



Provider Perceptions of Parent Aware  
September, 2014



**PARENT  AWARE**  
for SCHOOL READINESS



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# Provider Perceptions of Parent Aware

## Overview and Purpose

Parent Aware, Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), is in its third 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 these still early stages of statewide 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. Findings are described separately for three provider types: (1) providers participating in the Accelerated Pathways to Ratings (APR) process, (2) providers participating the Full Rating process, and (3) providers eligible for a Full Rating but not currently enrolled in Parent Aware.

A series of similar surveys with ECE providers were conducted in 2013. Most of the questions from the 2014 survey remained consistent with 2013 in order to observe trends or changes in perceptions and experiences. Notable differences (changes of 15 percentage points or greater) between 2013 and 2014 are highlighted in the report. Additionally, Appendix A contains a series of tables displaying 2013 and 2014 data. The Appendix tables contain all of the items presented in this report in addition to items not highlighted in the text of this report.

## Sample Description

Directors, family child care providers or program managers from three categories of ECE programs were asked to complete an online survey:

1. Head Start programs, School Based Pre-Kindergarten programs, accredited community based child care centers, and accredited family child care providers with a current Parent Aware rating achieved through the Accelerated Pathways to Ratings (APR) process (n = 265)
2. Fully-rated Parent Aware community-based child care centers and family child care programs rated as of December 31, 2013 (n = 97)
3. Eligible programs that have never participated in Parent Aware (n = 69)

## Survey Description

The surveys included questions to assess the following topics:

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

## Report Structure

The report is structured in three sections to highlight findings from three different types of providers:

- Providers participating in the Accelerated Pathways to Ratings (APR) process,
- Providers participating the Full Rating process, and
- Providers eligible for a Full Rating but not currently enrolled in Parent Aware.

## Accelerated Pathways to Ratings (APR)

Head Start, School Based Pre-Kindergarten programs, and accredited child care centers and family child care programs are eligible to participate in Parent Aware as Accelerated Pathways to Ratings (APR) programs. To date, Head Start, Public School Based Pre-Kindergarten and accredited programs comprise 78% of programs in Parent Aware.<sup>1</sup> Recruitment goals set by the Minnesota Department of Human Services have been met with all types of APR programs.<sup>2</sup> Understanding more about why APR programs participate and their experiences in Parent Aware will be helpful for assessing the potential for these programs to remain in Parent Aware and addressing any challenges to their ongoing participation.

The survey was administered online between April 15, 2014 through May 22, 2014. Respondents' email addresses were obtained from Parent Aware administrative, Minnesota Department of Human Services, as of April 2, 2014. The respondents were Head Start grantee directors, school district coordinators of School Based Pre-Kindergarten programs<sup>3</sup>, directors of accredited community-based child care centers, and accredited family child care providers with a current Parent Aware rating.<sup>4</sup> Respondents were emailed a link to the online survey. Two email reminders were sent, asking respondents to complete the survey. In total 265 of 556 respondents completed the survey. (Head Start directors (n=21), School Based Pre-Kindergarten District coordinators (n=136), Child Care Center directors (n=101), Family Child Care providers (n=6), and unknown (n=1)). The response rate was 48%.

### Key Findings

- 86% of respondents have an overall positive impression of Parent Aware.
- The most frequently cited #1 reason for joining Parent Aware was *"To access Early Learning Scholarships."*
- Respondents did not identify a clear area for improvements to Parent Aware. The most frequently recommended improvement to Parent Aware (noted by 14% of respondents) was to consider changes in the distribution of Early Learning Scholarships.<sup>5</sup>

### Respondents

Respondents were asked to describe the area in which their program is located. The majority of respondents reported that their program is located in a small town (37%) or suburban area (21%).

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<sup>1</sup> Tout, K., Cleveland, J., Friese, S., Sosinsky, L., Soli, M. & Hirilall, A. (2014). *Statewide Expansion of Parent Aware: Year 2 Implementation Report*. Minneapolis, MN; Child Trends.

<sup>2</sup> Minnesota Department of Human Services

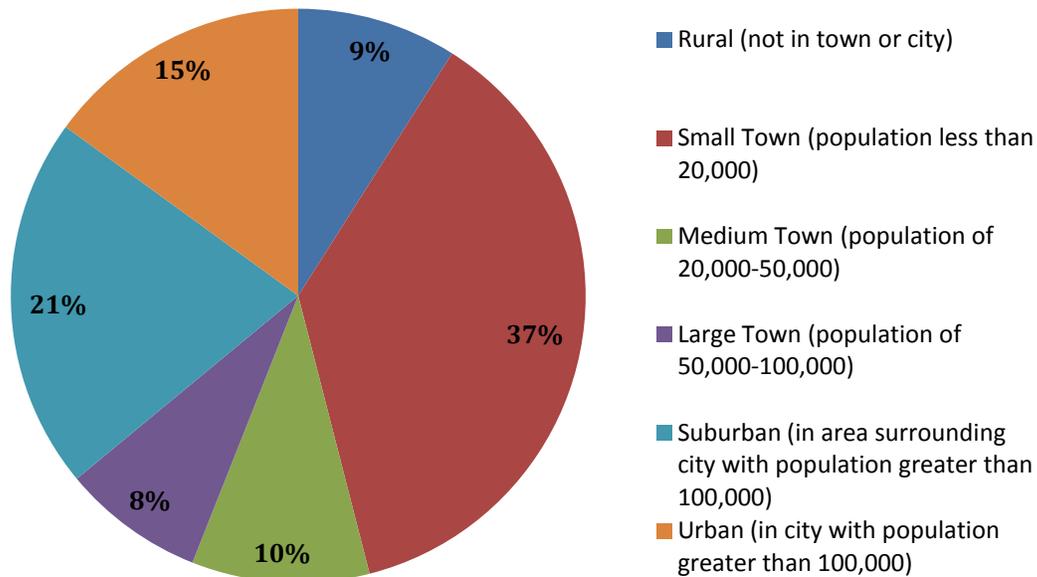
<sup>3</sup> Head Start Grantee level directors and School District coordinators may serve as the liaison for several rated sites in Parent Aware. The survey was completed by a respondent at the Grantee and District level, not the Head Start or school-based site level.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that the sample this year includes accredited child care programs. In 2013, the sample included only School-Based Pre-K and Head Start programs.

<sup>5</sup> An evaluation of the Early Learning Scholarships is conducted for the Minnesota Department of Education by SRI International and Child Trends.

Other responses are displayed in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Location of APR respondents



### Reasons for participating in Parent Aware

Respondents were asked to rank order twelve possible reasons for joining Parent Aware, with the top ranked reason being the primary reason they joined Parent Aware. Respondents cited multiple reasons for joining Parent Aware. Figure 2. contains the top 5 first ranked reasons for joining Parent Aware, followed by the percentage of respondents who identified each as their primary reason for joining Parent Aware. Nearly half of respondents (47%) reported that access to Early Learning Scholarships was their first ranked reason for joining Parent Aware (47%). Head Start and School Based Pre-K respondents in the 2013 Provider Perceptions Survey also reported their number one reason for joining Parent Aware was to access scholarship money.

Figure 2. Reasons for joining Parent Aware

- To access Early Learning Scholarships – 47%
- To be part of a cutting edge early childhood initiative/program – 13%
- Someone else in my program requires my program to participate – 8%
- To access higher CCAP reimbursement rates – 7%
- To better attract families to my program – 7%

## Experience with Parent Aware

APR respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements about their experiences with Parent Aware (see Table 1. ). The majority of respondents reported that they believe their program’s rating accurately reflects the program’s quality (94%) and that that they will reapply for a rating when their rating expires (92%). Most respondents agree that they would recommend that other programs join Parent Aware (73%). However, fewer respondents reported that the application process was easy (60%), a notable decrease compared to 2013 (84%).<sup>6</sup> Respondents were also less likely to report that their experience with Parent Aware has been what they expected (59%), which may indicate that some have encountered unexpected experiences or that they began their participation with unclear expectations. Just over half of respondents (56%) report having made changes to their program as a result of joining Parent Aware, a 26% increase from the 2013 survey. Just over half (51%) of respondents report that their teachers are able to find the trainings they need for Parent Aware.

Table 1. APR programs’ experience with Parent Aware

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
The rating my program received accurately reflects my program’s quality	2%	4%	94%
We plan to apply for Parent Aware in the future when my rating is set to expire	2%	6%	92%
I would recommend that other programs join Parent Aware	9%	18%	73%
The Parent Aware application was easy	16%	24%	60%
Our experience with Parent Aware has been what we expected	14%	27%	59%
We made changes to our program as a result of joining Parent Aware	26%	18%	56%
Teachers are able to find the professional development trainings they need	22%	27%	51%

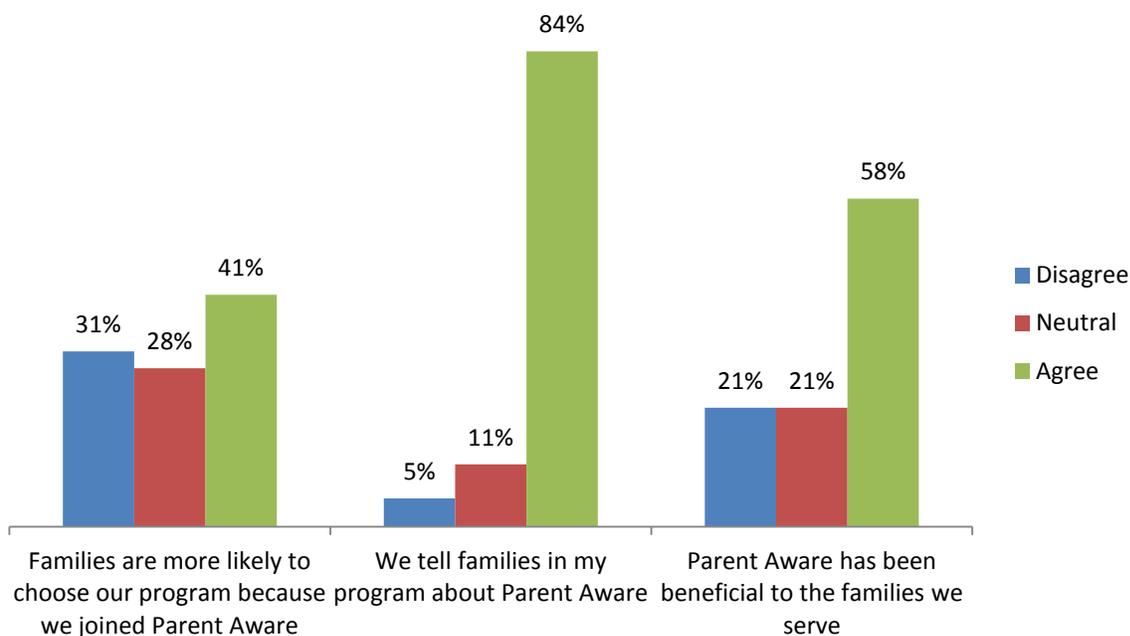
Programs also had the option to provide open-ended comments about their experience with Parent Aware. One fourth of programs (26%) commented that they believe Parent Aware is a great service with many positive benefits, and one fifth (20%) said they believe there need to be improvements to the rating process or believe Parent Aware is not necessary.

Respondents were asked about the extent to which Parent Aware is part of their marketing strategies. The majority of respondents reported that they tell families in their programs about Parent Aware (84%) and that Parent Aware has been beneficial to families in their programs (58%). This was a notable increase from 2013, in which only 30% of respondents reported that Parent Aware has been beneficial to families.

<sup>6</sup> No changes to the APR application process occurred between the 2013 and the 2014 provider perceptions survey.

Respondents are less likely to agree that a Parent Aware rating is drawing families to their programs (41%) (see Figure 3). This is a slight increase from 2013, when 32% of Head Start and School-Based Pre-K directors agreed with that statement.

Figure 3. Marketing strategies



### Recommended changes to Parent Aware

Respondents were asked what, if any, changes they would like to see for Parent Aware. The most frequent response noted by 14% of those who answered was that they would like to see increased access to funding and scholarships. Some APR respondents indicated that they would like to see more funds available across all programs. For example, one survey respondent commented:

*“I would rather see all programs receive more funding. I like that we are working on quality, but I don't like that we are competing for funds. We don't want to compete with Head Start who shares the same building and resources. Or, with the providers in the same small town. We feel we are all in this together. It is difficult for providers in small towns to participate.”*

In addition, some respondents reported that they would like greater access to scholarships. One respondent noted:

*“Early learning scholarships available to all programs once they qualify. Change roll out plan. Quit geographically discriminating against low income families just because they don't live in a certain county.”<sup>7</sup>*

<sup>7</sup> Parent Aware rolled out statewide over a four year period, county by county, beginning in 2012. Parent Aware will be available in all counties in Minnesota beginning in 2015. Additionally, Early Learning

Twenty one programs (13%) also commented that they would recommend changes to the Parent Aware rating process for APR programs. Specifically, some respondents indicated that they would like to see more flexibility in requirements for teachers, while others indicated that they would like to see changes in how star ratings are given.

*“Change in requirements for teachers with early Childhood Licenses in the state of MN. They are already required to meet higher requirements than Parent Aware. It seems like they have to do twice the work!”*

*“We all work really hard and have to answer to so many constituents, as I said earlier I would like accredited programs to automatically be granted 4 star rating without a bi-annual report. Maybe just a verification of accreditation would suffice.”*

### Summary of Findings from Accelerated Pathways to Ratings

Participation among APR programs exceeds goals set to date. A high proportion of Head Start and School Based Pre-Kindergarten programs joined Parent Aware during the first year of Parent Aware statewide implementation and that trend continued during the second year of statewide rollout. Density of participation among APR programs is near saturation levels for some types of programs (School-Based 97%, Head Start 90%, Accredited Center 72%, Accredited family child care 75%)<sup>8</sup> which suggests the importance of focusing on maintaining enrollment of APR programs.

APR programs reported that a primary incentive for joining Parent Aware was to access Early Learning Scholarships. They report advertising their participation in Parent Aware to their families, but they are less likely to agree that the programs’ Parent Aware status is the reason families enroll in their program. It will be important to monitor how, if at all, these perceptions change over time, especially given increased Parent Aware marketing efforts. Some respondents indicated that they have concerns about the availability of Scholarships and would like increased accessibility of 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>9</sup>

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Scholarships vary by type (Pathway I and Pathway II) and may not be available in all counties. For more information see

<http://www.education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/EarlyLearn/EarlyLearnScholarProg/index.html>

<sup>8</sup> Source: Develop: Minnesota’s Quality Improvement and Registry Tool, DHS.”

<sup>9</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

The second group of providers surveyed were all fully-rated center-based child care programs and family child care programs with an active Star rating as of December 31, 2013. Programs that had signed participation agreements, but not yet rated, were not included in the sample. The survey was administered from April 15, 2014 through June 6, 2014. In total, 97/232 respondents completed the survey (child care center directors (n=28), licensed family child care providers (n=67) and unknown (n=2)). The response rate was 42%.

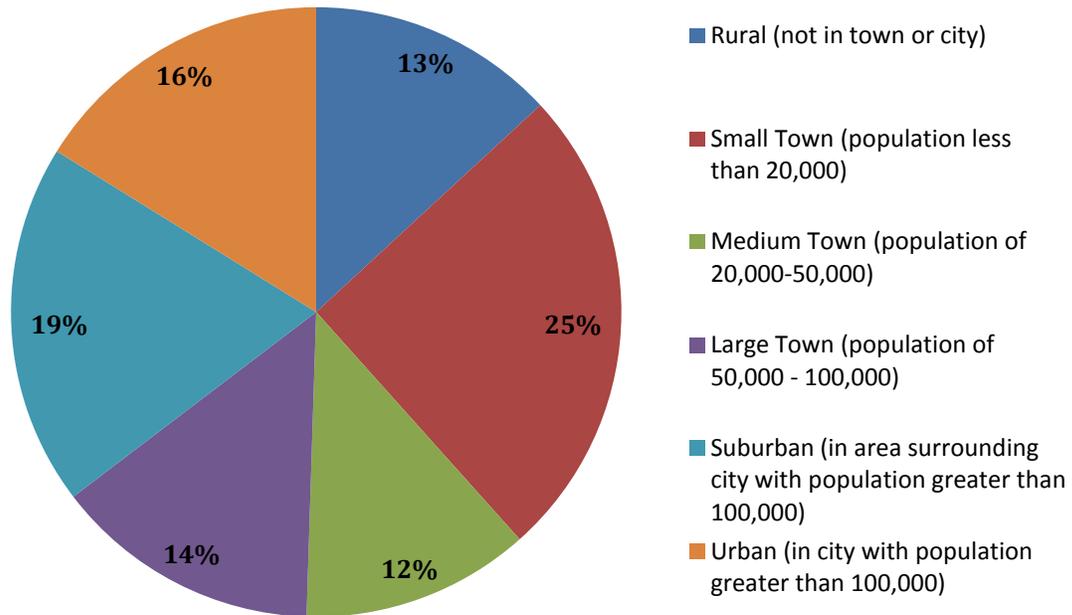
## Key Findings

- 90% of fully-rated providers surveyed reported an overall positive impression of Parent Aware.
- Providers reported positive experiences with their Quality Coach. For example, 83% reported that their coach helped them learn about the Parent Aware requirements.
- 67% of fully-rated providers 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 response was about paperwork. Participants reported that the paperwork for Parent Aware is overwhelming and often confusing, and that they would like to see the process simplified and clarified.
- Respondents also commented that they would like to see changes to aspects of the trainings included in Parent Aware, including details related to the requirements, accessibility, availability, and variety of trainings.

## Respondents

Providers were asked to describe the area in which their program is located. The majority of respondents reported that their program is located in a small town (25%); however programs are almost equally distributed across area type. Figure 3. provides a detailed description of where respondents' programs are located.

Figure 4. Location of fully-rated respondents



### 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 Quality Coaches, their opinions about marketing strategies, and their opinions about the professional development/training requirements in Parent Aware.

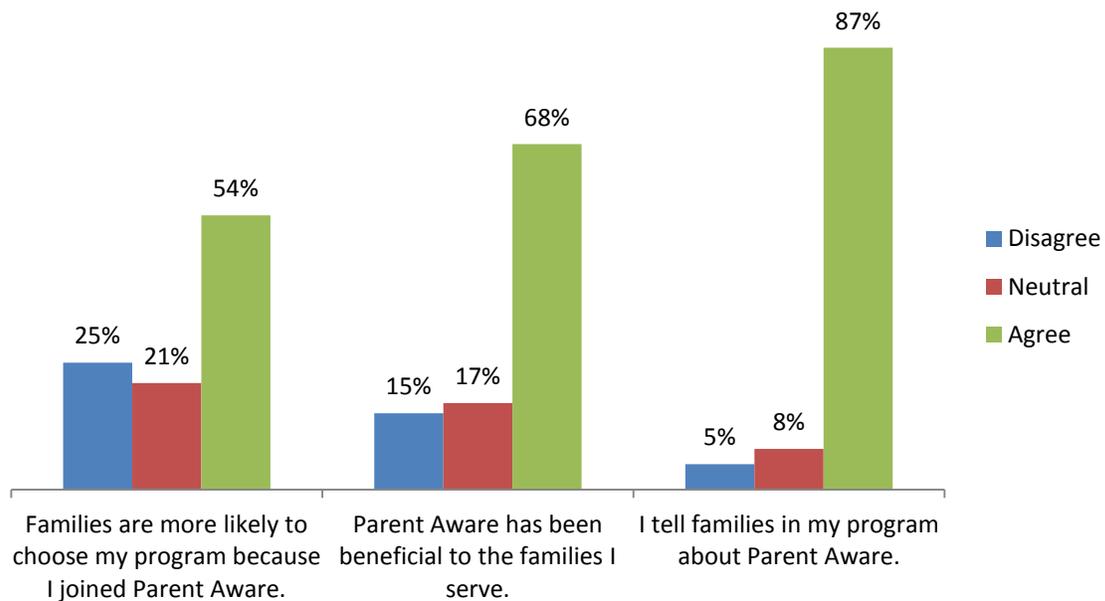
The majority of providers agree that their experience has been what they expected (67%), and they would recommend that other providers join Parent Aware (77%) (see Table 2). Most providers (78%) strongly or somewhat agree that they knew what was expected of them in Parent Aware. Most providers (71%) agreed they had enough time to meet all of the necessary requirements, a 17% increase from 2013.

Table 2. Fully-rated providers' experiences with Parent Aware implementation

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
I know what is expected of me in Parent Aware.	8%	13%	78%
I would recommend that other programs join Parent Aware.	6%	17%	77%
The internal due dates within Parent Aware give me enough time to complete the necessary requirements.	16%	13%	71%
My experience with Parent Aware has been what I expected.	12%	21%	67%
The Parent Aware Orientation Session was helpful.	12%	32%	56%
The Parent Aware application process was easy.	26%	21%	53%

Respondents were asked about the extent to which Parent Aware is part of their marketing strategies. The majority of providers (87%) report telling their families about Parent Aware, but providers are less confident that families are choosing their program because of their status in Parent Aware (54%) (see Figure 4). However, 68% of providers agree that Parent Aware has been beneficial to their families.

Figure 5. Providers' opinions about marketing strategies



The 2014 survey included a new question about fully-rated providers' perceptions about the primary purpose of Parent Aware. Parent Aware is a multi-pronged system which includes 1) measuring program quality and issuing ratings 2) providing quality improvement supports to programs and 3) sharing and marketing program quality information to parents. Providers were asked for their impressions of the the primary purpose of Parent Aware (see Table 3. ).

Table 3. Providers’ perceptions of the primary purpose of Parent Aware

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>
The primary purpose of Parent Aware is to help early care and education programs improve their quality	4%	7%	89%
The primary purpose of Parent Aware is to rate the quality of early care and education programs	6%	23%	71%
The primary purpose of Parent Aware is to share information with parents about the quality of early care and education programs	1%	29%	70%
Parent Aware works in partnership with me to be a resource	12%	27%	61%

Eighty-nine percent of providers agreed that the primary purpose of Parent Aware is to help programs improve their quality. More providers see quality improvement as the primary purpose of Parent Aware as opposed to measuring quality/issuing ratings and marketing program quality to parents (though these were also cited by a majority of providers).

Because quality improvement is a key purpose of Parent Aware, it is important to understand providers’ experiences and perceptions of the Parent Aware quality improvement strategies and incentives. Overall, the majority of providers (81%) reported that they had sufficient time to work with their Quality Coach and that their Coach helped them understand the necessary requirements for Parent Aware (83%). Providers reported with less frequency that their Professional Development Coordinator helped them understand the necessary requirements for Parent Aware (62%) (see Table 3).

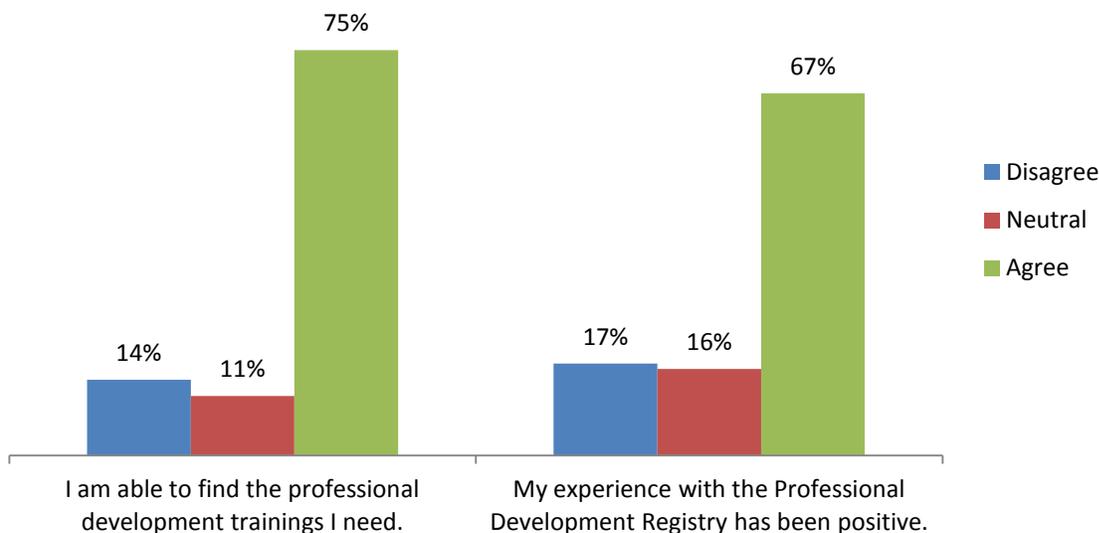
Table 4. Providers’ experiences with their Quality Coach

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>
My Quality Coach has helped me to understand the Parent Aware requirements.	7%	10%	83%
The time my Quality Coach has to work with me is sufficient.	12%	7%	81%
My Professional Development Coordinator (PDC) has helped me to understand the Parent Aware requirements.	8%	30%	62%

One focus of the Parent Aware quality indicators is the inclusion of training requirements related to different content areas. Most providers (75%) reported that they were able to find the professional development trainings they needed and that their experience with the Professional Development Registry has been positive (67%) (see Figure 5. ). This was a notable increase compared to 2013, when only 49% of respondents reported that their experience with the Professional Development was positive.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> While the Professional Development Registry underwent a notable change in 2014 (now called DEVELOP), these changes would not have been available to the respondents in this sample, all of whom received their rating as of 12/31/2013.

Figure 6. Providers' experiences with Parent Aware professional development requirements



### Reasons for joining Parent Aware

To capture providers' motivations for joining Parent Aware, respondents ranked possible reasons for joining. 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 7 displays the top five, top ranked reasons providers enroll in Parent Aware. Respondents reported the importance of enrolling in Parent Aware for their professional development and professionalism (30%) in addition to being a part of a cutting edge early childhood initiative (16%).

Figure 7. Fully-rated providers' ranking of reasons for enrolling in Parent Aware

- It is important for my professional development/professionalism – 30%
- To be a part of a cutting-edge early childhood initiative/program – 16%
- Access to pre-rating support dollars – 13%
- To better attract families to my program – 11%
- Access to free or low-cost training – 7%

Providers also reported on their likelihood of signing up for training offered in different formats (see Table 5). Providers are similarly likely to take a 2-hour stand-alone training (86%) and series-based training (78%); they are slightly less like to take a self-study (64%) and online training (60%).

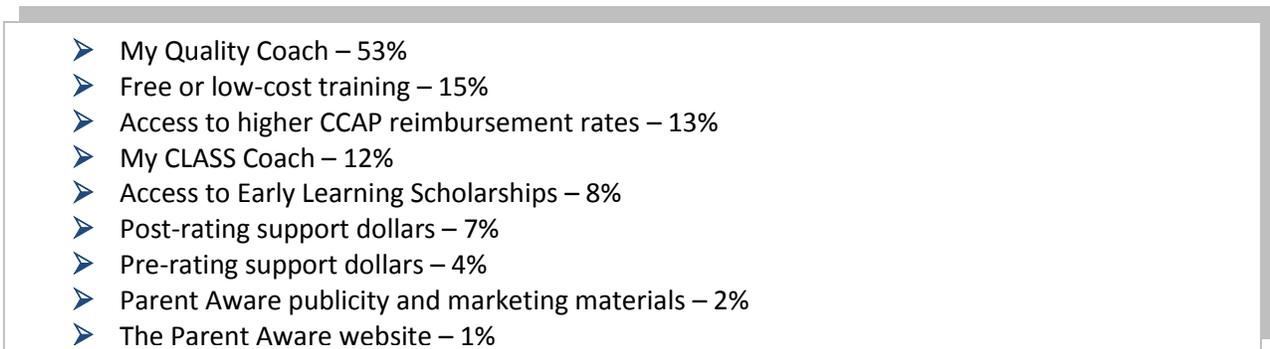
Table 5. Likelihood Parent Aware participants will sign up for a specific training delivery format

<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 be to sign up for the following kinds of training?</i>	<b>Unlikely</b>	<b>Likely</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
2-hour stand-alone, in-person trainings	4%	86%	10%
Series-based trainings comprised of 2-4 sessions, each session is 1-2 hours.	13%	78%	9%
Self-study, self-paced trainings, where you take a post-test	22%	64%	14%
Online trainings, scheduled at a specific time	23%	60%	17%

### Supports Offered by Parent Aware

In order to better understand what supports providers find most helpful, providers were asked to rank the top 3 out of 10 possible supports to their program. The majority of providers (53%) reported their Quality Coach was the most helpful support (53%). Fewer providers reported that free or low-cost training (15%) and access to CCAP reimbursement rates (13%) are helpful supports (see Figure 8. ).

Figure 8. Providers' ranking of most helpful supports offered by Parent Aware



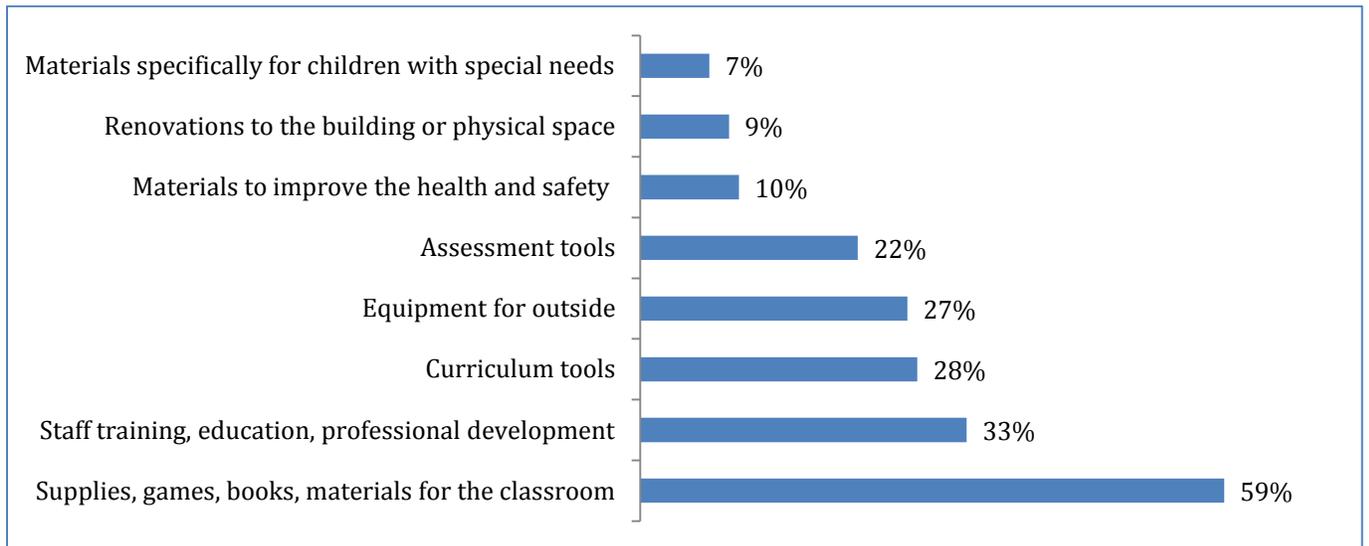
### Quality Improvement Supports

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.<sup>11</sup> Eighty-eight providers answered this question. As shown in Figure 9, a majority of providers (59%) expect to spend their money on supplies, games, books, materials for the classroom; fewer providers (33%) report that they will spend their quality improvement dollars on training, professional development,

<sup>11</sup> Fully-Rated providers work with their Quality Coach to determine how best to spend post-rating quality improvement support dollars. Dollars must be spent in one of three program areas: 1) Professional Development 2) Health & Safety 3) Learning & Environment.

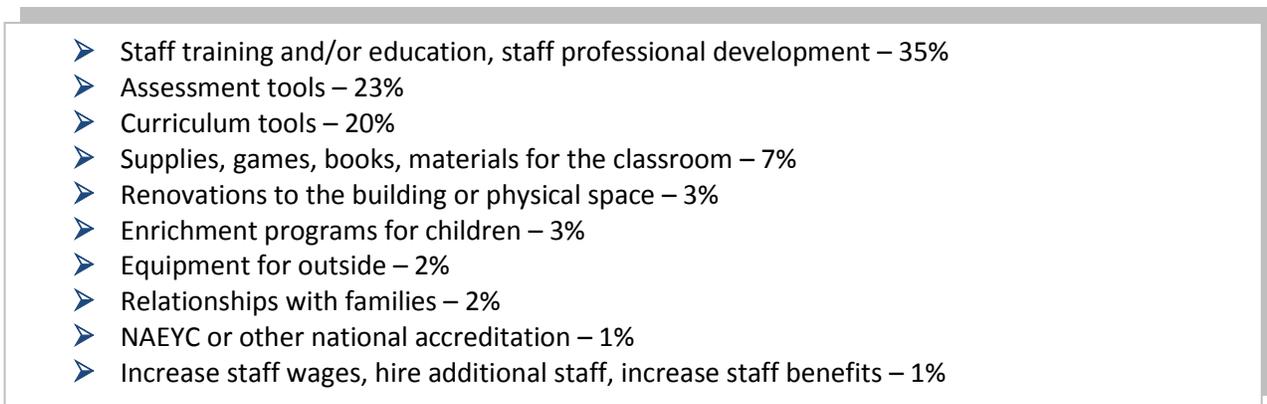
coaching, and consultation. Very few providers indicate that they will use their quality improvement dollars on other aspects of their programs such as renovations (9%) and materials specifically for children with special needs (7%)

Figure 9. Where providers expect to spend post-rating quality improvement dollars



Providers were asked to rank the 3 most important quality improvements made in their program in the last 12 months. Figure 10 shows that improvements to staff training, education, and professional development were ranked by 35% of providers as the most important improvement made. Providers also cited improvements in the use of assessment (23%) and curriculum tools (20%) as important quality improvements.

Figure 10. Providers' ranking of most important quality improvements made



## Reflecting on the Rating Process

Respondents were asked to reflect on the most recent rating they received. The majority of providers (81%) agreed that the rating they received was fair (compared to 77% in 2013) and that they will reapply to Parent Aware when their rating expires (76%) (compared to 86% in 2013). Respondents were less likely to agree that completing the Quality Documentation Packet (QDP) was easy (46% agreed) or that the QDP was responsive to groups of different cultural backgrounds (41% agreed) (see Table 6).

Table 6. Respondents' experiences after their rating was received

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
The rating I received was fair.	3%	16%	81%
I knew what I needed to do in order to get the rating I wanted.	10%	12%	78%
I plan to apply for a Parent Aware rating in the future when my rating is set to expire.	7%	17%	76%
The rating I received accurately reflects my program's quality.	18%	12%	70%
The Quality Documentation Packet was easy to complete.	36%	18%	46%
I have recommendations about how the rating process could be improved in the future.	10%	49%	41%
The Quality Documentation Packet was sensitive to groups of different cultural backgrounds.	4%	55%	41%

Finally, providers were asked if they would like to see any improvements made to Parent Aware. The most frequent responses described concerns about the perceived complexity and amount of paperwork for trainings, the QDP, and other aspects of Parent Aware. Fifty percent of providers who commented on paperwork also recommended the option for completing Parent Aware paperwork online.<sup>12</sup> Examples of responses about paperwork includes:

- *“There needs to be a place that has examples of what you are looking for in each item. It can be a real challenge when you feel helpless to do things/items number the way that you need to, but you do not understand what is needed. The amount of paperwork is very overwhelming. It would be nice if things could be submitted electronically.”*
- *“The quality packet of paperwork needs to be rewritten so it is more user-friendly.”*
- *“Make some of the paperwork easier and less time consuming.”*
- *“The packet is confusing; [needs to be] more straight forward. Multiple copies of something seems crazy.*
- *“Being able to submit online and check status online.”*

<sup>12</sup> The new data system for Parent Aware – Develop – began offering this option in July 2014.

In addition, providers commented that they would like to see changes to training included in Parent Aware, including details related to the requirements, accessibility, availability, and variety of training. Examples of responses related to training includes:

- *“Lessen the training requirements and the redundancies with training and within the packet.”*
- *“Offer different trainings in better locations that are really useful. A lot of the trainings were similar.”*
- *“Trainings need to be more timely and geared for new AND experienced providers.”*

### **Summary of Findings from Fully-Rated Programs**

Providers with full Parent Aware ratings report overall positive impressions of Parent Aware (90%). The majority of providers (67%) report that their experience with Parent Aware thus far has been what they expected; most providers (83%) report that their Quality Coach was helpful in teaching them the Parent Aware requirements. And, 70% of fully-rated providers believe the rating they received was fair. Providers also report however, that they have difficulty completing all of the necessary paperwork for Parent Aware. Providers report that the paperwork is often overwhelming and confusing. To assist providers with the rating process, Parent Aware staff, Quality Coaches and Professional Development Coordinators can offer clear, uniform communication that supports providers in navigating the rating process and eases some of the concerns that are raised. Peer mentoring among fully-rated providers may be another strategy for supporting providers' success and satisfaction with the rating process.

## Non-Rated Programs

Licensed family child care programs and licensed child care centers located in counties where Parent Aware is available completed an online survey about their level of interest and awareness of Parent Aware.<sup>13</sup> Programs that have ever participated in Parent Aware or are currently participating were not eligible to complete the survey. The sample was obtained from an export of NACCRRAware in January, 2014. Seven hundred thirty-three providers were emailed the request to complete the survey. The response rate for the survey was 12%<sup>14</sup> (87 of 737 providers); however 16 of the 87 respondents were not eligible to complete the survey because they had been in Parent Aware or were currently enrolled. Sixty-nine eligible providers completed survey questions. The survey was fielded between April 10, 2014 and June 20, 2014. Eighty-three percent of the providers who completed the survey were family child care providers (n=57), 14% of respondents were directors of child care centers (n=10) and 3% did not know their status (n=2).

### Key Findings

- All respondents (100%) had heard of Parent Aware.
- 22% of respondents reported having attended a Parent Aware Information Session.
- 56% of those surveyed reported knowing “a little” about Quality Rating and Improvement Systems for early care and education programs.
- Providers primarily learned about Parent Aware through a Child Care Aware (41%), a training (16%) or a print advertisement (13%).
- When asked if they would consider joining Parent Aware, 40% said “No”, 19% said “Yes”, and 41% said they “Don’t Know” if they would join Parent Aware.
- Providers believe that quality is important when parents select child care (90%); however, providers disagree that Parent Aware ratings are useful to parents (44%) and early care and education programs (44%). They also disagree that parents should consider a program’s Parent Aware rating when choosing child care (62%).

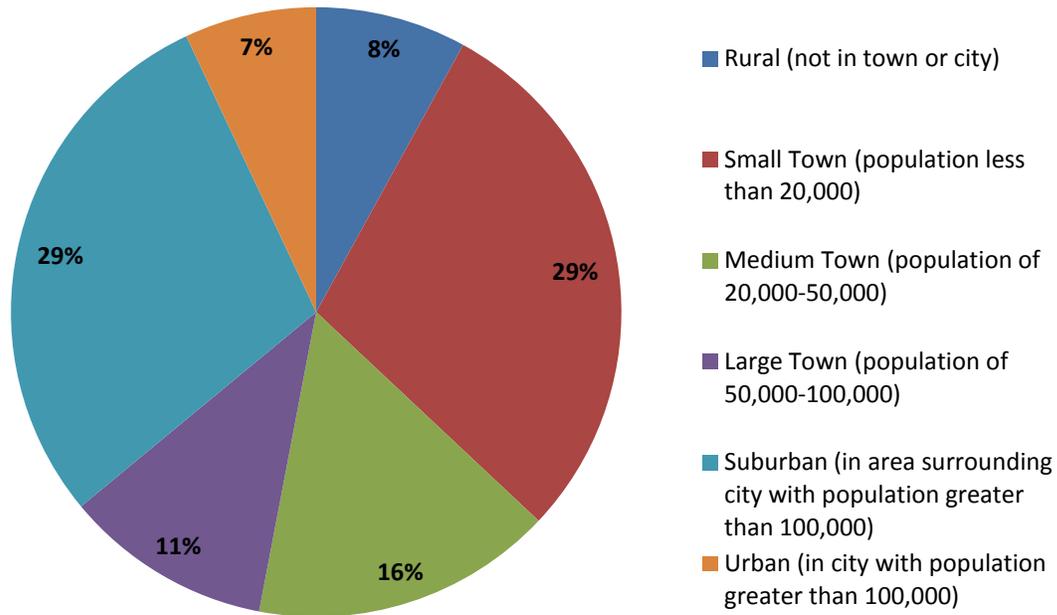
Providers were asked to describe the area in which their program is located. The majority of providers surveyed indicated that their program is located in a small town (29%) or a suburban area (29%). See Figure 11 for a more detailed description of where respondents’ programs were located.

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<sup>13</sup> When Minnesota won the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant award in December 2011, Parent Aware began a gradual statewide “roll-out” to all counties in Minnesota. As of 1/1/2015, Parent Aware will be available in all counties throughout the state. At the time of this survey, Parent Aware was available to Fully-Rated providers in 45 counties and 8 reservations. See: Tout, K., Cleveland, J., Friese, S., Sosinsky, L., Soli, M. & Hirilall, A. (2014). *Statewide Expansion of Parent Aware: Year 2 Implementation Report*. Minneapolis, MN; Child Trends for more information about the rating rollout.

<sup>14</sup> The response rate in 2013 was 18%.

Figure 11. Location of non-rated respondents



### Knowledge of Parent Aware and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

Providers were asked how much they know about Parent Aware and Quality Rating and Improvement System. Over half of providers (56%) reported knowing a little and 23% reported knowing a lot, an increase compared to 2013 (see Table 7).

Table 7. Providers' level of knowledge of Parent Aware/Quality Rating and Improvement Systems for early child care

	Percent
A Lot	23%
A Little	56%
Not Very Much	18%
Don't Know	3%

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

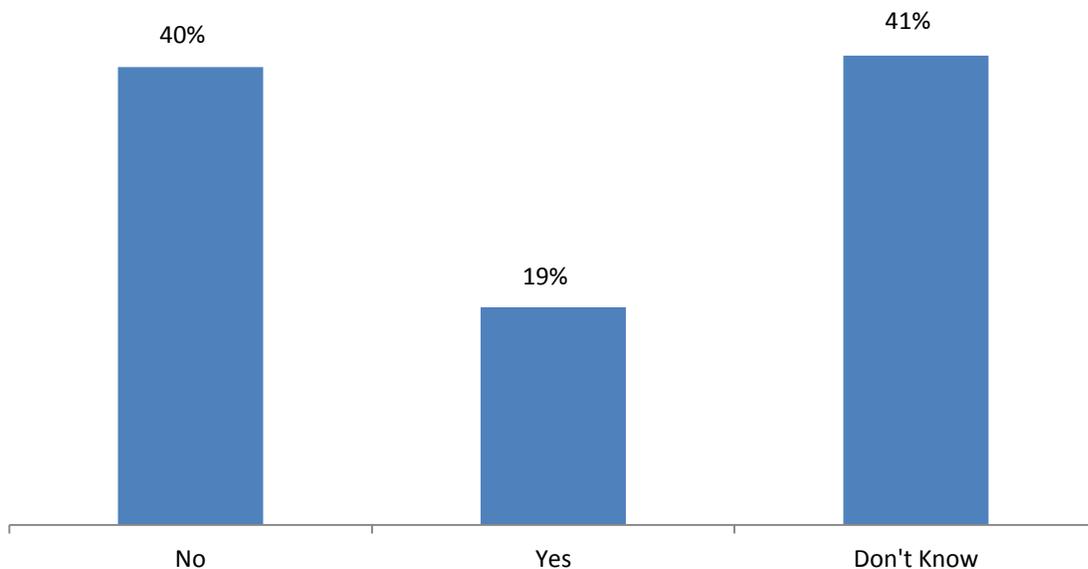
Figure 12. ).

Figure 12. How respondents first heard of Parent Aware

- Child Care Aware – 41%
- At a training – 16%
- Print advertisement – 13%
- From another ECE provider 11%
- From my county licensor – 7%
- On the radio – 4%
- When I heard about scholarships that families can use at Parent Aware rated programs– 1%
- Other– 5%

Providers were asked if they would consider joining Parent Aware. About two fifths (41%) do not know whether they would join Parent Aware; another two-fifths (40%) say they will not join Parent Aware, while just under one-fifth (19%) say they will join (see Figure 14).

Figure 13. Would you consider joining Parent Aware?



Respondents were asked to identify possible scenarios that might affect their decision to join or not join Parent Aware. Respondents were instructed to select two possible scenarios; however, some selected more (see Figure 14 and Figure 16. ). In the figures, the percentage next to each statement reflects the percent of respondents who checked that statement as a reason that would affect their

decision to join or not to join Parent Aware. Approximately half (52%) of providers reported that access to free or low cost training would affect their decision to join Parent Aware. Providers also reported that support for their professional development and professionalism (23%) would impact their decision to join. In contrast, providers report that they don't need Parent Aware to attract families to their program (62%), and that a rating won't accurately reflect their program's quality (39%). Fewer providers reported that the application/rating process is difficult (11%) compared to 2013, in which 48% of providers reported this as a top reason affecting their decision not to join Parent Aware.

Figure 14. Top reasons affecting providers' decision to join Parent Aware

- To access free or low cost training – 52%
- It is important for my professional development/professionalism – 23%
- To access higher CCAP reimbursement rates – 17%
- To better attract families to my program – 17%
- To access pre-rating support dollars – 13%
- To be part of a cutting-edge early childhood initiative/program – 13%
- If someone else in my organization required my program to participate – 13%
- To access coaching supports in my program – 13%
- I'd join Parent Aware for another reason not listed – 13%
- To access Early Learning Scholarships – 10%
- To access post-rating support dollars – 8%
- To access CLASS coaching – 2%

Figure 15. Top reasons affecting providers' decision NOT to join Parent Aware

- I don't need it to attract families to my program – 62%
- I don't trust that Parent Aware rating will accurately reflect my program's quality – 39%
- It is not worth the investment of my time – 28%
- I am waiting to hear from other programs/providers about their experience first – 16%
- I don't believe early care and education programs should be rated – 15%
- I don't need to improve the quality of my program – 13%
- The application/rating process is difficult – 11%
- There is not enough financial incentive to join – 11%
- Parent Aware does not provide enough support for programs/providers – 5%

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 8). This group of respondents - who are not already connected to Parent Aware - are much less likely to indicate that they will take series-based trainings (55% say it is likely) than providers already enrolled in Parent Aware (78%) (see Table 4). This group of respondents is also

slightly less likely to take 2-hour stand-alone training or self-study (71% of providers say it is likely vs. 87% of fully-rated providers). They are similar to fully-rated providers in their likelihood of taking online training (58% vs. 60%). 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.

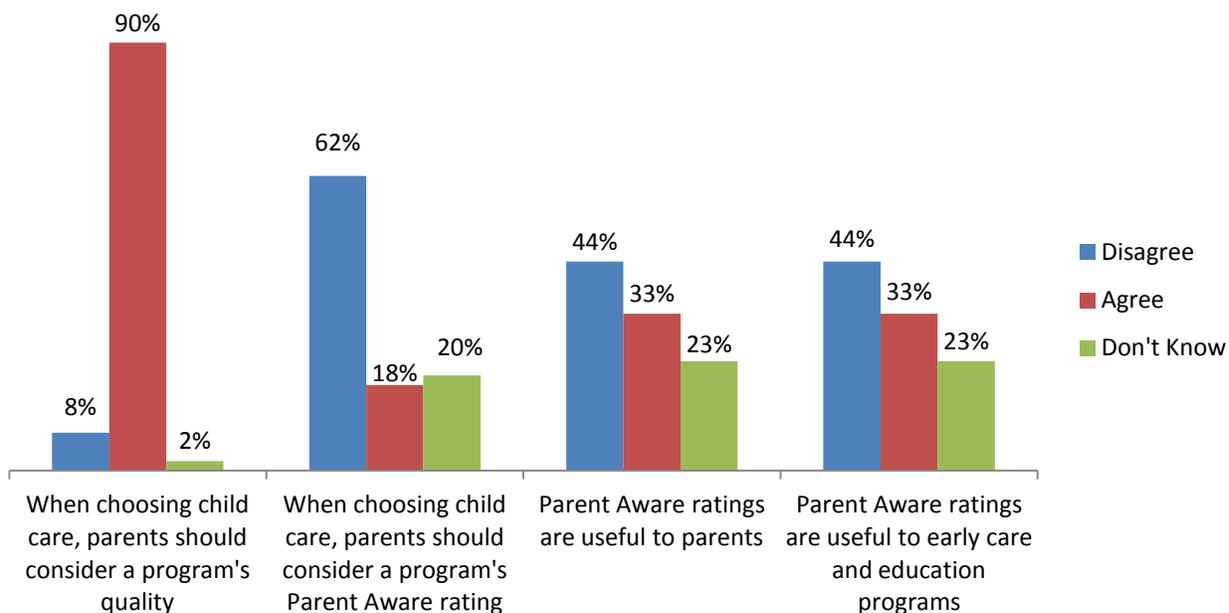
Table 8. Providers’ likelihood they will sign up for a specific training delivery format

	Unlikely	Likely	Don't know
2-hour stand-alone trainings	18%	71%	10%
Self-study, self-paced trainings, where you take a post-test	21%	67%	12%
Online trainings, scheduled at a specific time	32%	58%	10%
Series-based trainings comprised of 2-4 sessions, each session is 1-2 hours.	33%	55%	12%

### 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 (90%) believe that quality is important when parents select child care; however, the majority of providers (62%) disagree that Parent Aware ratings should be considered in child care decision-making (see Figure 16). This is similar to the percent of non-rated providers (58%) in 2013 who disagreed that Parent Aware ratings should be considered in decision-making. Providers have a mixed opinion about whether ratings are useful to parents and ECE programs.

Figure 16. Providers' perceptions of quality and Parent Aware



### Summary of Findings from Non-Rated Programs

Non-rated providers 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%).

The results provide a descriptive picture of how providers not yet affiliated with Parent Aware perceive the program. All respondents (100%) have heard of Parent Aware, but few (23%) indicated they know a lot about it. While some providers have developed an opinion about whether or not they will enroll in Parent Aware, about two-fifths (41%) 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 (90%) that parents should consider a program's quality when choosing child care for their child, but only 18% believe that a Parent Aware rating should be used in this process (a decrease from 30% in 2013).

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 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 (APR 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 group of providers who completed a survey to inform this report are not and have never been affiliated with Parent Aware. They are eligible but have not yet enrolled. The experience of this group of un-affiliated providers can help illuminate new communication and support strategies for engaging providers in Parent Aware.

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

- Providers value incentives and supports and view quality improvement as a primary purpose of Parent Aware. 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 APR 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 less certain that parents use the ratings to select their program. APR 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.
- An important goal of the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant is to track and meet enrollment targets in Parent Aware. As Head Start and School Based Pre-K programs' enrollment has nearly reached saturation levels, enrolling more providers through the full-rating process is important for continued growth and saturation of Parent Aware and to ensure that more children are being served by high quality programs. Parent Aware implementers and recruiters may want to focus their efforts on promoting aspects of Parent Aware that current fully-rated providers report as positive including telling their families about Parent Aware and their belief that the primary purpose of an initiative like Parent Aware is to help providers improve their quality. Emphasizing the marketing opportunities and quality improvement supports to non-rated providers may serve as a useful approach when trying to recruit more providers to join Parent Aware.

During the next year 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:

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## Appendix A: Tables comparing survey responses in 2013 and 2014

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### Accelerated Pathways to Ratings

Table A1. APR providers indicating their #1 ranked reason for joining Parent Aware

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
To access to Early Learning Scholarships	36%	47%
To be a part of a cutting-edge early childhood initiative/program	23%	13%
Someone else in my program requires my program to participate	0%	8%
To access higher CCAP reimbursement rates	-	7%
To better attract families to my program	18%	7%
To access post-rating support dollars	-	5%
It is important for my professional development/professionalism	21%	4%
To access pre-rating support dollars	-	3%
I joined Parent Aware for another reason not listed	0%	2%
To access coaching supports in my program	-	0%
To access CLASS coaching	-	0%

<sup>15</sup> Items listed below the thick bar in each table are items reported in the Appendix only.

Table A2. APR providers' experiences with Parent Aware

	2013			2014		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
The rating my program received accurately reflects my program's quality	-	-	-	2%	4%	94%
We plan to apply for Parent Aware in the future when my rating is set to expire	2%	9%	89%	2%	6%	92%
I would recommend that other programs join Parent Aware	7%	16%	77%	9%	18%	73%
The Parent Aware application was easy	11%	5%	84%	16%	24%	60%
Our experience with Parent Aware has been what we expected	21%	28%	51%	14%	27%	59%
We made changes to our program as a result of joining Parent Aware	52%	18%	30%	26%	18%	56%
Teachers are able to find the professional development trainings they need	32%	23%	45%	22%	27%	51%
The rating I received was fair	-	-	-	2%	3%	95%
I know what I needed to do in order to get the rating I wanted	-	-	-	4%	3%	93%
I know what is expected of me	-	-	-	15%	17%	68%
I believe my program is of higher quality because we joined Parent Aware	-	-	-	20%	26%	54%

Table A3. APR providers' perceptions of the primary purpose of Parent Aware

	2014		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
The primary purpose of Parent Aware is to help early care and education programs improve their quality	7%	8%	85%
The primary purpose of Parent Aware is to share information with parents about the quality of early care and education programs	11%	17%	72%
The primary purpose of Parent Aware is to rate the quality of early care and education programs	14%	17%	69%
Parent Aware works in partnership with me to be a resource	23%	27%	49%

Table A4. APR providers' opinions about marketing strategies

	2013			2014		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Families are more likely to choose our program because we joined Parent Aware	32%	36%	32%	31%	28%	41%
We tell families in our program about Parent Aware	5%	9%	86%	5%	11%	84%
Parent Aware has been beneficial to the families we serve	32%	38%	30%	21%	21%	58%
When choosing child care for their child, parents should consider program's quality	-	-	-	1%	2%	96%
When choosing child care for their child, parents should consider program's PA rating	-	-	-	7%	14%	79%
Parent Aware ratings are useful to parents	-	-	-	9%	19%	72%
Parent Aware ratings are useful to early care and education programs	-	-	-	12%	13%	75%
We display the marketing materials given to us by Parent Aware	-	-	-	10%	9%	81%

## Fully-Rated Programs

Table A5. Fully-rated providers indicating their #1 ranked reason for enrolling in Parent Aware

	2013	2014
It is important for my professional development/professionalism	17%	30%
To be a part of a cutting-edge early childhood initiative/program	32%	16%
Access to pre-rating support dollars	(see below)	13%
To better attract families to my program	10%	11%
Access to free or low-cost training	(see below)	7%
Access to quality improvements (coaching, money)	29%	-
Access to post-rating support dollars	(see below)	6%
Access to Early Learning Scholarships	-	6%
I joined Parent Aware for another reason not listed	7%	6%
Access to higher CCAP reimbursement rates	-	3%
Access to CLASS coaching	(see below)	0
If someone else in my program required me to join	5%	-

Reasons exclusive to 2013 survey	2013	2014
Access to quality improvements (coaching, money)	29%	-
Access to pre-rating support dollars	-	13%
Access to free or low-cost training	-	7%
Access to post-rating support dollars	-	6%
Access to CLASS coaching	-	0

Table A6. Fully-rated providers' experiences with Parent Aware implementation

	2013			2014		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
I know what is expected of me in Parent Aware	13%	13%	74%	8%	13%	78%
I would recommend that other programs join Parent Aware	15%	12%	73%	6%	17%	77%
The internal due dates within Parent Aware give me enough time to complete the necessary requirements.	44%	2%	54%	16%	13%	71%
My experience with Parent Aware has been what I expected.	20%	12%	68%	12%	21%	67%
My experience with the Professional Development Registry has been positive	34%	17%	49%	17%	17%	67%
The Parent Aware Orientation Session was helpful.	10%	14%	76%	12%	32%	56%
The Parent Aware application process was easy.	-	-	-	26%	21%	53%
We have made changes to our program as a result of joining Parent Aware	-	-	-	4%	7%	89%
I believe my program is of higher quality because we joined Parent Aware	-	-	-	5%	17%	78%
Teachers are able to find the professional development trainings they need	-	-	-	17%	17%	66%

Table A7. Fully-rated providers' experience with their Quality Coach

	2013			2014		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
My Quality Coach has helped me to understand the Parent Aware requirements	3%	13%	85%	7%	10%	83%
The time my Quality Coach has to work with me is sufficient	10%	10%	80%	12%	7%	81%
My Professional Development Advisor (PDA) has helped me to understand the Parent Aware requirements	8%	23%	70%	8%	30%	62%

Table A8. More: Fully-rated providers' experience with their Quality Coach

	2014		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
My coach believes I know my needs and strengths	5%	10%	85%
My coach supports the decisions I have made	3%	8%	90%
My coach views me in a positive way	2%	9%	89%
My coach helps me learn new skills to get resources	6%	12%	82%
My coach focuses on my strengths	2%	17%	80%
My coach encourages me to make my own decisions	1%	10%	89%
My coach provides me with information about available resources	6%	9%	85%
My coach places emphasis on my developing abilities	7%	15%	78%
My coach's suggestions are seen as useful	4%	12%	84%
My coach encourages the use of existing knowledge and capabilities	1%	18%	80%
My coach emphasized solutions to problems	2%	16%	82%
My coach works collaboratively with me	4%	13%	83%
My coach seeks my permission before sharing information	1%	21%	78%
My coach engages in proactive help-giving practices	6%	12%	81%
My coach's advice and assistance is worth following	5%	9%	87%
My coach tries to understand my concerns	6%	10%	84%
My coach is warm and caring	2%	7%	90%
My coach treats me as capable of learning new skills	2%	7%	90%
My coach gives me credit for solving problems	2%	9%	89%
My coach listens to what I have to say	5%	7%	87%
My coach conveys that I am deserving of help	4%	7%	88%
My coach places minimal blame on me for problems	4%	12%	84%
My coach promotes and enhances my capabilities	4%	16%	80%

Table A9. Fully-rated providers' opinions about marketing strategies

	2013			2014		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
We tell families in our program about Parent Aware	5%	7%	88%	5%	8%	87%
Parent Aware has been beneficial to the families we serve	13%	13%	74%	15%	17%	68%
Families are more likely to choose our program because we joined Parent Aware	24%	19%	57%	25%	21%	54%

## Non-Rated Programs

Table A10. Top reasons affecting non-rated providers' decision to join Parent Aware

	2013	2014
To access to free or low-cost training	-	52%
It is important for my professional development/professionalism	30%	23%
To access higher CCAP reimbursement rates	-	17%
To better attract families to my program	34%	17%
To access pre-rating support dollars	-	13%
To be part of a cutting-edge early childhood initiative/program	28%	13%
If someone else in my organization required my program to participate	28%	13%
To access coaching supports in my program	-	13%
I'd join Parent Aware for another reason not listed	-	13%
To access Early Learning Scholarships	-	10%
To access post-rating support dollars	-	8%
To access CLASS coaching	-	2%
<b>Reasons exclusive to 2013 survey</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
To access quality improvements (coaching, money)	30%	-
To access scholarship money	31%	-

Table A11. Top reasons affecting non-rated providers' decision NOT to join Parent Aware

	2013	2014
I don't need it to attract families to my program	59%	62%
I don't trust that Parent Aware rating will accurately reflect my program's quality	39%	39%
It is not worth the investment of my time	38%	28%
I am waiting to hear from other programs/providers about their experience first	17%	16%
I don't believe early care and education programs should be rated	-	15%
I don't need to improve the quality of my program	12%	13%
The application/rating process is difficult	16%	11%
There is not enough financial incentive to join	11%	11%
Parent Aware does not provide enough support for programs/providers	3%	5%

Table A12. Non-rated providers' level of knowledge about Parent Aware

	2013	2014
A Lot	21%	23%
A Little	44%	56%
Not Very Much	25%	18%
Don't Know	6%	3%

Table A13. Non-rated provider's perceptions of quality and Parent Aware

	2013			2014		
	Disagree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Agree	Don't Know
When choosing child care, parents should consider a program's quality	4%	94%	2%	8%	90%	2%
When choosing child care, parents should consider a program's Parent Aware rating	58%	30%	12%	62%	18%	20%
Parent Aware ratings are useful to parents	41%	32%	27%	44%	33%	23%
Parent Aware ratings are useful to early care and education programs	36%	39%	25%	44%	33%	23%

Table A14. Would you consider joining Parent Aware?

	2013	2014
Yes	22%	19%
No	33%	40%
Don't Know	45%	41%