partners with families.
12. Environment Rating Scales (ERS) are observational assessment tools used to evaluate the quality of early learning and care programs. Examples of these scales include the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ITERS-R) and the Early Childhood Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS – R). Each ERS is divided into criteria that assess the program's physical environment, health and safety procedures, materials, interpersonal relationships, and opportunities for learning and development.
13. Family Child Care refers to homes licensed by the California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division, to provide care to infants, toddlers, preschool, and school-age children. There are two categories of family child care homes: small family child care homes for up to eight children, including the early educator's own children under age 10, and large family child care homes, serving up to 14 children, including the early educator's own children under the age of 10. Large family child care homes must have two adults (the provider and an assistant) available to provide care.
14. Financial Incentives associated with quality rating systems are typically designed to motivate providers to participate in the system, encourage staff to obtain additional relevant training, and to provide resources for quality improvements. Generally, programs with higher ratings receive greater financial assistance than do programs with lower ratings. Examples of financial incentives include tiered provider reimbursement, program development grants, and tax credits.
15. First 5 California, also known as the California Children and Families Commission, was created in 1998 when California voters passed Proposition 10, adding a 50-cent tax to each pack of cigarettes sold. First 5 California is dedicated to improving the lives of California's young children and their families through a comprehensive system of education, health services, childcare, and other crucial programs. First 5 California distributes funds to local communities

through the state's 58 individual counties, all of which have created their own local First 5 local commissions.

16. Head Start is a federally funded and administered preschool program that provides comprehensive services to both low-income children and their families. To be eligible for Head Start, a child must generally be at least three years old by the date used to determine eligibility for public schools in the community. At least 90% of children enrolled in Head Start must be from low-income families.
  - Early Head Start is a federally funded program that promotes healthy prenatal outcomes, healthy families, and the optimal development of infants and toddlers beginning as young as newborn infants.
  - Migrant and Seasonal Head Start is a program designed to provide comprehensive Head Start services including child development and social services to low-income families working in agriculture, or families who migrate while working in agriculture.
  - Tribal Head Start Programs are Head Start programs that primarily serve Native Americans living on reservations or colonies throughout Nevada and northern California.
17. License-Exempt Early Learning and Care PROGRAMS, as defined by CAEL QIS, will be ECE programs that are administered by an agency with operational oversight and responsibility for:
  1. Meeting Title 22 program licensing standards;
  2. Providing liability coverage; and
  3. Providing financial and legal recourse for parents/families.License-Exempt early learning and care PROGRAMS include: Tribal Programs, CalSAFE programs, Parent Cooperatives operated by agencies such as Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and Parks and Recreation.
18. License-Exempt Care PROVIDER refers to individuals that are not required by law to have a license to operate and are not required to follow the Community Care Licensing Division's Licensing requirements. These providers may care for children from only one other family in addition to their own children. License-exempt care providers are often friends, neighbors and/or family members.
19. Local Child Care Planning Councils, mandated by California Education Code, are councils found in every county of California that are funded by the California Department of Education. Each council is responsible for planning and coordinating early learning and care services in its county. Councils also typically advocate for high quality, accessible and affordable child care services.
20. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is a nonprofit association with a focus on professional development to improve the quality of educational and developmental services for all children from birth through age eight. NAEYC administers a national, voluntary accreditation system of professional standards for early childhood education programs which helps families identify high-quality programs for their young children.
21. The National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC), a service of the Office of Child Care, is a national clearinghouse and technical assistance center that provides comprehensive early learning and care

- information resources and technical assistance to state Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Administrators and other key stakeholders.
22. In a Non-Weighted Block System associated with a Quality Rating Structure, all the quality criteria in each tier need to be accomplished to obtain a particular rating, and the criteria included in each tier build on those in previous tiers.
  23. Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) is a program designed and offered by WestEd to help infant/toddler teachers assist infants' intellectual development through an attentive reading of children's cues. The PITC's guides, manuals, and on-site trainings are designed to help child care managers and infant/toddler care teachers become sensitive to infants' cues, connect with their family and culture, and develop responsive, relationship-based care.
  24. The Program for Infant/Toddler Care Program Assessment Rating Scale (PITC PARS) is an assessment tool designed by WestEd to evaluate programs that serve children birth to age three. The PARS is designed to measure PITC's six essential policies: primary care, small groups, continuity of care, individualized care, inclusive care, and culturally responsive care.
  25. Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is the term for a system that not only assesses and rates early learning and care programs, but also provides technical assistance and support services to help programs improve.
  26. Quality Rating Structure (QRS) is the term for the rating structure for a QRIS.
  27. The Regional Market Rate (RMR) is a child care provider rate that is based on the average cost of child care within each county in the state of California. RMR rate ceilings vary within counties depending on the provider type, the age of the child being served, and the length of the program day. Two state-subsidized programs, CalWORKs and the Alternative Payment Program, use the RMR or a percentage of the RMR to determine the reimbursement for families using center-based, licensed family child care, and license-exempt settings.
  28. The Standard Reimbursement Rate (SRR) is the child care provider rate used to reimburse Title 5 center-based programs. As of this 2010 writing, the SRR is equal to \$34.38 per child day of enrollment or \$8,595 annually. In 22 counties across the state with more than 80 percent of California's population, the RMR is higher than the SRR.
  29. Tiered Reimbursement Systems are finance mechanisms that offer higher subsidy payments to child care programs that demonstrate they meet higher standards of care.
  30. Title 5 General Child Care and Development (CCTR) is a state-contracted full-day program serving children age birth to age three and kindergarten-age eligible children to children 13 years old. Eligible children include those under Child Protective Services supervision or those who meet income eligibility requirements or other criteria. This program is required to meet the same Title 5 standards as the State Preschool Program. For more detail on Title 5 contract requirements, see "Title 5 State Preschool" below.
  31. Title 5 State Preschool is designed to prepare three to four-year-old children from low income families for kindergarten. Priority is given to children who are Child Protective Services recipients, children who are identified by Child Protective Services as being at risk for neglect or abuse, and four-year-old children who are

income-eligible. Programs must meet Title 22 requirements and additional requirements that include stricter child- to- adult ratios and increased teacher and staff qualifications, and other program quality elements. Title 5 State Preschool programs are reimbursed at the Standard Reimbursement Rate (SRR), and may operate part-day or full-day.

32. Title 22 Licensed Programs are programs that meet Title 22 licensing requirements set by the Department of Social Services. These requirements include staff-child ratios, teacher and staff qualifications criminal background checks, screening and clearance for tuberculosis, and inspection by the Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing for compliance with basic health and safety requirements.

TrustLine is California's registry of in-home child care providers, tutors and in-home counselors who have passed a background screening. It was created by the California Legislature in 1987 and is a powerful resource for parents hiring a nanny or baby-sitter. All caregivers listed with TrustLine have been cleared through a fingerprint check of records at the California Department of Justice. This means they have no disqualifying criminal convictions or substantiated child abuse reports in California. TrustLine is administered by the California Department of Social Services and the non-profit Child Care Resource and Referral Network. It is endorsed by the California Academy of Pediatrics.

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