

LICENSING RESEARCH BLUEPRINT FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

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This blueprint will propose a plan for licensing research related to quality assurance with the advent of the reauthorization of CCDBG and the publication of the *OCC/NQI Licensing Brief on Monitoring Strategies for Determining Compliance*, & *ASPE/ACF White Paper on Innovations in ECE Monitoring*.

The issue of program monitoring and quality assurance of early care and education programs has a long history to determine the most effective and efficient way on ensuring that ECE programs are in compliance with respective standards at the local, state, or national levels. This is a very important but in many cases neglected area which can lead to uneven enforcement of standards.

What this blueprint will not address. The standards/rules themselves, licensing statutes, and policies related to enforcement will not be addressed. The purpose of this blueprint is to focus on the quality assurance aspects of licensing through a research agenda addressing all the various aspects of program monitoring as it relates to the licensing of programs. Other strategies for improving ECE program quality (i.e., QRIS and professional development) will be touched upon but not in the same in-depth way as with licensing. The key element to this blueprint is to validate what already exists and to hopefully look for new approaches to program monitoring and quality assurance.

For the purposes of this blueprint, **program monitoring** is the management process of reviewing and controlling the delivery of ECE program services on an ongoing basis, according to predetermined criteria, with the intention of taking corrective action to assure and increase both program quality and management efficiency. And for the purposes of this paper, **quality assurance** is a system for ensuring a desired level of quality in the development and delivery of early care and education services beginning with a set of standards, such as *Caring for Our Children (CFOC)*.

KEY LICENSING RESEARCH COMMENTS, QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

- ✚ Need to determine the eligibility criteria to be met for licensee to qualify for abbreviated tool use.
- ✚ What is the most efficient and effective data collection and analysis for generating abbreviated tool development, sampling or the full licensing data base?
- ✚ Need to determine the most effective and efficient modes to establish reliability amongst licensing inspectors.

- ✦ Need to complete validation studies on differential monitoring, key indicators, and risk assessment systems. Do they accomplish what they are intended to do? Are there levels of false positives and negatives that should not be exceeded in the decision making process?
- ✦ How to establish additional rule violations or non-regulatory factors to be measured during inspections.
- ✦ What is an appropriate licensing inspector caseload when the use of a differential monitoring approach is introduced.
- ✦ Need to develop and implement a measurement tool for *Caring for Our Children Basic (CFOCB)*. This new tool would need to be field tested for reliability and validity.
- ✦ Need to develop a model for integrating an implementation system with licensing and quality assurance. Please see Figure 1 on page 4 for a possible suggestion.
- ✦ Analyze the relationship between various licensing levels and the respective QRIS standards to see which systems are most effective. Do the states with the most stringent licensing rules have the most comprehensive QRIS standards?
- ✦ Are all of these methods (key indicators, risk assessment) equally effective in measuring the level of compliance with licensing rules?
- ✦ Are all abbreviated compliance systems successful in creating both efficient and effective use of resources?
- ✦ What are the similarities and differences of the measurement methodologies and what is their impact on effective regulation?
- ✦ What is the best mix of the measurement methodologies for consistent and strong enforcement of the licensing rules?
- ✦ How do these abbreviated methods impact the relationship between licensing and other entities that monitor child care programs, such as Head Start, Quality Rating and Improvement Systems, prekindergarten, and national accreditation?
- ✦ Assessing announced vs unannounced inspections, which is more effective and efficient?
- ✦ Is *CFOCB* sufficient to be used across all ECE programs? Will it provide the new Holy Grail floor to quality?
- ✦ Should we have the same person doing licensing and providing technical assistance?
- ✦ What is the best method to having inspectors from the various ECE systems be cross trained?
- ✦ What is the relationship and role of ECE accreditation systems in a differential monitoring system?

- ✦ Is it more cost effective and efficient to have states adopt *CFOCB* as their core rules and use this as their abbreviated tool for differential monitoring rather than having states develop individual key indicator, risk assessment, and differential monitoring systems?
- ✦ The NARA Workload Standards should be used in all the validation studies involving changes in how inspectors spend their time monitoring programs, such as abbreviated vs full reviews of ECE programs.
- ✦ Who are more effective, specialists (specific to an ECE area) or generalists (across all ECE areas) in reviewing early childhood programs?
- ✦ Is there a specific number of predictive rules that produces the most cost effective and efficient key indicator tool?
- ✦ A crosswalk of standards and rules needs to be accomplished amongst licensing, Pre-K, Head Start, accreditation, *Stepping Stones*, *CFOC-Basics* and *CFOC*.
- ✦ Knowing that programs cannot have only abbreviated inspections completed, what is the most appropriate timeframe for comprehensive inspections to be completed?

COST EXAMPLES (these are based upon my past 3 years of experience in doing these studies with individual states and provinces):

Key Indicator for each set of rules/standards only: \$10000

Risk Assessment for each set of rules/standards only: \$20000

Full Differential Monitoring validation assessment: \$120000 - \$150000

I could see several studies in various states that address the most important of the 25 research questions listed above. We could rank order them with the OCC/OHS/ACF/DOE.

For additional information:

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Figure 1

Early Childhood Program Quality Assurance Model (ECPQAM)©

