



Provider Perceptions of Parent Aware  
May, 2013



**PARENT  AWARE**  
for SCHOOL READINESS



## Table of Contents

Provider Perceptions of Parent Aware: Overview and Purpose.....	3
Head Start & School Based Pre-Kindergarten Programs with Parent Aware Ratings.....	4
Summary of Findings from Head Start and School-Based Pre-Kindergarten Programs with Parent Aware Ratings.....	8
Fully Rated Programs in Parent Aware.....	9
Summary of Findings from Fully-Rated Programs in Parent Aware.....	15
Parent Aware Pilot Programs Not Yet Enrolled in Statewide Parent Aware.....	15
Summary of Findings from Parent Aware Pilot Programs Not Yet Enrolled in Statewide Parent Aware.....	18
Interest & Awareness Survey.....	19
Summary of Findings from the Interest and Awareness Survey.....	23
Conclusion.....	24

## Table of Figures

Figure 1. Location of Head Start and School Based Pre-Kindergarten respondents.....	4
Figure 2. Reasons for joining Parent Aware.....	5
Figure 3. Marketing strategies.....	7
Figure 4. Providers' opinions about marketing strategies.....	10
Figure 5. Providers' experiences with professional development requirements.....	11
Figure 6. Providers' ranking of reasons for enrolling in Parent Aware:.....	12
Figure 7. Percent of providers who expect to post-rating QI dollars in specific areas.....	14
Figure 8. Location of responding providers rated in the pilot.....	16
Figure 9. What aspects would most affect your decision to rejoin Parent Aware? (n=28).....	17
Figure 10. What aspects would most affect your decision NOT to rejoin Parent Aware? (n=21).....	17
Figure 11. How respondents describe where their program is located.....	19
Figure 12. Providers' level of knowledge about Parent Aware (n=113).....	20
Figure 13. How did you first hear of Parent Aware?.....	21
Figure 14. Would you consider joining Parent Aware?.....	21
Figure 15. Top reasons affecting providers' decision to join Parent Aware.....	22
Figure 16. Top reasons affecting providers' decision NOT to join Parent Aware.....	22
Figure 17. Providers' perceptions of quality and Parent Aware.....	23

## Table of Tables

Table 1. Respondents' level of agreement about reasons for joining Parent Aware.....	5
Table 2. Experience with Parent Aware.....	6
Table 3. Providers' experiences with Parent Aware implementation.....	10
Table 4. Providers' experiences with their Quality Coach.....	11
Table 5. Participant report of training requirement attendance.....	12
Table 6. Likelihood Parent Aware participants will sign up for a specific training delivery format..	13
Table 7. Respondents' experiences after their rating was received.....	14
Table 8. Statements about participating in Parent Aware.....	17
Table 9. Providers' likelihood they will sign up for a specific training delivery format.....	22

# Provider Perceptions of Parent Aware

## Overview and Purpose

Parent Aware, Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), is in its second year of statewide expansion after being implemented as a pilot from 2007 through 2011. An essential component of a voluntary QRIS like Parent Aware is engagement of early care and education (ECE) providers through their application, sustained enrollment and participation in quality improvement activities offered by the QRIS. Data on the experiences of ECE providers that are participating in Parent Aware as well as the perceptions of providers not yet enrolled in Parent Aware are critical at this early stage of implementation; information on provider perceptions and experiences in Parent Aware can be used to design recruitment strategies and to refine current implementation processes.

The purpose of this report is to present findings from surveys with ECE providers about Parent Aware. Surveys were administered to gather data from currently-rated Parent Aware providers about their participation in Parent Aware, including their motivation for participating and their experiences thus far. Additionally, providers eligible to participate but not yet enrolled in Parent Aware were surveyed about their motivations for participating or not participating.

## Sample Description

Directors, family child care providers or program managers from four categories of ECE programs were asked to complete an online survey. The findings are presented in the report by type of program:

1. Head Start programs and School Based Pre-Kindergarten programs with a current Parent Aware rating (n = 44)
2. Fully-rated Parent Aware center-based and family child care programs rated on December 31, 2012 (n = 43)
3. Center-based and family child care programs that participated in the Parent Aware pilot but are not currently participating in Parent Aware (n = 32)
4. Eligible programs that have never participated in Parent Aware (n = 150)

## Survey Description

The surveys included the following types of questions.

- General program characteristics
- Motivations for participating in Parent Aware
- Experience with Parent Aware
- Perceptions of Parent Aware

## Head Start & School Based Pre-Kindergarten Programs with Parent Aware Ratings

Head Start and School Based Pre-Kindergarten programs are eligible to participate in Parent Aware as Accelerated Pathways to Rating (APR) programs. To date, Head Start and Public School Based Pre-Kindergarten programs comprise 66% of programs in Parent Aware<sup>1</sup>. Recruitment targets have been met with Head Start programs, but not yet with Public School Based Pre-Kindergarten programs. Understanding more about these programs' motivations and concerns will help program implementers better recruit and maintain programs' participation.

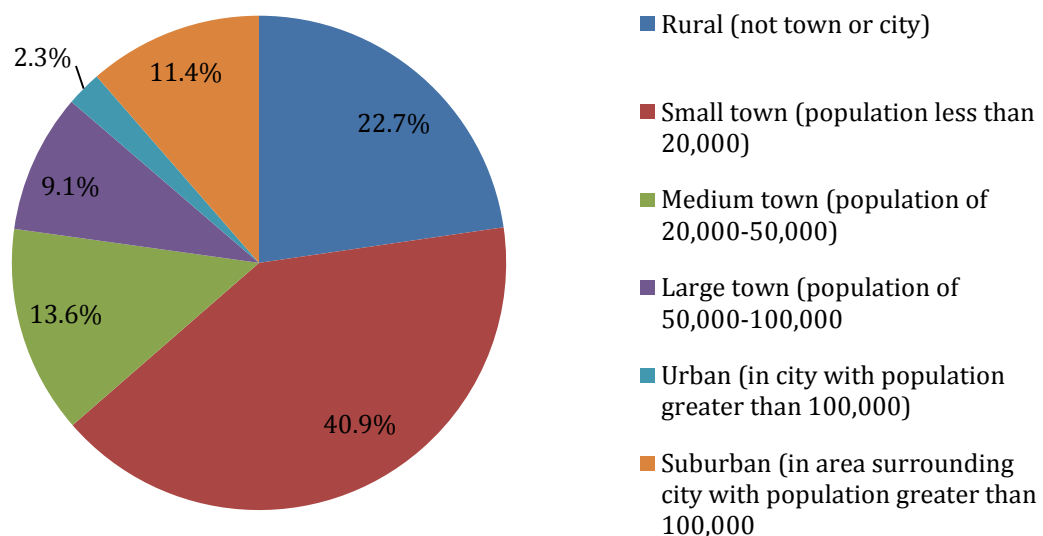
The survey was administered online between January 18, 2013 through March 1, 2013.

Respondents' email addresses were obtained from the Parent Aware Rating Tool Database (PART) in January 2013. The respondents for this survey were Head Start grantee directors and school district coordinators of School Based Pre-Kindergarten programs with a current Parent Aware rating.

Respondents were emailed a link to the online survey. Two separate email reminders were sent, asking respondents to complete the survey. In total 44 Head Start directors (n=17) and School Based Pre-Kindergarten District coordinators (n=27) completed this survey. The response rate was 70%.

Respondents were asked to describe the area in which their program is located. The majority of respondents reported that their programs are located in rural areas (23%) or small towns (41%). Other responses are displayed in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Location of Head Start and School Based Pre-Kindergarten respondents



<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Department of Human Services, Parent Aware Quarterly Report, March 2013.

## Key Findings

- 84% of respondents have an overall positive impression of Parent Aware.
- 75% of respondents reported positive experiences with Parent Aware thus far.
- The most frequently cited #1 reason for joining Parent Aware was “*To access scholarship money.*”
- The most frequent recommended change to Parent Aware from respondents was to consider changes to how the Early Learning Scholarship are structured.

## Reasons for participating in Parent Aware

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements about why they joined Parent Aware (see Table 1). The majority of respondents agreed that they joined Parent Aware to be part of a cutting-edge early childhood initiative and because it is important for the program’s professional status. Respondents also agreed that they joined Parent Aware to access scholarship funds. A small proportion agreed that they joined Parent Aware because they were required by someone else in their program.

Table 1. Respondents’ level of agreement about reasons for joining Parent Aware

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>
It is important for our program's professionalism	5%	7%	<b>89%</b>
To access scholarship money	5%	9%	<b>86%</b>
To be a part of a cutting-edge early childhood initiative	2%	16%	<b>82%</b>
Someone else in my program required me to participate	<b>70%</b>	16%	14%

Respondents cited multiple reasons for joining Parent Aware. To learn more about how the reasons were prioritized, respondents were asked to rank order six possible reasons for joining Parent Aware, with the #1 ranked reason being the primary reason they joined Parent Aware. Figure 2 contains possible reasons for joining Parent Aware, followed by the percentage of respondents who identified that as their primary reason for joining Parent Aware.

Figure 2. Reasons for joining Parent Aware

- To access scholarship money – 36%
- To be part of a cutting edge early childhood initiative – 23%
- It is important for my program’s professionalism – 21%
- To better attract families to my program – 18%

## Experience with Parent Aware

Head Start and School-Based Pre-Kindergarten respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements about their experiences with Parent Aware. Results are displayed in Table 2. Respondents reported that they will reapply for a rating when their rating expires (89%) and that the application process was simple (84%). They were less likely to report that their experience with Parent Aware has been what they expected (51%) which indicates that some have encountered unexpected experiences or that they began their participation with unclear expectations. Under

one-third (30%) of respondents report having made changes to their program as a result of joining Parent Aware.

Table 2. Experience with Parent Aware

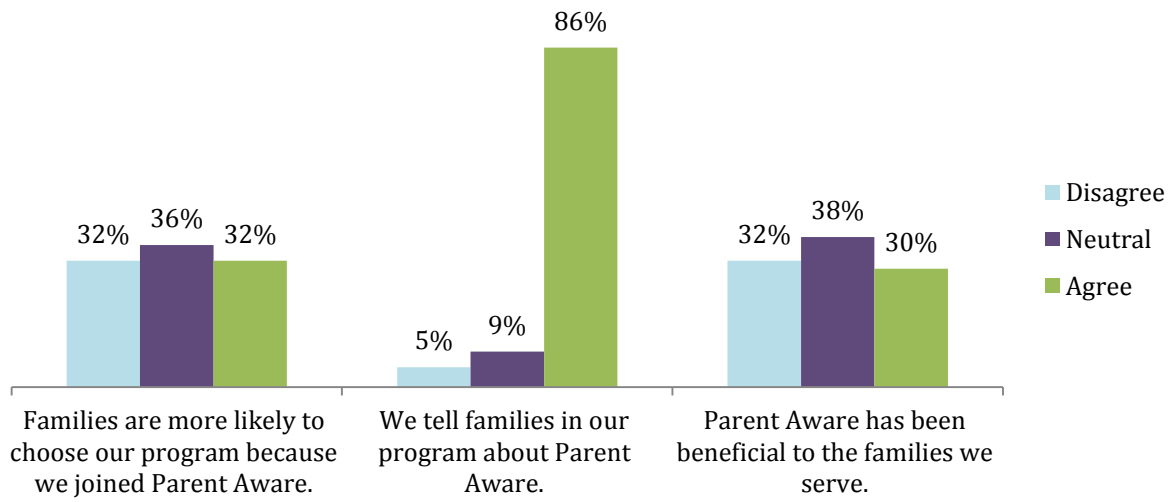
	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>
We plan to apply for a Parent Aware rating in the future when our rating is set to expire.	2%	9%	<b>89%</b>
The Parent Aware application process was easy.	11%	5%	<b>84%</b>
I would recommend that other programs join Parent Aware.	7%	16%	<b>77%</b>
Our experience with Parent Aware has been what we expected.	21%	28%	<b>51%</b>
Teachers are able to find the professional development trainings they need.	32%	23%	<b>45%</b>
Personal communication from someone at the MN Dept of Ed helped convince me to join Parent Aware.	<b>36%</b>	27%	<b>36%</b>
We have made changes to our program in anticipation of joining Parent Aware.	<b>57%</b>	20%	23%
We have made changes to our program as a result of joining Parent Aware.	<b>52%</b>	18%	30%

Programs had the option to provide open-ended comments about their experience with Parent Aware. One third of programs (35%) commented that they have unanswered questions about the Early Learning Scholarships and would like further information.

Respondents were asked about the extent to which Parent Aware is part of their marketing strategies. Respondents report that they tell families in their programs about Parent Aware (86%), but they are less likely to agree that a Parent Aware rating is drawing families to their programs (32%) or that Parent Aware has been beneficial to families in their programs (30%) (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. Marketing strategies



### Recommended changes to Parent Aware

Lastly, survey respondents were asked what, if any, changes they would like to see for Parent Aware. The most frequent response noted by 43% of those who answered was they would like to see changes made to the Early Learning Scholarships that children in eligible families can use in Parent Aware-rated programs. Some Head Start and School-Based Pre-Kindergarten respondents indicated that it is difficult for them to plan for using scholarship dollars because the money follows a child (who may leave the program unexpectedly). For example, one survey respondent commented:

*“Without a guarantee of the money (in the event a child leaves after a short amount of time), it is impossible to do anything more than fill an empty spot (if available). It is not fiscally responsible to try to open a new section, extend a day or add additional weeks of time without the guarantee of funding to cover expenses.”*

Another noted:

*“I would like to see Parent Aware dollars be used to ‘supplement’ School Readiness so it can expand service hours for more families at less cost to paying participants, rather than assigning large scholarships to a handful of children.”*

Six programs also commented that improved communication is needed, both in regard to the frequency of communication (a weekly update from Scholarship administrators was suggested) as well as receiving more specific information about how to best use Scholarship and Incentive dollars awarded.

*“I think that we need to sit down and look at the requirements for receiving the money.”*

*“Concrete answers on HOW to formulate yours costs, how to provide this from year to year, how to plan in the event the families move.....taking the monies with them, how to plan a*

*program change with parents apply in the middle of the year and the child will NOT be there the following year. Each person, from state to the person providing the funds (i.e. local agency contact) knowing this information.”*

## **Summary of Findings from Head Start and School-Based Pre-Kindergarten Programs with Parent Aware Ratings**

A high proportion of Head Start and School Based Pre-Kindergarten programs joined Parent Aware during the first year of Parent Aware statewide implementation. Program managers and district coordinators reported that a primary incentive for joining was to access Scholarship money. They report advertising their participation in Parent Aware to their families, but they are less likely to agree that Parent Aware has been beneficial to families and that the programs’ Parent Aware status is the reason families are enrolling in their program. It will be important to monitor how, if at all, these perceptions change over time. Respondents indicated that they have concerns about the stability of Scholarship dollars and would like more guidance and information about using these funds. These issues will be important to track in coordination with the evaluation of the Early Learning Scholarship and Title I Incentives funded through the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> SRI and Child Trends are conducting an evaluation of the Early Learning Scholarship and Title I Incentives. Evaluation reports will be issued throughout 2013-2016.



## Fully Rated Programs in Parent Aware

The third group of providers surveyed was fully-rated center-based and family child care programs that had received a rating on 12/31/2012. The sample was obtained from PART and SharePoint. The survey was administered in October 2012 and again in January/February 2013 in order to increase the response rate. The survey fielded in October did not include questions aimed at eliciting providers' feedback from the rating process; however, by January 2013, ratings had been issued and providers were better able to reflect on their six-month rating process. Directors of child care centers completed the survey (28%, n=12) as well as licensed family child care providers (72%, n=31). Five family child care providers completed the survey over the telephone with the help of an interpreter. In total, 43 providers completed the survey. The response rate was 70%.<sup>3</sup>

## Key Findings

- 85% of fully-rated providers surveyed reported having an overall positive impression of Parent Aware.
- 81% of providers surveyed rated their experience with Parent Aware thus far as positive.
- Providers reported positive experiences with their Quality Coach. For example, 85% reported that their coach helped them learn about the Parent Aware requirements.
- Just under half of respondents (49%) rated their experience using the Professional Development Registry as positive.
- When asked what changes to Parent Aware they would like to see implemented, the most frequent open-ended comment was about training. Participants reported limited access to available trainings and inadequate time to complete trainings.
- Respondents also commented that they do not have enough time to meet all of the standards required for their rating (44%).

## Impressions of Parent Aware

Providers were asked to rate a series of statements about several areas of Parent Aware participation, including their experiences with Parent Aware overall, their experiences with coaches, their opinions about marketing strategies and their opinions about the new professional development/training requirements. Table 3 and Table 4 display providers' ratings.

As presented in Table 3 the majority of providers agree that their experience has been what they expected (68%).<sup>4</sup> They would recommend that other providers join (73%). Respondents agree that the Information and Orientation sessions are helpful. Seventy-four percent of providers strongly or somewhat agree that they knew what was expected of them in Parent Aware. One area of concern for providers was about having enough time to meet the internal timeline requirements. Just over half (54%) of providers agreed they had enough time to meet all of the necessary requirements.

---

<sup>3</sup> In October 2012, some Accelerated Pathways to Rating programs and Building Quality providers completed the survey; however, the final sample sizes from those programs were fewer than 10 programs. As a result, findings from those programs are not included in this report.

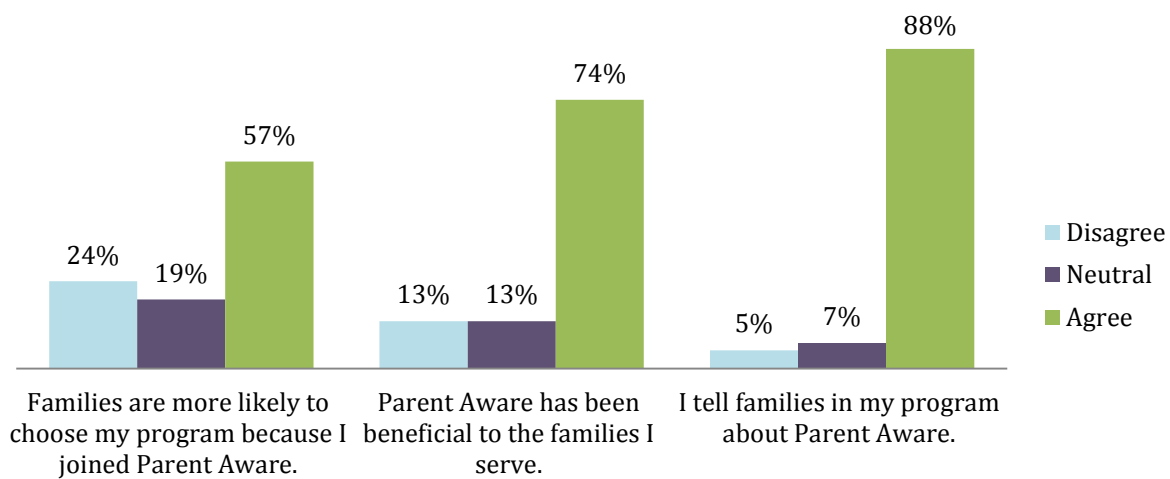
<sup>4</sup> This is higher than what Head Start and School Based Pre-Kindergarten programs reported

Table 3. Providers' experiences with Parent Aware implementation

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
My experience with Parent Aware has been what I expected.	20%	12%	68%
I would recommend that other programs join Parent Aware.	15%	12%	73%
The internal due dates within Parent Aware give me enough time to complete the necessary requirements.	44%	2%	54%
The Parent Aware Information Session was helpful.	15%	7%	78%
The Parent Aware Orientation Session was helpful.	10%	14%	76%
I know what is expected of me in Parent Aware.	13%	13%	74%

As shown in Figure 4, the majority of providers report telling their families about Parent Aware, but providers are less confident that families are drawn to their program because of their status in Parent Aware. However, 74% of providers agree that Parent Aware has been beneficial to their families.

Figure 4. Providers' opinions about marketing strategies



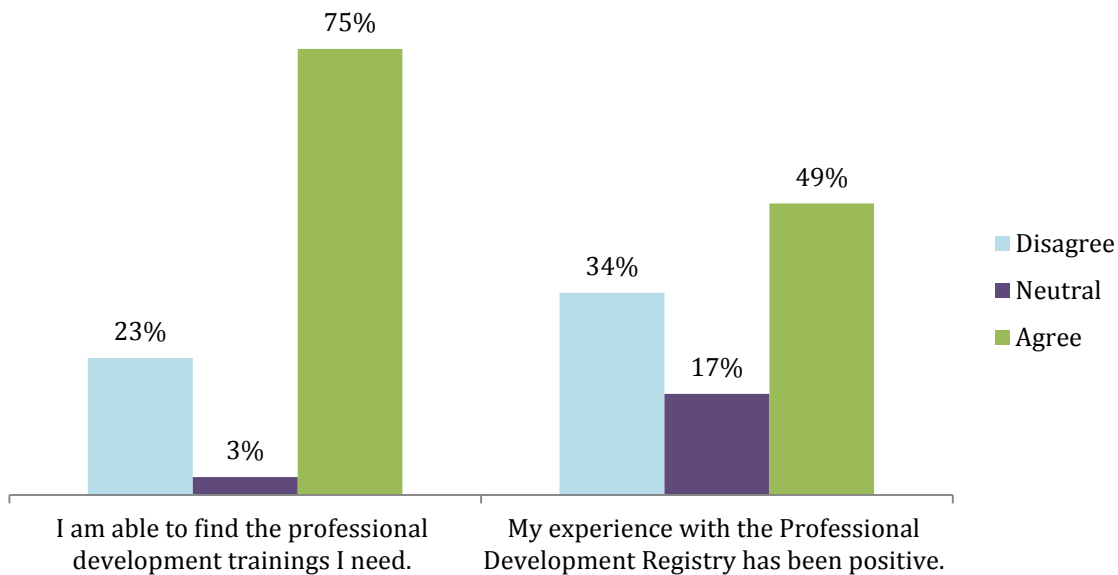
A key feature of Parent Aware is the quality improvement strategies and incentives. It is important to understand providers' experiences and perceptions of this integral part of the Parent Aware model. In general, providers reported that they had sufficient time to work with their Quality Coach (80%) and that their Coach helped them understand the necessary requirements for Parent Aware (85%). Providers reported with less frequency that their Professional Development Coordinator helped them in understanding the necessary requirements (70%) (see Table 4).

Table 4. Providers' experiences with their Quality Coach

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
The time my Quality Coach has to work with me is sufficient.	10%	10%	<b>80%</b>
My Professional Development Coordinator (PDC) has helped me to understand the Parent Aware requirements.	8%	23%	<b>70%</b>
My Quality Coach has helped me to understand the Parent Aware requirements.	3%	13%	<b>85%</b>
My Quality Coach has done little or nothing to help me complete my Parent Aware paperwork.	<b>68%</b>	16%	16%
My Quality Coach has completed all of my Parent Aware paperwork for me.	<b>79%</b>	5%	16%

One change to the Parent Aware statewide model from the pilot is the inclusion of particular training requirements related to different content areas. Most providers (75%) reported that they were able to find the professional development trainings they needed; however fewer providers (49%) reported that their experience with the Professional Development Registry has been positive (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Providers' experiences with professional development requirements



### Reasons for joining Parent Aware

In order to capture providers' motivations for joining Parent Aware, respondents ranked the reasons they joined. This information can be used to target recruitment efforts and strategies. Providers' reasons for joining Parent Aware can be monitored throughout early implementation to identify any shifts in reasons or priorities over time.

Figure 6 displays the top four reasons providers enroll in Parent Aware. They express interest in being part of a cutting-edge initiative in addition to accessing quality improvement supports.

Figure 6. Providers’ ranking of reasons for enrolling in Parent Aware:

- To be a part of a cutting-edge early childhood initiative/program – 32%
- Access to quality improvement supports (coaching, money) – 29%
- It is important for my professional development/professionalism – 17%
- To better attract families to my program – 10%
- If someone else in my program required me to join – 5%
- Another reason, not listed – 7%

### Missing Documentation from the Quality Documentation Packet (QDP)

As part of the rating process, the Minnesota Department of Human Services mailed certain providers and programs letters informing them of missing pieces of the documentation they submitted to Parent Aware. The letter informed providers that a lower star rating would be awarded if they did not submit the necessary documentation. To learn more about this process and how it was perceived, 11 providers answered a series of questions. Of these 11 respondents...

- Seven agreed that the letter they received was clear.
- Eight reported that they knew what to do in response to receiving the letter.
- Nine reported they had enough time to submit the additional documentation.
- Nine reported submitting the missing documentation.

### Professional Development Training

Because the new quality indicators in the Parent Aware Rating Tool emphasize specific training, it is useful to learn more about which types of trainings Parent Aware applicants have taken. Table 5 displays trainings providers have taken as part of their rating process.

Table 5. Participant report of training requirement attendance

<i>The following are a list of series-based trainings that you may have recently taken as part of your Parent Aware training requirements. Please check "Yes" or "No" if you have taken these series-based trainings.</i>	Yes	No	Don't Know
Child Development (sometimes called "Basic Child Development" or "Introduction to Child Development") (n=22)	50%	50%	0%
Not By Chance (n=20)	65%	35%	0%
Tipping the Scales: Promoting Nutrition and Physical Activity (n=19)	47%	53%	0%
Focus on Core Concepts (n=19)	37%	63%	0%
Introduction to Children with Special Needs (n=20)	35%	60%	5%
Creating Cultural Connections in Child Care (n=20)	50%	50%	0%
Overview of Curriculum and Assessment (sometimes called "Overview of Curriculum") (n=20)	60%	35%	5%

Providers are less likely to have taken training on Core Concepts or Introduction to Children with Special Needs; providers were most likely to have taken the Not by Chance training than other training.

Providers also reported on their likelihood of signing up for training offered in different formats (see Table 6). Providers are similarly likely to take 2-hour stand-alone training, series-based training, and self study; they are slightly less like to take online training.

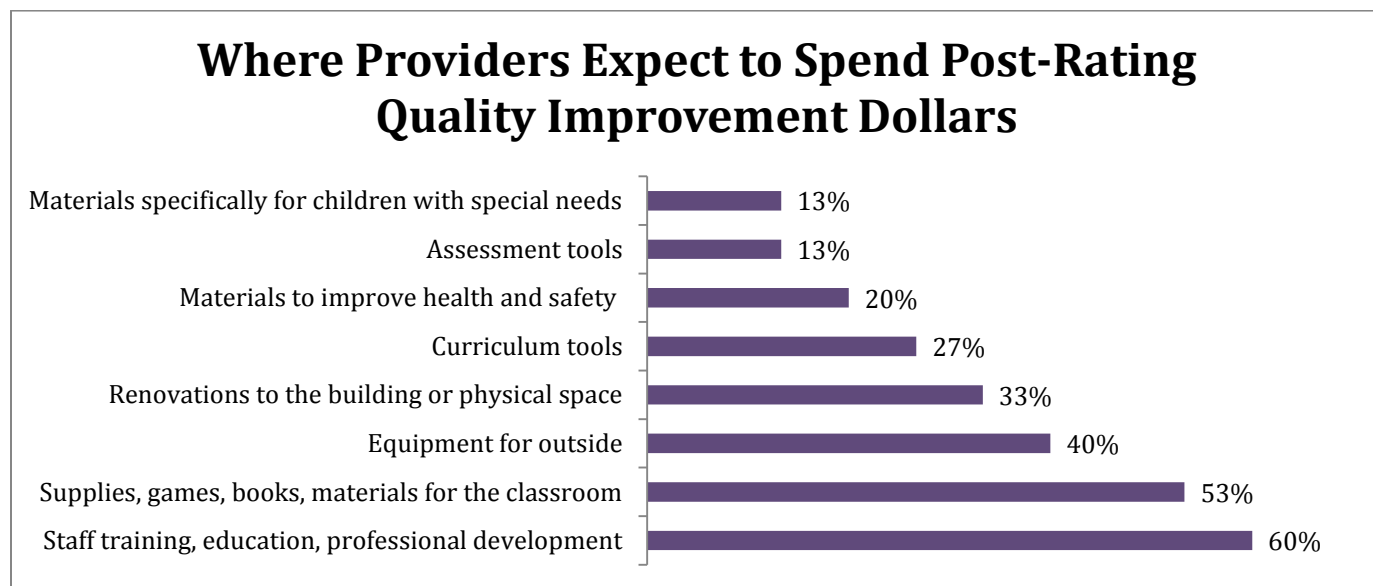
Table 6. Likelihood Parent Aware participants will sign up for a specific training delivery format

<i>In order to earn higher star levels in Parent Aware, lead program staff may be required to take additional training. If you or your staff needed to take additional training, how likely would you sign up for the following kinds of training?</i>	<b>Unlikely</b>	<b>Likely</b>
2-hour stand-alone, in-person trainings (n=20)	10%	<b>90%</b>
Series-based trainings comprised of 2-4 sessions, each session is 1-2 hours. (n=19)	16%	<b>84%</b>
Online trainings, scheduled at a specific time (n=19)	32%	<b>68%</b>
Self-study, self-paced trainings, where you take a post-test (n=19)	11%	<b>89%</b>

### Quality Improvement Supports

After completing the rating process, programs receiving a 1-, 2-, or 3-Star rating have access to quality improvement dollars that can be used to implement changes to their program. Respondents were asked how they plan to spend the money they receive after their rating. Fifteen providers answered this question. As shown in Figure 7, a majority of providers expect to spend their money on training, professional development, coaching, and consultation and/or on supplies, games, books, and materials for the classroom. Fewer providers indicate that they will use their quality improvement dollars on other aspects of their programs such as renovations and materials to improve health and safety.

Figure 7. Percent of providers who expect to post-rating QI dollars in specific areas



### Reflecting on the Rating Process

Respondents were asked to reflect on their rating that was issued on 12/31/2012. About half of the sample (n = 22) answered questions about the rating process. The majority of providers agreed that the rating they received was fair (77%). Respondents were less likely to agree that completing the Quality Documentation Packet (QDP) was easy (59% agree) or that the QDP was responsive to groups of different cultural backgrounds (55%) (see Table 7).

Table 7. Respondents' experiences after their rating was received

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
I knew what I needed to do in order to get the rating I wanted. (n=22)	14%	14%	<b>73%</b>
The Quality Documentation Packet was easy to complete. (n=22)	32%	9%	<b>59%</b>
I have recommendations about how the rating process could be improved in the future. (n=21)	10%	38%	<b>52%</b>
The Quality Documentation Packet was sensitive to groups of different cultural backgrounds. (n=22)	14%	32%	<b>55%</b>
The rating I received was fair. (n=22)	14%	9%	<b>77%</b>
The rating I received accurately reflects my program's quality. (n=21)	19%	19%	<b>62%</b>
I plan to apply for a Parent Aware rating in the future when my rating is set to expire. (n=22)	4%	9%	<b>86%</b>

Lastly, providers were asked if they would like to see any changes made to Parent Aware. The most frequent comments were about professional development training and the short amount of time available to complete the rating process.

Fifty percent of providers who made recommendations indicated that more time should be given for providers to complete the required training. Some providers also commented that training should be more accessible. A sample of responses is included below:

- *“More available trainings, more time, and more help from the Registry”*
- *“Better communication of what will be required as well as time to get that required training completed.”*
- *“I would like to see the changes implemented more slowly. It's too much all at once.”*
- *“Not enough time to meet standards”*
- *“I need more support, professional trainings catered to ELL providers, e.g. trainings conducted in my primary language.”*
- *“More complete program work up front. Group time to share and discuss questions with knowledgeable coaches and other providers in same area, to share needed resources, class needs, etc More access to classes, information, resources, etc at the beginning. More than couple month timeline to cram all the observations, assessments, and documentation. As we do still need to work a 60 hr week job and have family needs.”*

## **Summary of Findings from Fully-Rated Programs in Parent Aware**

Providers with full Parent Aware ratings report overall positive impressions of Parent Aware (85%). Eighty-one percent of those surveyed report that their experience with Parent Aware thus far has been positive. Eighty-five percent report that their Quality Coach was helpful in teaching them the Parent Aware requirements. And, 77% of the fully-rated providers surveyed believe the rating they received was fair. Providers also report however, that they have difficulty meeting the new professional development requirements. Providers report that the window of time they had to complete the training before their rating was not long enough. To assist providers with this process, it will be helpful for Parent Aware staff, Quality Coaches and Professional Development Coordinators to offer clear, uniform communication that supports providers in navigating the rating process and eases some of the concerns that are raised. Peer mentoring may also be another strategy for supporting providers' success and satisfaction with the rating process.

## **Parent Aware Pilot Programs Not Yet Enrolled in Statewide Parent Aware**

The second group of providers who were administered a survey were directors and providers whose programs had been rated in the Parent Aware pilot, but who as of January 2013 were no longer rated or had not signed a participation agreement to join Parent Aware statewide. The sample was created by comparing current program applications in PART and program data from the Parent Aware Pilot Evaluation. Head Start and School Based Pre-Kindergarten programs were excluded from this sample. Programs whose email addresses could not be obtained from PART, evaluation data, or from Nware were also excluded from the sample. In total 77 programs were asked to complete the survey about their perceptions and opinions of Parent Aware. Respondents were emailed a link to complete the

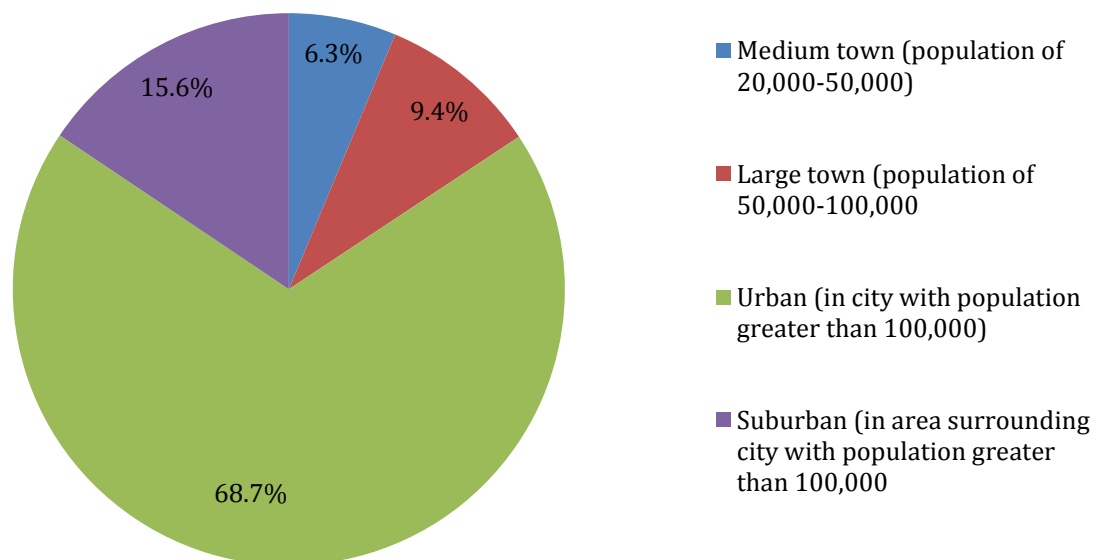


survey online. Two reminder emails were also sent. The response rate for the survey was 42% (n=32). The survey was fielded from January 15, 2013 through February 25, 2013.

Respondents were nearly evenly divided between licensed family child care providers (n=15; 47%) and directors of licensed child care centers (n=17; 53%). Forty-seven percent of programs indicated they were accredited; fifty percent reported they were not; and three percent did not know their status. The majority of accredited programs were center-based programs (73%).

Respondents were asked which area best describes where their program is located. The majority of programs (69%) indicated their program is located in an urban area, characterized by a city population of 100,000 or more. Figure 8 displays details for where other programs are located.

Figure 8. Location of responding providers rated in the pilot.



### Key Findings

- 57% of respondents have an overall positive impression of Parent Aware.
- Almost half of those surveyed (47%) intend to join Parent Aware in the future.
- Of those who would join, most would in order to access the quality improvement supports (coaching, grants for quality improvement).

### Participation in Parent Aware

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with several statements about participation in Parent Aware. Results are displayed in Table 8. Respondents have diverse opinions about participating in Parent Aware. One third of programs believe the indicators will change again, while one third of programs do not want to rejoin because of the increased training requirements. Approximately half of programs (48%) reported that they would not be more likely to

join even if more families told them that a Parent Aware rating were important to them. However, a majority of programs agree (67%) that they would receive the rating they wanted if they applied. Most respondents (68%) are not waiting to hear about other providers' experience before re-joining Parent Aware.

Table 8. Statements about participating in Parent Aware

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
I have attended a Parent Aware information session and have learned about the new indicators.	54%	4%	42%
I do not want to join Parent Aware at this time because I believe the indicators will change again.	36%	32%	32%
I do not want to join Parent Aware at this time because of the increased training requirements.	52%	16%	32%
I would be more likely to join Parent Aware if more families told me that a Parent Aware rating was important to them.	48%	12%	40%
I am waiting to hear other providers' experiences of joining Parent Aware before re-joining myself.	68%	24%	8%
If I joined Parent Aware, I think I would receive the rating I wanted.	25%	8%	67%

Respondents were asked to identify possible scenarios that might affect their decision to rejoin Parent Aware or not to rejoin Parent Aware. Respondents were instructed to select two possible scenarios; however, some selected more (see Figure 9). The most frequent reason cited by respondents that might affect their decision to rejoin Parent Aware was to access quality improvement supports. The most frequent reason providers cited for not rejoining Parent Aware is that providers believe that the application and rating process is difficult (see Figure 10). However, no providers indicated that they do not need to improve their quality. Based on these findings, promoting the quality improvement supports that Parent Aware offers providers may be an effective recruitment tool for programs that had been rated previously in Parent Aware.

Figure 9. What aspects would most affect your decision to rejoin Parent Aware? (n=28)

- To access quality improvement supports – 50%
- To be part of a cutting edge early childhood initiative – 39%
- It is important for my professional development/professionalism – 32%
- To attract families to my program – 29%
- To access scholarship money – 29%
- If someone else in my organization requires my program to participate – 11%

Figure 10. What aspects would most affect your decision NOT to rejoin Parent Aware? (n=21)

- The application/rating process is difficult - 48%
- I don't trust that a Parent Aware rating will accurately reflect my program's quality- 38%
- I don't need it to attract families to my program - 33%
- It is not worth the investment of my time- 33%
- There is not enough financial incentive to join- 24%
- Parent Aware does not provide enough support for programs/providers - 10%
- I am waiting to hear from other programs/providers about their experience first - 0%
- I don't need to improve the quality of my program - 0%

Accredited programs indicated with greater frequency than non-accredited program that rejoining Parent Aware is not worth the investment of their time (33% compared to 6%.) Non-accredited programs were also slightly more likely to indicate that access to quality improvement supports is a factor affecting their decision to rejoin Parent Aware (50%), compared to accredited programs (33%). Accredited programs were more likely than non-accredited programs to indicate that access to scholarships would be a motivation to rejoin Parent Aware (40% compared to 13%).

## **Summary of Findings from Parent Aware Pilot Programs Not Yet Enrolled in Parent Aware**

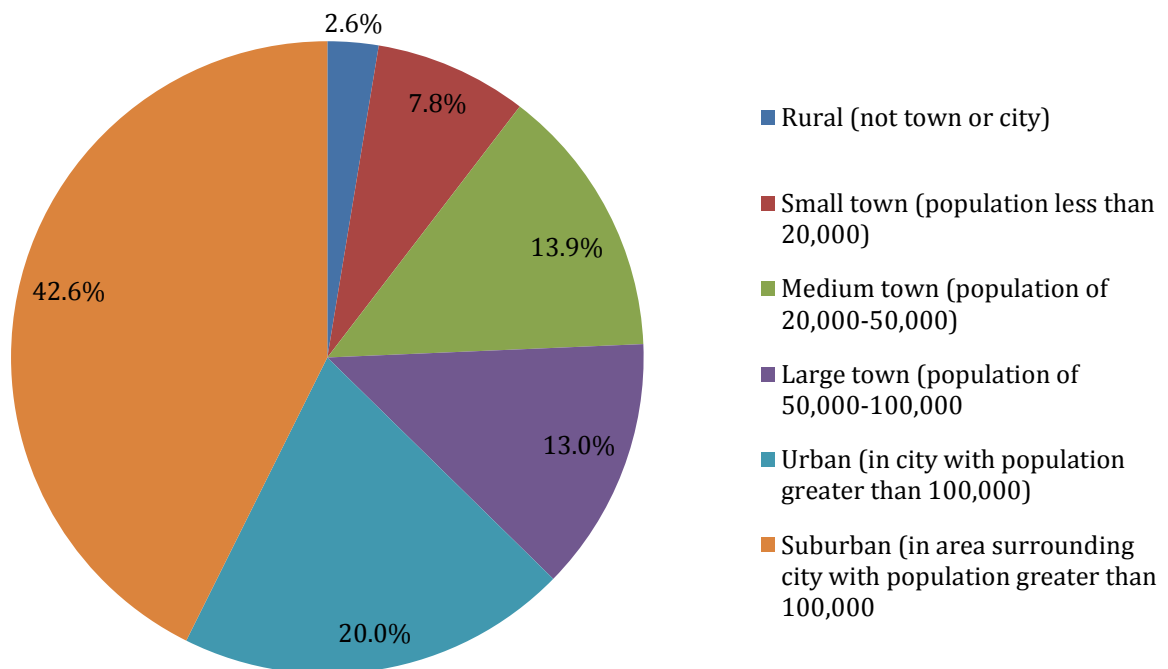
Understanding why certain Parent Aware pilot programs have not sought re-rating can inform current recruitment efforts. Nearly half of programs report that the application process is difficult and is affecting their decision to rejoin. Respondents also expressed concern that their rating will accurately reflect their quality. Pilot programs also report that access to quality improvement supports is a factor that could support their re-enrollment in Parent Aware. Promotion of quality improvement supports such as coaching and grants will be particularly important with pilot programs that were able to receive these supports in the past. Finally, forty percent of respondents reported that they would be more likely to join if families asked them about their Parent Aware rating. This finding supports the ongoing marketing efforts aimed at increasing parents' recognition and use of Parent Aware ratings.

## Interest & Awareness Survey

Licensed family child care programs and center-based child care programs residing in counties where Parent Aware is available completed an opinion survey about their level of interest and awareness of Parent Aware. Programs that had participated in Parent Aware during the pilot or are currently participating were not eligible to complete the survey. The sample was obtained from the January 2013 NACCRRRAware list of providers. Eight hundred thirty providers were emailed the request to complete the survey. Two reminders were also emailed. The response rate for the survey was 18% (n=150 providers); however 33 of the 150 respondents and were not eligible to complete the survey because they had been in the Parent Aware pilot or were currently enrolled. One hundred fifteen eligible providers completed the survey. The survey was fielded between January 22, 2013 and April 8, 2013. Eighty-three percent of the providers who completed the survey were family child care providers (n=95); Seventeen percent of respondents worked in child care centers (n=20).

Providers were also asked to describe the area in which their program is located. The majority of providers surveyed indicated that their programs are located in a suburban area (43%). See Figure 11 for a more detailed description of where respondents' programs were located.

Figure 11. How respondents describe where their program is located



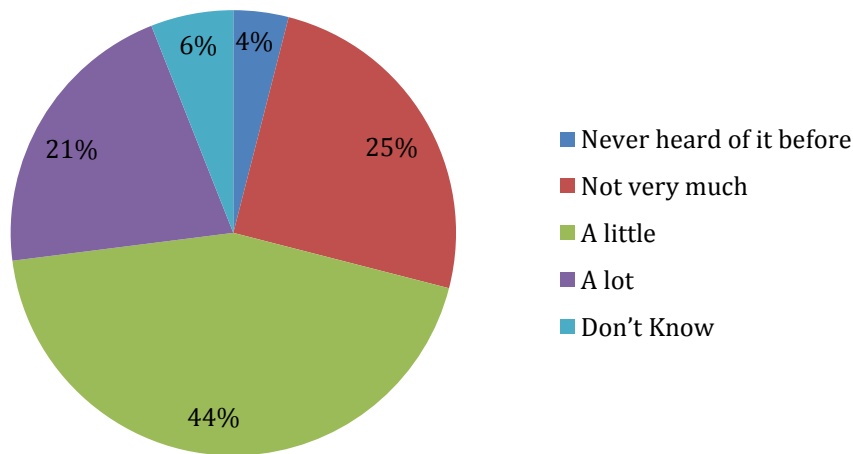
## Key Findings

- Most respondents (92%) had heard of Parent Aware.
- 36% of respondents reported having attended a Parent Aware Information Session.
- However, 44% of those surveyed reported knowing only “a little” about Parent Aware.
- Providers learned about Parent Aware through Child Care Aware (37%), a training (22%) or another provider (17%).
- When asked if they would consider joining Parent Aware, 33% said “No”, 22% said “Yes”, and 45% said they “Don’t Know” if they would join Parent Aware.
- Providers believe that quality is important when parents select child care; however, providers disagree that Parent Aware ratings reflect quality and should be used in child care decision-making.

## Knowledge of Parent Aware

Providers were asked how much they know about Parent Aware. See Figure 12 for providers’ reported level of awareness.

Figure 12. Providers’ level of knowledge about Parent Aware (n=113)



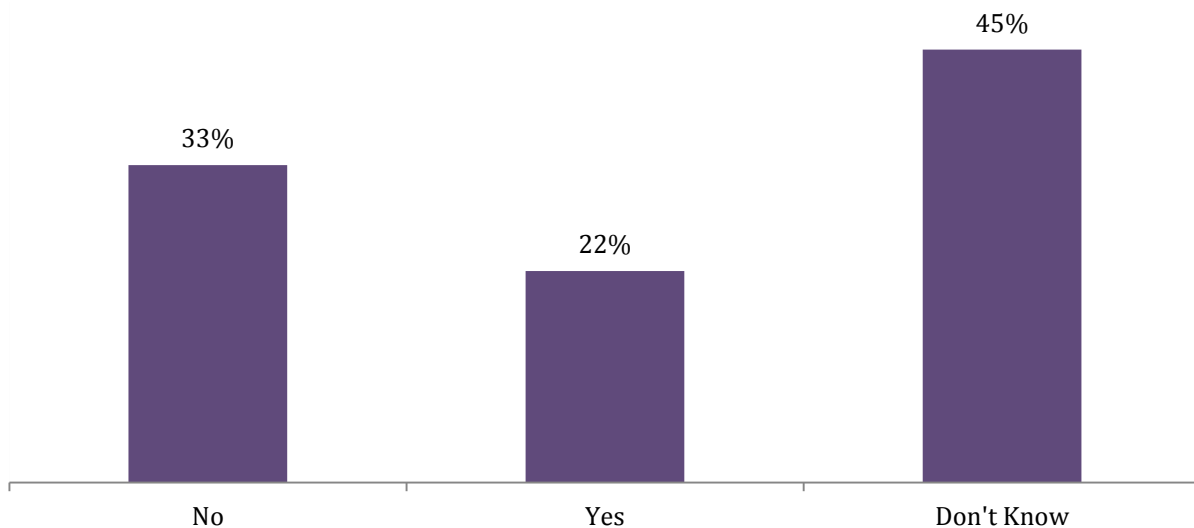
Providers were asked to indicate how they had first heard of Parent Aware. The most frequent response from providers was that they first heard about Parent Aware from Child Care Aware. Training sessions, other ECE providers and print advertisements were also cited as sources of information (see Figure 13 below).

Figure 13. How did you first hear of Parent Aware?

- Child Care Aware – 37%
- At a training – 22%
- From another ECE provider 17%
- Print advertisement – 17%
- From my county licensor – 3%
- Internet advertisement – 2%
- On the radio – 1%
- An accreditation body – 1%

Providers were asked if they would consider joining Parent Aware. Nearly half (45%) do not know whether they would join Parent Aware; about one-third say they will not join Parent Aware, while just under one-quarter say they will join (see Figure 14).

Figure 14. Would you consider joining Parent Aware?



Respondents were asked to identify possible scenarios that might affect their decision to join Parent Aware or not to join Parent Aware. Respondents were instructed to select two possible scenarios; however, some selected more (see Figure 15 and Figure 16 below). The percentage next to each statement reflects the percent of providers who checked that statement as a reason that would affect their decision to join or not to join Parent Aware. Approximately one-third (34%) of providers reported that attracting families to their program would affect their decision-making process to join Parent Aware; however, a greater majority of providers (59%) report that they do not need a Parent Aware rating to attract families to their program (i.e. families don't ask about it; they have a waiting list). Providers are also concerned that a rating won't accurately reflect their quality (39%) and that it won't be worth an investment of their time (38%). Almost one-third of providers (31%) reported that

accessing scholarship money and that accessing quality improvement supports (30%) would impact their decision to join Parent Aware.

Figure 15. Top reasons affecting providers' decision to join Parent Aware

- To attract families to my program-34%
- To access scholarship money-31%
- To access quality improvement supports-30%
- It is important for my professional development-30%
- To be part of a cutting edge early childhood initiative – 28%
- If someone else in my organization requires my program to participate – 28%

Figure 16. Top reasons affecting providers' decision NOT to join Parent Aware

- I don't need it to attract families to my program-59%
- I don't trust a rating will accurately reflect my quality-39%
- It is not worth the investment of my time-38%
- I am waiting to hear from other programs/providers about their experience first – 17%
- The application/rating process is difficult – 16%
- I don't need to improve the quality of my program – 12%
- There is not enough financial incentive to join – 11%
- Parent Aware does not provide enough support for programs/providers – 3%

Similar to the items that fully-rated providers completed, respondents were asked about the types of professional development training formats and opportunities they would be most likely to attend (see Table 9). This group of respondents that is not already connected to Parent Aware is much less likely to indicate that they will take series-based trainings (49% say it is unlikely) than providers already enrolled in Parent Aware as described in Table 9 (16%). This group of respondents is also slightly less likely to take 2-hour stand-alone training or self-study. They are similar to Parent Aware providers in their likelihood of taking online training. This information offers an important insight into the additional incentives or support that providers not enrolled in Parent Aware already may need for completing Parent Aware training requirements.

Table 9. Providers' likelihood they will sign up for a specific training delivery format

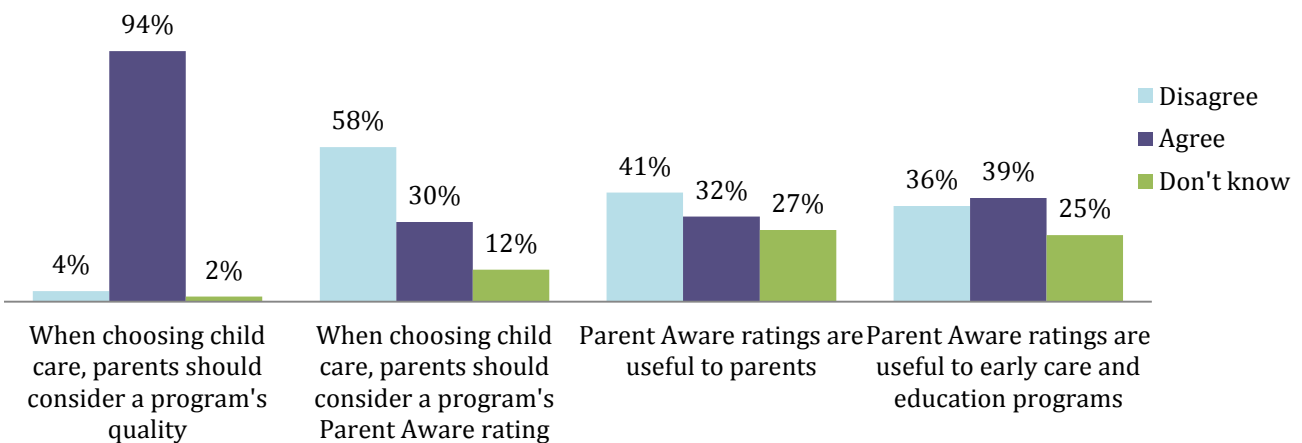
<i>In order to earn higher star levels in Parent Aware, lead program staff may be required to take additional training. If you or your staff needed to take additional training, how likely would you sign up for the following kinds of training?</i>	<b>Unlikely</b>	<b>Likely</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
2-hour stand-alone trainings	25%	<b>68%</b>	7%
Series-based trainings comprised of 2-4 sessions, each session is 1-2 hours.	<b>49%</b>	47%	4%
Online trainings, scheduled at a specific time	33%	<b>60%</b>	6%
Self-study, self-paced trainings, where you take a post-test	23%	<b>72%</b>	4%



## Perceptions of Quality and Parent Aware

Survey respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements about how a Parent Aware rating may affect parents' decision making when choosing child care for their child. Nearly all providers (94%) believe that quality is important when parents select child care; however, providers disagree (58%) that Parent Aware ratings should be considered in child care decision-making (see Figure 17). Providers disagree (41%) or don't know (27%) if Parent Aware ratings are useful to parents, and they have a mixed opinion about whether ratings are useful to ECE programs.

Figure 17. Providers' perceptions of quality and Parent Aware



## Summary of Findings from the Interest and Awareness Survey

Providers that responded to the Interest and Awareness Survey represent the variety of early care and education programs that are being targeted for enrollment in Parent Aware. The majority of respondents (83%) were family child care providers, and a significant portion was located in suburban areas (43%). Race to the Top recruitment targets specify that 890 licensed family child care providers and 186 licensed child care centers be recruited by the end of 2013<sup>5</sup>.

The results provide a descriptive picture of how providers not yet affiliated with Parent Aware perceive the program. Most respondents (92%) have heard of Parent Aware, but few (21%) indicated they knew a lot about it. While some providers have developed an opinion about whether or not they will enroll in Parent Aware, just under half (45%) say that they don't know yet if they will enroll. Providers are mixed in their interest level and belief that Parent Aware ratings are useful to parents. They agree (92%) that parents should consider a program's quality when choosing child care for their child, but only 30% believe that a Parent Aware rating should be used in this process.

The results highlight the opportunity to offer information that can address providers' concerns and questions about Parent Aware. Because providers are interested in improving their quality and believe

<sup>5</sup> Data provided by the Minnesota Department of Human Services for the Parent Aware Advisory Committee.

that quality improvement supports would be a factor in their decision to join Parent Aware, outreach and recruitment information that emphasize the quality improvement supports in Parent Aware may be key to increasing enrollment and participation. Messages about the rating process and parents' interest and use of ratings may also increase providers' trust that the ratings are meaningful and helpful to parents.

## Conclusion

This report provides information about the opinions and perceptions of providers with different characteristics and experiences with Parent Aware. Two groups of providers (Head Start and School Based Pre-Kindergarten respondents and Fully-Rated providers) are affiliated currently with Parent Aware. Their responses provided insights into the benefits and the challenges of participating in Parent Aware. The other two groups of providers that completed surveys to inform this report are not affiliated currently with Parent Aware. One set of providers had been rated in the Parent Aware pilot but had not yet re-enrolled in Parent Aware at the time of the survey. The other set of providers are eligible but have not yet enrolled. The experience of these two groups of un-affiliated providers can help illuminate new communication and support strategies that can engage providers in Parent Aware.

Across the respondents to the four surveys, common themes emerged:

- Providers value incentives and supports. Access to quality improvement supports such as coaching and funds for activities and materials are important to providers' decision-making about Parent Aware. Access to scholarships is also important, particularly for Head Start and School-Based Pre-Kindergarten programs.
- Providers' perceptions of parents' interest and use of Parent Aware ratings vary. Fully rated providers tell parents about their rating and believe the ratings are beneficial. They are slightly less sure that parents use the ratings to select their program. Head Start and School-Based Pre-Kindergarten programs also tell parents about the ratings, but they are mixed in their perception of whether the rating is beneficial to parents or used in decision-making. In contrast, providers not yet in Parent Aware do not believe that a Parent Aware rating should be used in child care decision-making, and they are mixed in their perception of whether a rating is useful to parents.

Over the next few years of statewide expansion, it will be important to continue tracking the perceptions and experiences of providers and using the information to refine recruitment processes and the supports available to providers as they enroll and progress through Parent Aware.

**Acknowledgments:** *Funding for the Parent Aware evaluation is provided by Parent Aware for School Readiness and Greater Twin Cities United Way. Child Trends would like to thank the early care and education providers enrolled in Parent Aware who provided their feedback by completing surveys about their perceptions of the implementation of Parent Aware. Without their participation, this report would not have been possible.*