Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families Child Care Licensing Measures and Outputs Validation Study: Preliminary Findings Technical Research Note

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January 2020

This technical research note will provide the preliminary findings from a large-scale validation study of Washington State's Department of Children, Youth and Families child care program. The validation involves two key components: 1) Validation of the measurement strategy used to determine the licensing decision making for child care centers and family child care homes; 2) Validation of the licensing system in juxtaposition to the program quality measures (ERS & CLASS) as part of their QRIS – Quality Rating and Improvement System utilized in Washington.

The full data set will involve several cohorts drawn from licensing reviews in 2019 – 2020. The data reported in this technical research note is from late 2019 and involved 146 sites. It was driven by the QRIS visiting and assessment schedule.

Let me start by saying that licensing/regulatory compliance data are very different from other data in how they get distributed and therefore should be analyzed. Licensing/regulatory compliance data are grouped into 4 basic buckets: Full regulatory compliance, substantial regulatory compliance, mid-range, and non-optimal regulatory compliance. Obviously full regulatory compliance means 0 violations or 100% compliance with all rules. Substantial regulatory compliance means 1-3 violations with all rules, while low compliance means 10 or move violations with all rules. A middle regulatory compliance range means 4-9 violations with all the rules.

I am going to "cut to the chase" in attempting to provide an oversight to the preliminary findings. The data were well distributed and fit into the above four (0 - 3) buckets very nicely. Based upon comparing the licensing data to the "Tiers" and "Actions" variables, the licensing decision making system has been validated with high correlations between the licensing data, the Tiers, Risk Assessment Matrix, and the proposed Actions (see Charts 1 and 2).

With the comparisons between the licensing data and the Environmental Rating Scales (ERS), the licensing data showed the typical "regulatory compliance law of diminishing returns" (see Figure 1) where the ERS scores were highest with the substantial regulatory compliance range rather than the full regulatory compliance level. In other words, there is not a linear relationship between moving from low to full regulatory compliance and program quality. Programs that are in substantial regulatory compliance and not full regulatory compliance had higher program quality scores. Obviously, the low regulatory compliance programs had also low program quality scores. There is a linear relationship

between regulatory compliance and program quality in moving from low regulatory compliance to the middle and substantial regulatory compliance levels (see Chart 3).

So far, so good! The data are validating the new licensing approach undertaken in Washington utilizing a Risk Assessment Model and a Tiered Licensing Decision Making Process at both the measures and output levels.

Chart 1: Tiers By Proposed Actions

	Tiers	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Proposed	**None**	119	0	0	0
Actions	**Tech Assist**	0	12	0	0
	Safety Plan	0	1	2	0
	Civil Penalty	0	1	8	0
	Suspend	0	0	0	1

R = .97; p < .001

Chart 2: Risk Assessment Matrix (RAM) By Regulatory Compliance (RC) Levels & Licensing Decisions

	Tiers	**Actions**	**Immediate**	**Short Term**	**Long Term**	**RC**
RAM	.50*	.48*	.63*	.69*	.37*	.93*

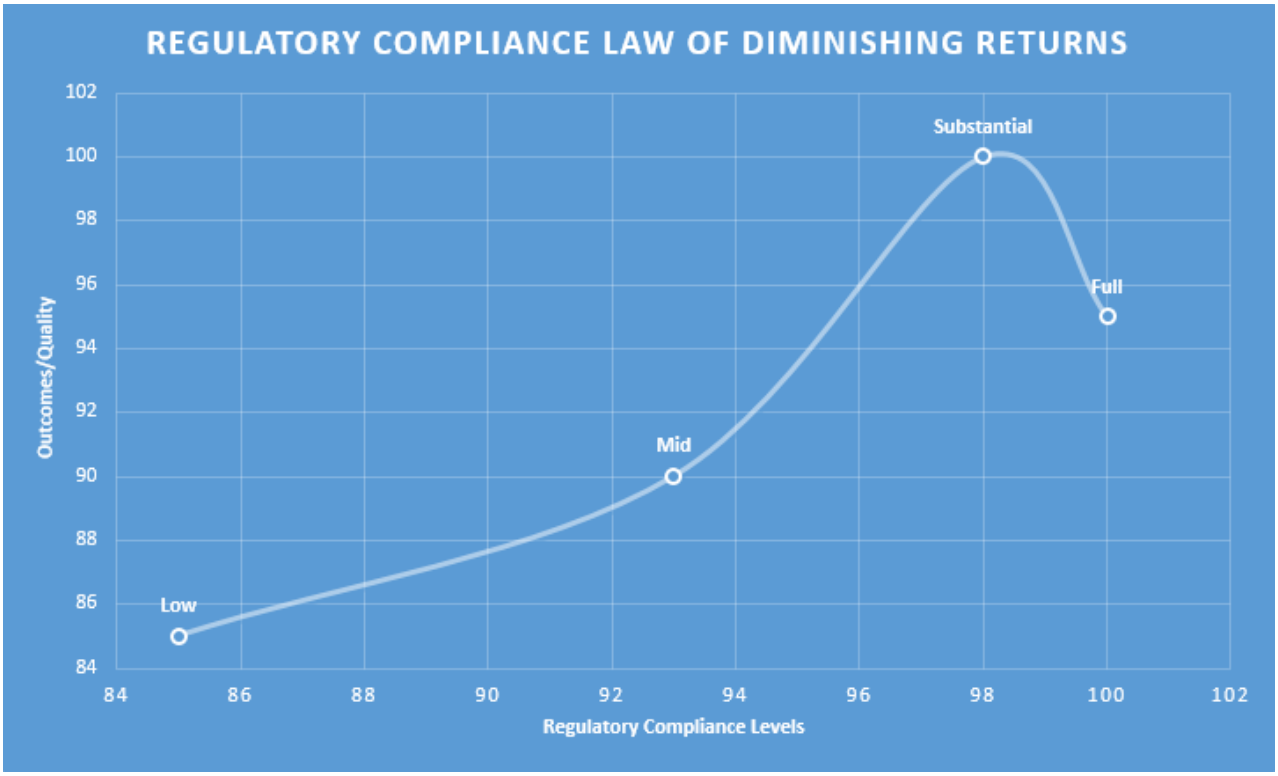
* P < .01

Chart 3: Regulatory Compliance Levels By Program Quality Scores (ERS Average Scores)

Licensing Bucket	**Legend**	**Compliance**	**Programs**	**ERS Aver Score**
0	Full	0 violations	33	3.84*
1	Substantial	1-3 violations	32	4.26*
2	Middle	4-9 violations	50	4.18*
3	Low	10+ violations	31	3.92*

* P < .03

Figure 1: Relationship Between Program Quality and Regulatory Compliance Levels



The above graph theoretically depicts the relationship between program quality and regulatory compliance levels as defined by the *Regulatory Compliance Law of Diminishing Returns*.

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