

PARENT  AWARE
for SCHOOL READINESS

LIVE UNITED



Greater Twin Cities United Way
gtcuw.org

April 1, 2014

Dear Board Members and Other Stakeholders:

Together, Greater Twin Cities United Way and Parent Aware for School Readiness (PASR) provide private support to evaluate Minnesota's Parent Aware Quality Rating and Improvement System. As with all Rating Systems throughout the country, Parent Aware is a work-in-progress. A committed group of public and private partners work hard each day to make Parent Aware a strong framework of quality for Minnesota's early learning system. In that spirit of continuous improvement, we are pleased to share the attached Year 2 Implementation Report, prepared by Child Trends, our non-profit, non-partisan external evaluator.

In reading this report, it's important to recall its intended purpose and audience, and how it fits into the four-year Parent Aware evaluation plan outlined in Minnesota's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge plan. This Year 2 report focuses on evaluating Minnesota's progress toward the implementation of Parent Aware. It examines the context for and stakeholder perceptions of implementation thus far; progress in enrolling programs in Ratings; and a more detailed analysis of the quality improvement process, including some initial analysis focused on validating the tool used by centers to self-assess their quality. The findings contained in this report are primarily intended for use by those individuals and organizations engaged in day-to-day implementation of Parent Aware, in order that they may continue to improve the system. We are all building the system even as we roll it out, and these evaluation findings provide critical information to help us all make Parent Aware stronger. Our hope is that every partner reads this report with a sense of curiosity – what successes should we celebrate; and what opportunities do we have to improve Parent Aware?

Finally, we want to acknowledge that two of the questions of great interest to both internal and external stakeholders are not yet answered in the Year 2 Report: how well do ratings differentiate between quality levels; and how do ratings link to patterns of children's development? Before Child Trends can answer those key questions, there must be a critical mass of programs rated, of various types and at different star levels. At the end of 2013, there were not yet enough rated programs in the system, but we expect the Year 3 report will include detailed answers to those validation questions. To insure that we can answer those critical questions in Year 3, all partners must continue to focus on increasing participation in Parent Aware, especially among non-accredited Licensed Family Child Care and center-based programs eligible for full rating.

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We are extraordinarily grateful to all our public and private partners in this important work: the Minnesota Departments of Human Services, Education and Health; Child Care Aware of Minnesota and all the local resource and referral agencies across Minnesota; all the generous foundation and individual donors whose support of PASR and Greater Twin Cities United Way made this evaluation possible; and most importantly, the parents that use ratings in their shopping and the early learning programs that demonstrate their commitment to quality by volunteering for Parent Aware rating. We appreciate your willingness to work together, while respecting that each of us has our own role to play in making Parent Aware successful. We are also grateful to the many programs that have agreed to participate in the Parent Aware evaluation, and we encourage all eligible programs to do so, in order that Child Trends can provide our system with a robust and meaningful evaluation that helps everyone improve school readiness outcomes for Minnesota's young children.

Sincerely,

Ericca Maas
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Parent Aware for School Readiness

Meghan Barp
Senior Vice President, Community Impact
Greater Twin Cities United Way

Parent
Aware 

Evaluation of Parent Aware: Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)



Year 2 Implementation Report
April, 2014

Child **TRENDS**[®]

PARENT  AWARE
for **SCHOOL READINESS**

**United
Way** 
Greater Twin Cities
United Way

Statewide Expansion of Parent Aware: Year 2 Annual Report

Reporting Period January – December 2013

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The Parent Aware Evaluation

Parent Aware is Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The Parent Aware Evaluation is designed to provide information about the implementation and effectiveness of Parent Aware in promoting children's optimal development and school readiness. Parent Aware uses a two-pronged strategy that (1) provides information about early care and education program quality to parents and (2) supports quality improvement of early care and education programs.

Child Trends, a nonpartisan, nonprofit research organization is conducting the evaluation from 2012-2016. The Parent Aware Evaluation is funded by Parent Aware for School Readiness (PASR), Greater Twin Cities United Way, and Minnesota's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant.

The evaluation addresses six primary research questions:

- 1. How is implementation proceeding?** Child Trends will study the implementation of Parent Aware, including the marketing campaigns and tools, quality improvement supports for programs, recruitment and retention of programs and the rating process. Perceptions of how Parent Aware is working for participants and families from the perspective of early care and education providers and Parent Aware staff will be collected through surveys and interviews. This question will be addressed in each annual report.
- 2. Is quality improving in Parent Aware-rated programs?** Observations measuring the quality of the environment and teacher-child interactions will be conducted in rated programs to understand how program quality is changing over time and whether these changes are aligned with the Parent Aware indicators and ratings. This question will be addressed in the Year 3 and Year 4 annual reports.
- 3. How is children's development related to Parent Aware ratings?** Children in observed classrooms will be recruited to participate in a fall and spring school readiness assessment aimed at measuring Kindergarten readiness patterns in four year-old children attending Parent Aware programs at all rating levels. This question will be addressed in a report in the third quarter of Year 4.
- 4. How effective are the quality indicators and rating structure used in Parent Aware?** Child Trends will conduct a validation of the Parent Aware indicators and rating structure and assess the extent to which Parent Aware is capturing program quality accurately and reliably. This question will be addressed for different components of the Parent Aware Rating Tool in the Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4 annual reports.
- 5. What are parents' perceptions of Parent Aware?** Child Trends will survey parents with children in Parent Aware-rated programs to assess their experiences with Parent Aware. This question will be addressed in the Year 4 annual report.
- 6. How is Parent Aware contributing to Minnesota's early care and education system?** The evaluation will address the role of Parent Aware and the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant in supporting Minnesota's early care and education system. This question will be addressed in each annual report.

Three evaluation reports will be produced each year. The annual report will provide an overview of activities and outcomes while two brief reports will be produced in the first and third quarters to address high priority topical issues (such as provider perceptions of Parent Aware).

Reports are available at www.pasrmn.org.

Parent Aware At a Glance

What is Parent Aware?

Parent Aware is Minnesota's Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) for early care and education programs. It is available to all licensed child care centers and family child care providers, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, School-Based Pre-K programs and Early Childhood Special Education programs.

How do programs receive a rating?

Parent Aware has two rating pathways. Licensed, non-accredited child care centers and family child care providers rated under the *full-rating* pathway submit program documentation in four areas of quality.

- Physical Health and Well-Being
- Teaching and Relationships
- Assessment of Child Progress
- Teacher Training and Education

Reliable raters review documentation and award a One to Four Star rating. Parent Aware requires that programs meet all quality indicators at the One and Two Star level before being able to achieve a Three or Four Star rating. Center-based programs aiming for a Three or Four Star rating receive a preschool classroom observation using the Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS). Programs eligible for the full-rating process participate in a rating cohort. Ratings earned under the full-rating process are awarded two times per year: June 30th and December 31st.

A second option for rating is the *Accelerated Pathways to Rating (APR)* process. Accredited child care centers, accredited family child care providers, Head Start, Early Head Start, Early Childhood Special Education and School-Based Pre-K programs are eligible for the APR process and can apply for a Parent Aware rating at any time during the year. Because the standards for these programs are aligned with Parent Aware standards, APR programs are eligible for a Four Star rating after submitting documentation about indicators related to curriculum and assessment

Statewide Expansion of Parent Aware

Parent Aware is available statewide to programs eligible for APR. Parent Aware began a gradual statewide expansion in 2012 to all other types of programs - licensed, non-accredited child care centers and family child care providers. As of December 31, 2013, Parent Aware was available to licensed, non-accredited programs in 22 counties and 7 Reservations. On January 1, 2014, Parent Aware rolled out to an additional 23 Minnesota counties and 1 additional Reservation.

What supports do programs receive as part of Parent Aware?

Fully-rated programs receive support in the form of a Quality Coach who provides coaching and assists with assembling the documentation needed to apply for a rating. Programs eligible for Building Quality receive \$500 in pre-rating quality improvement supports. Programs rated at One, Two, and Three Stars receive \$1000 in post-rating quality improvement supports. After being rated, a program also receives marketing materials to promote their rating.

How do parents learn about Parent Aware ratings?

When a program receives a Star rating, it is posted at www.parentawareratings.org. Parents can search for rated programs in their area. Parents calling the Child Aware hotline are also informed about Parent Aware and how to identify rated programs on child care availability lists they receive.

Overview and Purpose of the Report

Parent Aware, Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for early care and education programs, completed its second year of a four-year statewide expansion at the end of 2013. The purpose of Parent Aware is to promote children's optimal development and school readiness through a two-pronged strategy that (1) provides information about early care and education program quality to parents and (2) supports quality improvement of early care and education programs. Parent Aware is unique among QRIS nationally with a name that focuses on parents and resources dedicated in the system to supporting marketing efforts and parent decision-making.

As a pilot program from 2007 to 2011 and throughout the early years of statewide expansion, the Parent Aware evaluation contributes research and information to support design and revisions of the system, monitoring of successes and challenges, and reporting on implementation and outcomes. For example, evaluation findings related to the validation of the Parent Aware Rating Tool and linkages between program ratings and children's school readiness will be included in reports on Minnesota's Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant award for 2012 – 2015. The evaluation also produces findings related to implementation, the effectiveness of quality improvement supports, parent perceptions of Parent Aware and the role of Parent Aware in Minnesota's early care and education system. The overview of the Parent Aware Evaluation at the beginning of this report provides an outline of the primary research questions and the timeline for addressing each question.

The purpose of this report is to analyze activities and outcomes from the second year of statewide expansion. A previous report produced after the first year of expansion focused primarily on implementation (as few programs had been rated through the Parent Aware full rating process by the time the report was released) and provided baseline findings to which findings from subsequent reports can be compared. This report on Year Two of expansion draws upon data from programs rated in three "cohorts" from the end of 2012 through the end of 2013. The report includes findings presented in six sections. Research questions numbers in parentheses refer to the questions listed in the Evaluation overview.

- Section 1 provides information about the context of Parent Aware implementation in the second year of expansion and a brief overview of details about how Parent Aware is structured.
- Section 2 uses data from multiple sources to describe patterns of enrollment and program ratings in Parent Aware. (Research Question 1)
- Section 3 offers an analysis on focal topics related to implementation from the perspective of key informants. It describes key informants' perceptions of innovations and challenges and their experiences with issues related to recruitment and enrollment of programs, the use of quality indicators in the Parent Aware Rating Tool that require evidence of training on particular topics, and the role of Parent Aware in the implementation of Minnesota's RTT-ELC grant. (Research Question 1)

- Section 4 describes the quality improvement supports in Parent Aware and the work and experiences of Quality Coaches, Professional Development Advisors and Grant Coordinators using survey and administrative data. (Research Question 2)
- Section 5 presents initial validation analyses that examine one component of the Parent Aware Rating Tool – the Environment Self Assessment – and how it is working so far to differentiate quality and areas needing attention in quality improvement efforts for child care programs participating in the full-rating pathway. (Research Question 4)
- Section 6 provides a synthesis of findings across the report and describes how findings might be used to support implementation and continuous quality improvement.

This is the second annual report from the evaluation of Parent Aware being conducted by Child Trends with funding from Parent Aware for School Readiness, Greater Twin Cities United Way and Minnesota’s Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant. In addition to the annual reports produced by the evaluation team, mid-term reports are available which include a report from 2013 on providers’ perceptions of Parent Aware (see www.pasrmn.org). A mid-term report in 2014 will present the first analysis of the Parent Aware indicators and scoring process. In addition, surveys of providers will be repeated so that trends in provider opinion can be analyzed and tracked.

Note on terminology used in the report: The terms “provider(s)” and “program(s)” are used to distinguish between the people and facilities in early care and education (ECE). Provider (or providers) refers to family child care providers, directors, teachers, curriculum coordinators or other people who make decisions and have specific knowledge and skills in ECE settings. Program (or programs) refers to facilities. This is a broad term that encompasses the personnel, environment, and materials in an ECE setting. ECE program, or simply program, is an inclusive, umbrella term that includes family child care programs, child care centers, School-Based Pre-Kindergarten programs, and Head Start programs. If specificity about program type is needed, the terms center-based programs (to refer to both child care centers and preschools), child care center, family child care program, school-based pre-kindergarten program and Head Start program are used. The terms used in the report reflect those used in Parent Aware materials and by the key informants interviewed for the evaluation.

Section 1. Parent Aware Description and Context¹

Parent Aware was a pilot program from 2007 – 2011 and began statewide expansion in January 2012. The Parent Aware statewide expansion is supported through Minnesota’s Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant awarded at the end of 2011. The RTT-ELC grant provides a primary context for Parent Aware implementation as Minnesota works to achieve the goals outlined in the grant application of creating a sustainable, high quality system that supports children’s development, particularly those living in poverty. The goals in RTT-ELC related to Parent Aware include targets for program enrollment and rating and specify that children with high needs will be served increasingly in high quality (highly rated) programs.² As required by the RTT-ELC grant, Minnesota’s plan for Parent Aware also includes a schedule and framework for assessing (and revising) the Parent Aware indicators and for analyzing the validity of the Parent Aware rating tool.

The RTT-ELC grant is managed by the Office of Early Learning which brings together staff from the Minnesota Departments of Education, Human Services and Health. The Minnesota Department of Education serves as the lead agency for the grant.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) has primary responsibility for administering Parent Aware. DHS contracts with Child Care Aware of Minnesota to manage and coordinate Parent Aware recruitment, quality improvement services, and communications. Local Child Care Aware agencies conduct recruitment and offer the services of Quality Coaches, Professional Development Coordinators and Grants Administrators to center-based programs and family child care programs. The Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) at the University of Minnesota is contracted to conduct observations for select programs seeking ratings. All information to determine ratings for center-based programs and family child care programs (including accredited child care centers, preschools and family child care programs) is sent to Child Care Aware of MN for scoring. Child Care Aware of MN makes the initial determinations and recommendations of the rating level. Then, the Department of Human Services issues the final ratings for the aforementioned programs. All information to determine ratings for School Based Pre-Kindergarten, Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Childhood Special Education programs is sent to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). Implementation of Parent Aware involves several additional partners:

- Parent Aware for School Readiness (PASR) is a nonprofit organization with a mission to “promote and protect” Parent Aware ratings by supporting marketing and communications activities and by funding evaluation.
- Greater Twin Cities United Way supports the Accreditation Facilitation Project (AFP) at the Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children (MnAEYC). AFP provides consultation, training, support and reimbursement of fees for programs located in the Twin Cities’ nine-county metropolitan area

¹ The annual report from Year 1 of the Parent Aware evaluation provides a detailed description of Parent Aware implementation and Minnesota’s Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant. The information is summarized here and updated with changes that occurred in 2013.

² Children with high needs are defined in the RTT-ELC grant as children from low-income families or children with disabilities or developmental delays, who are English learners, who reside on Indian lands, who are migrant, homeless or in foster care, or have some other characteristics defined by the State.

seeking national accreditation. Programs with national accreditation are eligible for the Accelerated Pathways to Rating process in Parent Aware. Greater Twin Cities United Way also provides funding for evaluation.

- The Minnesota Licensed Family Child Care Association, with funding from DHS, provides supports for accreditation of family child care programs.
- The Minnesota Center for Professional Development maintains provider-level information about qualifications, credentials, training and employment for providers in licensed programs through the Professional Development (PD) Registry. The information entered by providers and verified by the PD Registry is used to create a Learning Record for each provider and to designate the provider's step on the Career Lattice (which is used in the rating process). Enrollment in the PD Registry is a requirement for all licensed family child care providers and for directors and lead teachers employed at licensed center-based programs seeking a rating. The PD Registry is available to staff in other program types as well, but membership in the Registry is not a requirement for their Parent Aware rating.

The Parent Aware Rating Process

Programs that are interested in Parent Aware have different options for enrollment to receive a full Parent Aware rating. Programs that serve children with high needs are eligible to enroll in Building Quality, a pre-rating support process that offers the services of a Quality Coach, a Professional Development Advisor that assists with professional development planning, quality improvement funds (up to \$500), and access to low-cost training. Building Quality is a six-month process that prepares programs for entering Parent Aware.

Programs not eligible for or interested in Building Quality supports enroll directly into Parent Aware. These programs receive support from a Quality Coach and a Professional Development Coordinator, but it is a less intensive model of support than what is received through Building Quality. For example, Quality Coaches will provide technical assistance to help programs complete the documentation needed for the Parent Aware rating, but do not provide Quality Coaching. Many of these programs also have access to low-cost trainings.

After receiving a full rating, programs that are awarded a One, Two, or Three Star rating receive a \$1000 grant. This grant is available to programs regardless of whether they participated in Building Quality. Parent Aware encourages all programs to continuously improve their quality. Due to financial constraints, grants were prioritized for programs earning a One, Two or Three Star rating.

Programs enter Parent Aware at two time-points each year in groupings called "cohorts". One cohort begins in January, and one cohort begins in July. The process from the time of enrollment to the time of a ratings designation takes approximately six months.

Nationally accredited child care centers, preschools, and family child care programs as well as Head Start, School Based Pre-Kindergarten and Early Childhood Special Education programs enter Parent Aware via the Accelerated Pathway to Rating (APR) on a rolling basis (not in cohorts). APR programs have a streamlined process to achieve a Four Star rating once they

demonstrate that their curriculum tool aligns with the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress. APR programs must also demonstrate that they use an approved assessment tool or must submit their assessment tool for approval. All lead teachers in APR programs must document that they have achieved 8 hours of training on implementing curriculum as well as 8 hours of training on the approved assessment tool. APR programs do not have access to the quality improvement supports available to programs that receive a full rating. However, APR programs do have access to low-cost trainings, similar to fully-rated programs and they do have access to technical assistance from MDE (for School Based Pre-Kindergarten, Head Start and Early Childhood Special Education programs) or from Child Care Aware (for accredited center-based programs and family child care programs). Accredited programs seeking accreditation can receive additional support through the Accreditation Facilitation Project at MnAEYC (for center-based programs in the nine-county metropolitan area) or MLFCCA (for family child care programs).

The Parent Aware Rating Tool

In Parent Aware, programs seeking a full rating must meet all of the indicators at the first star level (or block) in order to earn a 1-star rating. To reach Two Stars, programs must also meet all of the indicators at the Two Star level (or block). Programs must meet all indicators at the One and Two Star levels before their application is considered for a Three or Four Star rating. To earn Three or Four stars, programs must earn points on additional indicators and meet specific requirements.³ The number of points earned determines whether a program achieves Three or Four Stars.

Parent Aware indicators are grouped into four categories:

1. Physical health and well-being
2. Teaching and relationships
3. Assessment of child progress
4. Teacher training and education

The quality indicators in these categories are nearly identical for family child care programs and center-based programs. Major differences in indicators across the two program types are noted below in the teaching and relationships category and the teacher training and education category.

Physical health and well-being. The physical health and well-being category includes indicators for providing families with contact information for developmental, vision, dental, hearing, and social/emotional screenings, mental health, and special education (at One Star) and for family services such as the Child Care Assistance Program or public health services (at Two Stars). The Two Star level also requires a self-assessment of the environment and goal setting for the program. To earn Three or Four Stars, programs must meet additional physical health and well-being indicators such as providing additional assistance to help families get the

³ To earn a Three or Four Star rating, center based programs must score 2.5 on the Instructional Support sub-scale of the CLASS, use a curriculum aligned with the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress in all classrooms, have all lead teachers trained on curriculum implementation and score at least one point in each category. Requirements are similar for family child care providers except that they are not assessed on the CLASS.

supports they need, participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and teacher training on child nutrition and obesity prevention.

Teaching and relationships. To earn One Star in the teaching and relationships category, programs must provide families with contact information for local family education options, such as Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), and lead teachers and family child care providers must complete 8 hours of training in child development. For Two Stars, programs must hold an orientation for new families and discuss preferences including family traditions. Programs must also use lesson plans and a daily schedule. Lead teachers and family child care providers must have 8 hours of training on the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs). To earn Three or Four Stars in teaching and relationships, programs must meet additional indicators such as using a curriculum aligned with the ECIPs (including lead teacher/family child care training on the curriculum), lead teacher/family child care provider training or coaching on special needs or child development, and the ability to communicate with parents in their primary language. Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) observations are required for center-based programs with preschool classrooms to earn Three or Four Stars.


Assessment of child progress. To earn One Star, lead teachers/family child care providers must complete two hours of training on authentic observation practices and must observe children regularly and record information monthly. For Two Stars, programs must share the authentic observation summaries with families. To earn Three or Four Stars in assessment of child progress, programs must conduct child assessments with an approved tool and lead teachers/family child care providers must be trained on the assessment tool. Points can also be earned for providing families with child assessment results and using child assessment information to guide lessons and individual goals for children.

Teacher training and education. To earn One Star, lead teachers/family child care providers must submit training and professional development credentials in the PD Registry. At Two Stars, lead teachers/family child care providers must have professional development plans. Points to reach Three or Four Stars are earned based on the education level of the director (for center based programs) and by teachers'/family child care provider's level on the Career Lattice (the average level is used for center-based programs).

Statewide Roll-out

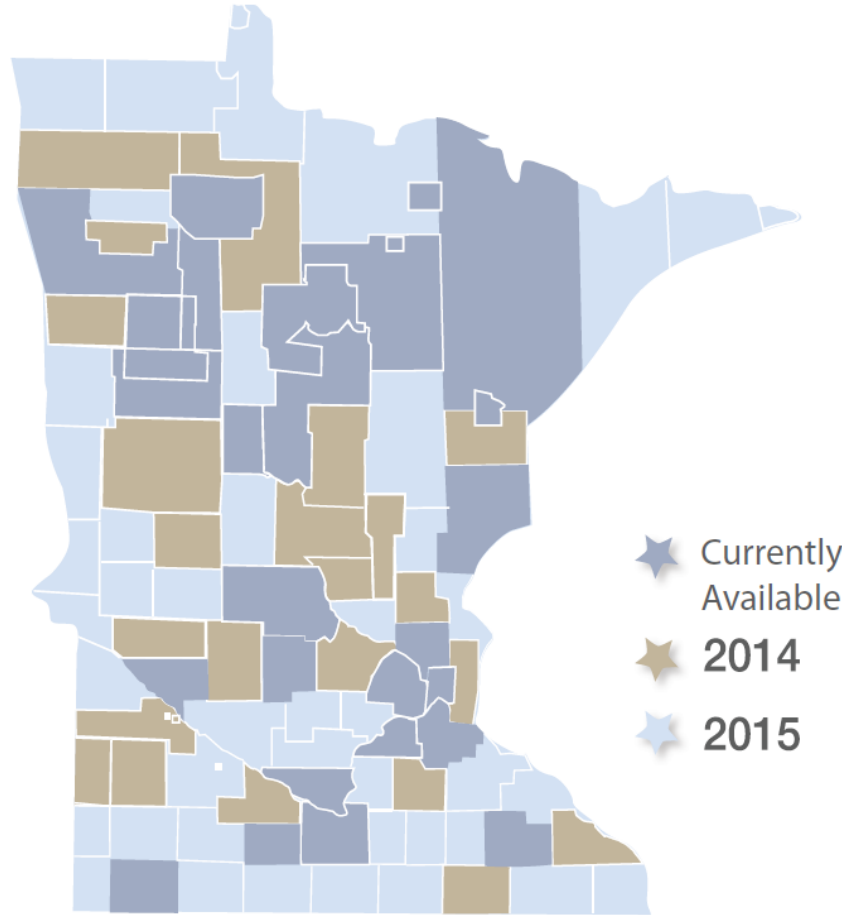
The Parent Aware statewide roll-out began in early 2012 and included Parent Aware pilot areas as well as the rest of Hennepin and Ramsey counties, and Becker, Clearwater, Mahnomen, and Itasca counties. These areas include a focus on four Transformation Zones: White Earth Reservation, which includes Mahnomen county and parts of Becker and Clearwater counties, Itasca County, Saint Paul's Promise Neighborhood, and the Northside Achievement Zone in Minneapolis. In 2012, Parent Aware also became available statewide to programs eligible for Accelerated Pathways to Rating. Expansion continued in 2013 and 2014. As of January 1, 2014, Parent Aware is available in 45 Minnesota counties and 8 Reservations throughout the state. Parent Aware will be available for all rating pathways statewide by 2015 (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Plan for Parent Aware Statewide Roll-out 2012-2015

Parent Aware  *A Rating Tool for Selecting High Quality Child Care and Early Education*

parentawareratings.org
1-888-291-9811
Updated October 2013

RATING ROLLOUT MAP



By 2015, Parent Aware Ratings will be available for parents and early education programs throughout Minnesota. Right now, Parent Aware Ratings are available statewide to accredited child care, Head Start and school-based pre-kindergarten programs. Ratings are also available in a growing number of Minnesota counties for licensed family child care programs and child care centers.



Source: Downloaded from www.parentawareratings.org, February 2014.

Marketing of Parent Aware. Parent Aware for School Readiness (PASR) and Child Care Aware of Minnesota lead the communications and marketing efforts for Parent Aware.

The Parent Aware website (www.parentawareratings.org) serves as the primary source of information about the program. Parents are directed to the website through a multimedia advertising campaign. The campaign, which took place from April through September of 2013 included paid sponsorship on Minnesota Public Radio and Twin Cities Public Television, radio advertisements, online banner advertisements, paid search optimization on Google, and Facebook advertising. Marketing efforts were limited to four major markets where the full ratings process was available to providers. The markets included the Twin Cities metro area, Mankato, Rochester, and Duluth. In addition, printed brochures, public relations efforts, and newspaper advertisements have been used. Staff at Child Care Aware are encouraged to talk about Parent Aware with parents during referrals. Marketing kits including banners, window clings, and cubby hangers are given to participating programs.

Primary messages to parents first communicate the importance of school readiness and the urgency of preparing their child for Kindergarten, and then proceed to explain the ratings and how they are a useful tool for parents. The messaging of Parent Aware was informed by a baseline survey of Minnesota parents in September 2012. The purpose of the survey was to inform the PASR campaign strategy and Parent Aware implementation strategy and evaluate the effectiveness of the PASR campaign and Parent Aware implementation work. Follow-up surveys will be conducted in future years to gauge trends, measure effectiveness and inform adjustments. These efforts are conducted by Parent Aware for School Readiness (PASR) and are separate from the Parent Aware Evaluation.

Federal Policy and State Legislative Context

Developments at the federal level and in the Minnesota State legislature were relevant to Parent Aware implementation in 2013.

Federal Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services proposed new requirements for child care providers serving children who receive Child Care and Development Funds (CCDF) subsidies. The rule would require providers to receive specific training in health and safety topics, undergo background checks and receive on-site monitoring. Importantly for Parent Aware, the rule requires that states share with parents via website information about facility licensing and violations and quality indicators. The proposed federal rule is anticipated to be finalized in 2014 and would go into effect in Federal Fiscal Year 2016. The Minnesota Department of Human Services, Minnesota's lead agency for the Child Care Development Fund, will be responsible for implementing new requirements. In anticipation of these changes, DHS and Child Care Aware of Minnesota are partnering with PASR on a new parent child care search tool that would meet the requirements outlined in the NPRM, in addition to many other improvements.

State Early Learning Scholarships. Forty million dollars was allocated in 2013 (with a total appropriation of \$46 million) to fund Early Learning Scholarships (a maximum of \$5000) for young children with high needs and their siblings. The purpose of the scholarships is to increase access to high quality early care and education. The Minnesota Department of

Education estimates that the scholarships can serve 4,000 children (9% of the eligible population). Scholarships are provided in two ways. Pathway I scholarships are provided to the family and are available for 12 months. The scholarships stay with the recipient child until he/she enters kindergarten. By 2016, Pathway I scholarships must be used in Three or Four Star rated programs only. Until then, scholarships can be used in any program with a signed Parent Aware participation agreement. Pathway II scholarships are provided to families through eligible Four Star rated programs. These include APR programs as well as fully rated programs in specific geographic areas.⁴

State training requirements for family child care providers. Responding to reports of infant deaths in family child care programs, the Minnesota Legislature passed and the Minnesota Department of Human Services is implementing new training requirements effective July, 2014 that emphasize health and safety, CPR and Sudden Unexpected Infant Death and Abuse Head Trauma prevention. Additionally, the overall annual in-service training requirement for family child care providers was increased from 8 hours to 16 hours.

Tiered Reimbursement and Parent Aware. New higher rates for quality for child care programs serving children receiving child care assistance will be available in 2014. Programs serving children receiving child care assistance with a Three Star rating will receive a 15% increase above the maximum Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) rate. Programs with a Four Star rating will receive a 20% increase above the maximum CCAP rate. Accredited programs and family child care providers with certain credentials that have not enrolled in Parent Aware will receive a 15% increase above the maximum CCAP rate. These rates will be effective in early March, 2014. Parent Aware informants were asked about the potential of the tiered reimbursement rates to increase Parent Aware enrollment. Findings are presented in Section 3.

Increase continuity of care in CCAP. As of August 2014, the CCAP redetermination requirements will change so that families can keep their child in a Parent Aware rated program even if circumstances of the parents' employment change.

Together, these changes and their effect on programs and families will be important to track as part of the Parent Aware evaluation.

⁴ Retrieved from the Minnesota Department of Education's overview of Early Learning Scholarships: <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/EarlyLearn/EarlyLearnScholarProg/index.html>

Section 2. Program Participation and Ratings

Purpose of this Section:

This section provides an overview of Parent Aware participation rates as of December 31, 2013.

Key Findings:

- Over 1,300 early care and education programs (1,322) have received a Parent Aware rating as of December 31, 2013.
- Nearly 300 Parent Aware rated programs received a rating as part of the full-rating process (299 programs or 22% of all rated programs).
- Over 1,000 Parent Aware rated programs received their rating through Accelerated Pathways to Rating (APR) (1023 programs or 78% of all rated programs).
- Among programs that participated in the full-rating process, 23% earned a One Star, 45% earned a Two Star, 9% earned a Three Star, and 23% earned a Four Star.
- Five percent of the programs eligible for the full-rating process in 2013 are participating in Parent Aware.
- The Northwest district has the highest Parent Aware participation rates among non-accredited programs eligible for the full-rating process, but also has the smallest number of eligible programs in the six Child Care Aware districts across Minnesota.

This section provides an overview of Parent Aware participation rates as of December 31, 2013. In addition to reporting the number of currently rated programs, this section describes the density of programs' participation by region and the current distribution of Star level across all types of programs rated in Parent Aware.

Number of Currently Rated Programs

As of December 31, 2013, 1,322 early care and education programs or sites in Minnesota received a Parent Aware rating (see Table 1). The goal established in the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT-ELC) was for 1,491 programs to be rated by the end of 2013. The goal was nearly reached due to the high rates of participation among School-Based Pre-K programs and Head Start/Early Head Start programs (with participation exceeding targeted goals). Additionally, Minnesota has set its own goals for participation of different types of child care programs as noted in Table 1. Accredited child care programs participate at a rate that exceeds these goals. In contrast, the participation of non-accredited child care programs is significantly under the targeted goal for 2013. Table 1 indicates that 299 non-accredited child care centers and family child care providers were rated as of the end of 2013; the target was 1023 total programs.

Table 1. Minnesota’s goals for rating early education programs through Parent Aware by program type

Program/Site Type	Number of Parent Aware rated programs/sites as of 12/31/2012	Number of Parent Aware rated programs/sites as of 12/31/2013	Goal number of Parent Aware rated programs/sites by 12/31/2013
School-Based Pre-K	126	496	184
Head Start & Early Head Start	225	258	131
ECSE (Part B & Part C)	0	2	0
Accredited Child Care Centers	91	249	143
Accredited Family Child Care	15	18	10
Non-accredited Child Care Centers	16	66	176
Non-accredited Family Child Care	56	233	847
TOTAL	529	1,322	1,491

Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services, December 31, 2013

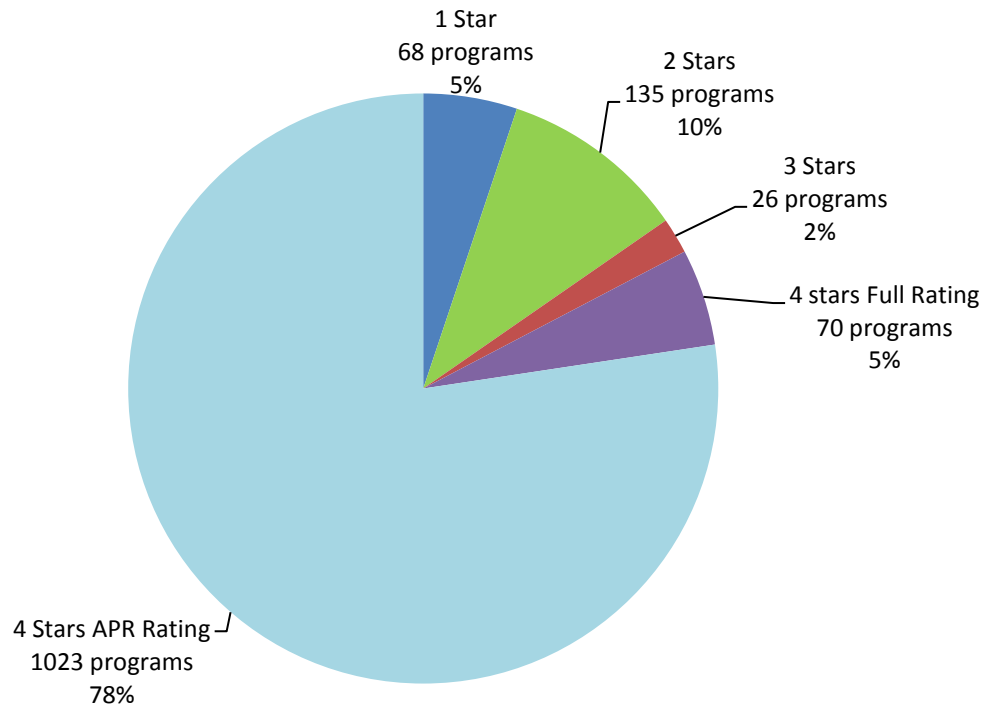
Ratings by star level and program type and region

Figure 2 and Table 2 display the current Star ratings across all types of programs. Ratings are distributed as follows: 5% earned One Star, 10% earned Two Stars, 2% earned Three Stars, 5% earned a Four Star full rating, and 78% earned a Four Star rating through APR. Note that the RTT-ELC distribution targets for 2013 are 10% in “Tier One,” 17% in “Tier Two,” 23% in “Tier Three” and 50% in “Tier Four.”⁵

The majority of rated programs have received their rating through Accelerated Pathways to Rating (APR). Of the APR programs, 73% of them are Head Start or School-Based Pre-K programs. More family child care programs (233) than child care centers (66) have been rated through the full-rating process. The most frequently awarded Star rating to fully-rated programs is a Two Star rating. The fewest number of programs have received a Three Star rating. Future evaluation efforts will examine the indicators closely to understand more about scoring patterns, including a review of the how ratings are calculated, and a review of the cut points for Two Star and Three Star programs.

⁵ See Minnesota’s RTT-ELC Annual Performance Report for 2012: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/annual-performance-reports/mnfinalapr.pdf>

Figure 2. Current star rating across all program types (n=1,322)



Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services, December 31, 2013

Table 2. Currently rated programs by rating type and star rating

Program Type	4 Stars APR Rating	4 Stars Full Rating	3 Stars	2 Stars	1 Star	TOTAL
Child Care Center	249	22	1	32	11	315
ECSE (Part B & Part C)	2	0	0	0	0	2
Family Child Care	18	48	25	103	57	251
Head Start/ Early Head Start	258	-	-	-	-	258
School-based Pre-K	496	-	-	-	-	496
TOTAL	1,023	70	26	135	68	1,322

Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services, December 31, 2013

Table 3 shows the number of currently rated programs by program type and district. Child Care Aware uses designations of six different districts across the state to deliver services: Southern, Northeast, Northwest, East Metro, West Metro, and West Central. The majority of rated programs are APR programs from the East Metro and West Metro districts. Table 4 shows the number of currently rated programs by Star rating and district.

Table 3. Currently rated programs by program type and Child Care Aware district⁶

Program Type	Southern	Northeast	Northwest	East Metro	West Metro	West Central
Non- Accredited						
Child Care Center	8	8	4	15	18	13
Accredited Child						
Care Center	8	4	1	86	145	5
ECSE (Part B & Part C)	0	2	0	0	0	0
Non- Accredited						
Family Child Care	32	32	29	60	66	14
Accredited Family						
Child Care	1	1	0	9	7	0
Head Start/Early						
Head Start	40	64	59	22	19	54
School-based Pre-K	76	90	45	96	122	67
TOTAL	165	201	138	288	377	153

Source: Department of Human Services, December 31, 2013

Table 4. Currently rated programs by star rating and Child Care Aware district

Star Rating	Southern	Northeast	Northwest	East Metro	West Metro	West Central
1 Star	5	8	5	13	31	6
2 Stars	10	15	11	49	33	17
3 Stars	9	6	6	3	1	1
4 Stars-Full					19	3
Rating	16	11	11	10		
4 Stars-APR					293	126
Rating	125	161	105	213		
TOTAL	165	201	138	288	377	153

Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services, December 31, 2013

⁶ Child Care Aware districts comprise the following Minnesota counties (note: these tables list only the counties where the full-rating is available; Parent Aware is available statewide for APR programs): East Metro: Anoka, Ramsey | West Metro: Dakota, Hennepin, Scott | Northwest: Becker, Clearwater, Mahnomon, Polk | Northeast: Cass, Itasca, Pine, St. Louis, Wadena | Southern: Blue Earth, Nicollet, Olmsted, Watonwan | West Central: Chippewa, Meeker, Nobles, Stearns.

Density of Program Participation

Understanding the extent to which eligible programs are participating in Parent Aware is useful for monitoring Parent Aware implementation and for understanding patterns of knowledge about Parent Aware among early care and education providers and parents of young children. Knowing if certain regions of the state have low rates of participation or certain types of programs that are underrepresented in Parent Aware can assist with targeting recruitment and incentive efforts. Density of participation is particularly important for QRIS evaluators to consider when conducting validation analyses to assess how well a QRIS rating tool is functioning.⁷ If the QRIS participation rate among eligible programs is low, selection factors may be operating that can distort evaluation findings (because participating programs are not representative of the typical program in the state). Examination of trends in participation over time can help support interpretation of validation findings.

Since Parent Aware has exceeded recruitment goals for programs entering through the Accelerated Pathways to Rating process, it is most useful to examine density in terms of programs eligible for the full-rating process (i.e., non- accredited centers and family child care program). Table 5 highlights the percent of programs eligible for the full-rating process and number of current programs with full-ratings in Parent Aware.

Table 5. Percent of programs eligible for the full-rating process and the current number of fully rated programs in Parent Aware.

Program Type	Total number of eligible programs	Number of programs rated in Parent Aware	Percent rated
Non-accredited Child Care Centers	724	66	9%
Non-accredited Family Child Care	5253	233	4%
TOTAL	5977	299	5%

Source: NACCRRARware, Child Care Aware, December 2013 & Minnesota Department of Human Services, December 31, 2013

Overall, 9% of eligible child care centers and 4% of eligible family child care providers have received a Parent Aware through the full rating process. As noted in other sections of this report, recruitment of eligible programs to participate in Parent Aware is a focus of implementation in 2014. Child Care Aware has hired the equivalent of five full-time staff (staff will be represented in each of the six districts across the state) to focus on recruitment and bolster participation in Parent Aware.

⁷ Tout, K & Starr, R. (2013). Key Elements of a QRIS Validation Plan: Guidance and Planning Template. OPRE 2013-11. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Table 6. Percent of programs eligible for the full-rating process and the current number of fully-rated programs, broken down by Child Care Aware district

Region	Non-accredited Child Care Centers			Non-accredited Family Child Care		
	Number Eligible	Number Rated	Percent Rated	Number Eligible	Number Rated	Percent Rated
Southern	69	8	12%	724	32	4%
Northeast	61	8	13%	464	32	7%
Northwest	11	4	36%	216	29	13%
East Metro	179	15	8%	1,147	60	5%
West Metro	362	18	5%	2,146	66	3%
West						
Central	42	13	31%	556	14	3%
TOTAL	724	66	9%	5,253	233	4%

Source: NACCRRAware, Child Care Aware, December 2013 & Minnesota Department of Human Services, December 31, 2013

Children with High Needs Served in Parent Aware

Annual Performance Reports documenting progress on the performance indicators in the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant (2012-2015) are submitted by Minnesota each February of the grant period. One set of indicators tracked annually is the number and percentage of children with “high needs” served in the “top tiers” (Three and Four Stars) of Parent Aware. In 2013, Minnesota exceeded its targets for the percentage of children with high needs served in programs with Three or Four Stars in School-Based Pre-K, Early Head Start/Head Start, and Title 1 programs (acknowledging that these program types are eligible only for a Four Star rating).⁸ Notably, Minnesota also exceeded its targets for the number and percentage of children receiving subsidies from the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) served in highly rated Parent Aware-rated programs. In 2013, 5,150 or 28% (5,150) of 20,292 children receiving CCAP were in a program with a Three or Four Star rating.⁹

Summary

Program participation in Parent Aware is strong among programs eligible for the APR, while participation among programs eligible for a full rating is below targets set in RTT-ELC. Because the majority of programs in Parent Aware are APR programs, the distribution of program ratings is skewed toward higher ratings with more than 83% of the 1,322 rated programs earning a Four Star.

⁸ Details about the methodology used to develop baseline and annual estimates of children served in different program types are beyond the scope of this report. Further details and full tables of performance can be found at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/performance.html>.

⁹ Annual Performance Report Data provided to Child Trends by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (not yet available on the U.S. Department of Education website at the time of this report).

Among programs with a full-rating, it appears that rating patterns have shifted from those observed during the Parent Aware pilot. In 2013, the most common rating earned for programs completing the full rating process was a Two Star (45% of programs). Nearly a quarter earned a One Star (23%) and another quarter (23%) earned a Four Star. In contrast, the most commonly earned rating in the Parent Aware pilot was a Three or Four Star (82% of programs).

Participation and ratings data will continue to be tracked in 2014. These data complement and extend data in the Annual Performance Reports submitted for the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant.

Section 3. Perceptions of Key Informants on Parent Aware Implementation

Purpose of this Section:

In the second year of the statewide roll out, it is important to understand how Parent Aware implementation is proceeding and to identify opportunities and challenges that can be addressed to support Parent Aware in meeting its goals. Interviews were conducted with key informants from different organizations involved in Parent Aware implementation. This section includes an in-depth analysis of these interviews and describes key informants' perceptions and experiences with various aspects of implementation, including recruitment, quality indicators (particularly those that require participation in training), Parent Aware in the context of the Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Grant and overall perceptions of implementation in the first two years of statewide expansion.

Key Findings:

- Respondents expressed that the second year of implementation is marked by improvements including increased collaboration, streamlining documents and processes, and finding an overall stride.
- Program recruitment was a challenge in 2013, especially recruitment of family child care programs. Respondents believe that the use of more personal recruitment strategies such as one-on-one conversations and small group meetings are promising approaches to increasing the number of family child care programs participating in Parent Aware.
- Respondents noted that difficulties meeting training indicators are mostly due to providers' lack of time to attend trainings and to low availability of the trainings needed for Parent Aware.
- Keeping up with the fast pace of Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge Grant was a concern for many respondents. Related to recruitment challenges, respondents are concerned about the feasibility of meeting the program enrollment targets in the grant and would like an opportunity to propose more attainable targets.

As Parent Aware continues to grow, respondents noted the potential benefits of personalizing Parent Aware based on program types. In addition, respondents emphasized the importance of making Parent Aware sustainable after Race to the Top and would like to continue communicating and collaborating across agencies.

Purpose

As Parent Aware completes a second year of statewide expansion, details about implementation successes and challenges can be used for planning next steps and to correct course on issues that are problematic. Similar to the evaluation strategy used at the end of the first year of expansion, Child Trends conducted interviews with key informants who have direct responsibility for implementation or who participate on a committee or workgroup that provides input on implementation. In the interview, key informants were asked about their experiences and perceptions of overall implementation and specific aspects of Parent Aware implementation,

including recruitment of programs into Parent Aware, the training requirements embedded in the Parent Aware Rating Tool, and Minnesota's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant. These focal topics represent primary issues that emerged after the first year of implementation and toward which resources were directed to improve implementation. The interviews were intentionally shorter and covered fewer topics than those conducted after the first year of implementation. A more complete set of implementation topics will be addressed again in the final evaluation report (planned for 2016).

Sample Description

Interviews were conducted between November 7 and December 20, 2013 by Child Trends staff. Thirty-one key informants were contacted via email with interview requests and 27 of them completed an interview (a response rate of 87%). Three key informants declined because one of their colleagues was being interviewed and one declined due to a recent change in position.

Representatives from the following organizations completed interviews:

- Minnesota Department of Human Services
- Minnesota Department of Health
- Minnesota Department of Education
- Minnesota Center for Professional Development
- Minnesota Office of Early Learning
- Child Care Aware of Minnesota
- Greater Twin Cities United Way
- Parent Aware for School Readiness
- Think Small
- Minnesota Licensed Family Child Care Association
- White Earth Reservation
- Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota
- Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children- Accreditation Facilitation Project

In addition, members of the following implementation teams and committees are represented in the interview data:

- Office of Early Learning Parent Aware Team
- Parent Aware Advisory Committee
- Parent Aware Communications Team
- Parent Aware Implementation Team
- Relationship Based Professional Development (RBPD) Workgroup
- Curriculum Development and Delivery Workgroup
- Parent Aware Data Systems Workgroup
- Full Ratings Workgroup
- Accelerated Pathway to Rating (APR) Workgroup
- Parent and Provider Access Workgroup

Methodology

Interviews were conducted by phone and took approximately 30 minutes to complete. Responses were documented and reviewed by researchers to identify and code key themes. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Direct quotes were de-identified and are noted in quotations to represent the themes that emerged in the data.

In reporting on the findings for groups of respondents, the following terms are used: “Most/majority” refers to 81-100% of respondents, “Over half” refers to 61-80%, “About half” refers to 41-60%, “Several/many” refer to 21-40%, and “Some” refers to 5-20% (see Table 7). If one respondent had a comment that captured a unique perspective, it was included at the end of each section. These comments were important to include given the small sample size for this analysis and the fact that respondents were picked to represent different facets of implementation. Typically, only one staff person from an agency or organization was selected for the interview. These staff members may experience an aspect of implementation that others do not. Therefore, single responses are a valuable piece of this section.

Responses were not included in coding if respondents answered “I don’t know,” the question was skipped due to time constraints, or the response was not addressing the question. The number of respondents for each question was adjusted accordingly in these cases and is noted in the text.

Table 7. Terms used to describe the percentage of select respondents expressing particular themes

Term	Percent/ Number of Respondents
Most/Majority	81-100%
Over half	61-80%
About half	41-60%
Several/Many	21-40%
Some	5-20%
Few	3 Respondents
Couple	2 Respondents

Overall Impressions of the Second Year of Implementation

Key informants were asked to reflect on the second year of Parent Aware implementation by answering questions about innovations, challenges, areas for improvement, and top priorities for 2014. All 27 key informants answered questions in this section.

Innovations and Changes in the Second Year

Respondents were asked, “*What do you see as the biggest innovations that have occurred in 2013?*” The term *innovation* is used to denote positive changes that have increased the quality and the efficiency of work on Parent Aware. Responses to this question varied and no single innovation was highlighted by a majority of the informants. Several respondents (9) noted innovations related to collaboration, such as successful cross-agency work, having an aligned vision, and engaging in strategic planning.

“The most significant change that will have a long-term impact is the requirement for all state agencies to work together... We've made huge progress on that. If you can coordinate three departments around the same vision and goal you avoid duplication of services and increase effectiveness and efficiency.”

Many respondents (8) discussed streamlining implementation and innovations used to clarify indicators, simplify documents, and more clearly communicate with parents and providers. Several respondents (8) also referred to the general notion of “finding stride” in 2013—having systems in place, stabilized staffing, clear and comfortable roles, fewer changes to the system, and increased efficiency and flow in implementation.

“One innovation is that there haven't been any major changes. This year was more about getting into a rhythm and following a plan...getting more comfortable and consistent. The positive improvement has been keeping a calm and measured approach and not reacting to anecdotes as much, which happened a lot last year...If I had to summarize this year, it would be about finding our stride. To me that feels like a turning point and next year is going to be easier.”

Several respondents (7) explained that there have been innovations related to the new data system and the Professional Development Registry. These respondents noted features of the new Registry that make it easier to use and better able to track information. They also expressed excitement around the development and impending launch of a new data system. Respondents (6) also discussed innovations in 2013 with regards to recruitment, including thoughtful planning, trying new strategies, and engaging new partners. Respondents (6) mentioned improvements with respect to coaching, including a clarified model, a revised manual, and increased support for coaches.

Some respondents noted innovations in the provision of incentives (5) including the availability of mini grants, low cost trainings, and scholarships (3). A few respondents (3) highlighted ratings staff as an innovation and the fact that there are now contracted staff who determine ratings using a reliable process.

“Towards the beginning of 2013, we launched a contract for raters that brought on board new staff who carry out the rating process. The rater contract enabled us to expand our capacity to rate more programs and provided an opportunity to solidify a valid and reliable process.”

A few respondents (3) noted that the schedule for revisions has been successful in limiting changes and helping plan for the future, and a couple of respondents (2) noted the success of Parent Aware marketing efforts.

Other innovations were mentioned that were unique from other themes, including the following:

- Rating Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) programs
- More training provided to staff at different state agencies about what data needs to be collected
- Gaining more knowledge about how well providers understand and perceive Parent Aware

Challenges in the Second Year

Respondents were then asked, “*What do you see as the biggest challenges for Parent Aware in the past year?*” The challenges reported may be new or they may be challenges that emerged in the first year of implementation and continued into the second year.

There was considerable consensus on a primary challenge in the second year, with over half of respondents (19) stating that recruitment was the greatest challenge. Several respondents explained that recruiting programs for the full-rating process, specifically family child care programs has been a great implementation challenge.

In conjunction with recruitment challenges, several respondents (7) described challenges related to providers’ misconceptions of Parent Aware. These misconceptions included confusion about the role of different entities, like unions and licensing. Respondents also discussed lingering negative perceptions of the program and that some providers’ view Parent Aware as having a temporary presence in the Minnesota early childhood landscape. Respondents noted that addressing providers’ misconceptions is a simultaneous challenge along with recruitment. For example, one respondent explained that there are not enough people in the field accurately communicating the purpose and addressing misconceptions of Parent Aware.

“Very challenging in that providers don't necessarily know the players and how they are interconnected and not related. They don't understand that Parent Aware is its own entity, that the child care union is its own entity, licensing is its own entity, etc.”

Some respondents mentioned other implementation challenges including issues with the Registry (2), the need to clarify indicators, particularly those related to training (3), and the need to build capacity across staffing and time, both in state agencies and in coaching efforts (4). Coordination was also noted as a challenge; respondents explained that more coordination is needed across agencies, new partners should be engaged, and synergy needs to be achieved amongst the agencies involved in scholarships (4). A couple of respondents discussed the need for improved outreach to diverse communities (2) and general issues related to evaluating the effectiveness of Parent Aware (2).

Some challenges were mentioned by single respondents including the following:

- Sustaining program quality after rating
- Recruitment tactics that encourage programs to set a goal of 1-Star in order to receive more incentive money
- Time lag between submitting documentation and awarding ratings
- Representative for family child care not being “at the table” from the beginning

Areas for Improvement

After discussing the innovations and challenges in the second year of implementation, respondents were asked “*What changes would you like to see in Parent Aware implementation in the coming year?*” This question elicited responses across a variety of issues. Many respondents (10) focused on changes needed to recruitment in the coming year. Ideas for improvement included having staff solely dedicated to recruitment, providing additional incentives for participation, increasing marketing efforts, and leveraging parent demand (note

that we address responses related to recruitment efforts in greater depth below). Among the respondents who discussed improving recruitment, several (5) emphasized the need to specifically improve efforts in recruiting family child care programs. Many respondents (7) had other ideas related to family child care providers, for example, ensuring they have a seat at the table during policy discussions and providing participating providers more resources and technical assistance.

“I would see...family child care providers to be involved in the policy decision making process. Scheduling meetings when they can attend and involving the area leaders... there are over twenty active associations with presidents. They should be a part of the team.”

Several respondents (8) shared ideas related to efficiency and focus on implementation. A few of these respondents (3) discussed simplifying and streamlining what is included in the Quality Documentation Packet. A few respondents (3) mentioned increasing efficiency by linking existing systems with the new data system. A couple of these respondents (2) explained the need for an assessment tool for family child care programs that allows for assessing multiple age groups, which would reduce paperwork.

Ideas related to capacity were voiced by many respondents (7). A few of these respondents (3) focused on the importance of making full use of resources that are already available in Parent Aware, such as child care health consultants and technology. A couple of respondents (2) discussed increasing engagement and support for culturally and linguistically diverse providers. Lastly, a couple of these respondents (2) reflected on the need to increase capacity to meet the needs of providers and to assign ratings.

“I would like to see increased capacity to deal with the coaching and infrastructure. As we are moving forward and more providers want to be rated we need the capacity...we are worried about that. We don't feel at this time that we have the capacity to rate as many programs as the target numbers tell us that we should be.”

Some respondents (7) discussed improving the Parent Aware indicators. A few of these respondents (3) thought that the indicators need to be revised, in general. A couple (2) expressed that more indicators related to health and safety and cultural competency should be added. In addition, a couple of respondents (2) expressed a need for increased alignment between Parent Aware and licensing standards.

Some respondents (5) discussed a need to improve communication strategies amongst partner agencies and in messaging Parent Aware to providers and parents. A couple respondents (2) also mentioned that the ways to meet training indicators needs to be communicated more clearly to providers.

“In terms of communication, we are finally comfortable talking about and stressing the benefits and selling the program more...but that's an area that still needs to be improved and we are not making the most of opportunities there...There are only two years left of Race to the Top and we really need to be hitting it on all cylinders to be successful.”

Some respondents (6) expressed a topic only once, including the following:

- More community collaboration
- More flexibility embedded in the APR rating process
- Creating a global acceptance policy for training
- Increased focus on the sustainability of Parent Aware after Race to the Top
- Improving processes for relationship-based professional development option

Top Priorities for 2014

Respondents then answered, “*What would you say should be the top priorities of Parent Aware implementation?*” Consistent with other the responses, over half of respondents (17) stated that priority should be placed on recruitment, particularly of family child care programs.

Several respondents (8) expressed ideas related to quality assurance and ensuring the validity of Parent Aware. Respondents noted the importance of ensuring that the Parent Aware indicators are evidence-based and comprehensive. They also describe priorities related to monitoring the consistency of coaching and training, understanding the validity of using training in the quality indicators as a proxy for practice, and examining the validity of the APR process.

“We don’t have enough quality assurance within our system and I think we’ve really got to look at that...we don’t know if the quality of coaching is consistent across the system. We don’t know if the quality of training is consistent across this system. We don’t know that the quality of technical assistance that people are getting is consistent.”

Some respondents (5) mentioned that marketing should be a top priority for 2014. These respondents described the importance of using provider testimonials and educating parents about quality ratings as strategies for improving buy-in and enthusiasm for Parent Aware.

Some respondents (4) described a top priority of providing support to participating programs as they navigate the Parent Aware process by providing adequate technical assistance, guidance, and time. A couple of these respondents stated the importance of providers having positive experiences throughout the rating process so that they spread positive word-of-mouth about Parent Aware.

“I think the top priority is ensuring that providers who are part of Parent Aware are receiving the best possible service because providers speak to one another. We want providers to buy into this program and there is hesitancy and wondering if this really makes a difference...if a Four Star is really a Four Star, so we have to bolster the confidence in Parent Aware in some way... and then if they're having good experiences and talking to one another then recruitment will increase as well.”

A few respondents voiced additional priorities for the coming year, including:

- Clearer communication to providers and parents (3)
- Providing accurate and timely data (3)

- Aligning Parent Aware and licensing and determining processes for when noncompliance issues are observed by Parent Aware staff (2)

Other priorities for the coming year not included in previously mentioned themes were:

- Streamlining implementation
- Strengthening connections with Head Start
- Taking steps to ensure sustainability after Race to the Top
- Shifting implementation from a “reactive” to a “proactive” mode and to anticipate issues before they arise

Summary of Key Informant Perceptions on the Second Year of Implementation

- The second year of implementation is marked by innovations in collaboration, streamlining documents and processes, and finding an overall stride.
- Over half of respondents stated that recruiting programs into the full rating process, especially family child care programs, has been the greatest challenge in 2013.
- Aligned with this challenge, over half of respondents expressed the need to improve efforts aimed at recruiting and including family child care programs in Parent Aware.
- Respondents’ top priorities for 2014 include increasing the participation of family child care programs and taking steps to ensure that quality is promoted throughout the Parent Aware indicators and rating processes.

Recruitment Strategies

Recruitment and enrollment of programs in Parent Aware were two focal areas of implementation identified in key informant interviews after the first year of statewide expansion (Tout et al., 2012). Successful recruitment is necessary for Parent Aware to meet enrollment targets, to ensure that parents have an adequate supply of rated programs to select from when making early care and education decisions, and, ultimately, to provide high quality programs to children with high needs . The purpose of asking informants targeted questions about recruitment was to document the activities that have been used in the past year and to hear directly from informants about successes and challenges.

Respondents were interviewed about strategies used to recruit different types of providers, the effectiveness of different strategies and incentives, and their recommendations for improvements to be made to recruitment efforts. Twenty respondents answered questions within this section. Those who responded were familiar and/or involved in recruitment efforts.

Effectiveness of Recruitment Strategies

A variety of recruitment strategies are used for Parent Aware. The Minnesota Department of Education recruits Head Start, Early Childhood Special Education, and School Based Pre-Kindergarten programs, and Child Care Aware focuses on other types of programs (child care centers, family child care, both accredited and non-accredited). Strategies include contacting programs via email and phone, visiting programs, holding orientation sessions, offering incentives, and using marketing tools such as mailings.

Respondents were asked, “*What strategies are used for recruiting different types of programs?*” Over half (12) described the use of personal approaches to recruitment being used across providers.¹⁰ One example includes one-on-one conversations between a coach and a provider. Respondents discussed that this method builds trust and understanding through direct and accurate messaging. Another personal approach mentioned was small group meetings, where providers can get together and have their questions answered and concerns addressed by a coach. In addition, respondents reported the benefit of having participating providers recruit others. Respondents claimed Parent Aware participants are a more trusted source for wary providers and allows them to get a first hand view of what their experiences in Parent Aware may be like.

Most of these strategies promote relationship-building between providers and Parent Aware Staff, which several (5) mentioned as being crucial in current recruitment needs.

“My colleague and I really pride ourselves on relationships. We think that it's been [an effective] way to get programs to apply, be rated, and enhance the quality of their programs.”

About half (9) of the respondents spoke about developing partnerships with various organizations to bolster recruitment efforts. They noted that working with existing groups increases the pool of prospective participants for Parent Aware. Respondents mentioned partnering with provider associations, trainers, health consultants, and community-based organizations that can organize trainings and outreach for eligible providers.

“This year there is a lot more and different private sector support. Community partners take it upon themselves to host training or do other outreach [strategies]. That has been a significant change.”

Several participants (6) described the use of indirect approaches such as fliers, radio advertisements, mailings, and email blasts to engage eligible programs, though a few of these respondents (4) expressed concern about the effectiveness of indirect approaches. One respondent noted that while indirect approaches may have worked to promote enrollment among the first wave of more motivated providers, new recruitment strategies are needed to target the second wave of providers who may be less interested or have less information about Parent Aware and the steps needed to enroll.

Many respondents (5) talked about new recruitment strategies implemented in the past year. For example, information sessions allowed family child care providers and center directors to share their Parent Aware experiences with a group. Other recruitment strategies described by informants include:

- Combining information and orientation sessions (which previously were held separately) allowing providers to receive more information by attending only one session
- Holding open houses

¹⁰ Note that respondents focused primarily on recruitment of fully-rated programs when answering this question.

- Developing online discussions where providers can find out more information and have questions answered
- Developing recorded voice-over information sessions posted on the Parent Aware website to offer a more personal experience when gathering information about Parent Aware.

As described in earlier responses regarding challenges, several respondents (4) noted that motivating family child care programs to join Parent Aware is difficult. Two respondents described the lack of incentives for family child care providers to join Parent Aware. For example, there is less competition for programs in rural communities. In some areas, family child care providers are in high demand and have waiting lists, so the benefit of becoming rated in Parent Aware is less evident. Respondents described the importance of increasing incentives to warrant the amount of time and effort it takes to participate in Parent Aware.

A couple respondents mentioned increasing and diversifying incentives as a way to bolster recruitment, for example, rewarding participating providers with free training certificates. In addition, respondents cited the “Bring a Buddy” program, which rewards participants who get friends to sign up with a gift card.

Next respondents were asked, “*What strategies are used for recruiting providers who speak languages other than English?*” Over half (12) of respondents named Think Small as leading efforts within the Twin Cities. Two respondents noted the effectiveness of Think Small’s outreach staff which works with child care providers and identifies community leaders to help with recruitment. Bilingual coaches were also cited as being beneficial for recruiting these providers.

“Think Small is the leading entity doing that work because they have coaches who are from the community itself and speak the languages.”

Many (4) respondents reported language resources available such as language phone lines at Think Small, panels and trainings through Early Childhood Special Education, and translated Parent Aware brochures. One respondent asserted, however, that translations are only part of the issue.

“There are many more hurdles besides just getting things translated... There are other attitudinal things, there are cultural things, there are past experiences that people have had with certain government agencies and we have not even begun to crack that nut.”

Respondents were then asked, “*What strategies are used for recruiting programs that serve children with high needs?*” Several (7) respondents explained the pre-rating support offered through Building Quality which is available only to programs serving children with high needs.

“Enrollment in Building Quality is contingent upon having at least some children in a high needs category. The premise of getting an extra six months of support, training, and access to a coach, we hope [is] an incentive.”

Many (4) respondents claimed coaches are instrumental in recruitment of programs serving children with high needs. Some (3) respondents said that coaches are using the Child Care Assistance Program list to locate providers serving high needs children and schedule one-on-one meetings with those providers. Two respondents mentioned partnering with community agencies and other organizations such as Child Care and Adult Food Program and Head Start programs as an effective method of recruiting programs serving high need populations.

Additional incentives are focused directly on parents and supporting their access to Parent Aware-rated programs. A few respondents (3) described the scholarship opportunities that are available to high need populations (through both state-funded scholarships and Race to the Top –Early Learning Challenge Grant-funded Early Learning Scholarships) and the Child Care Assistance Program’s (CCAP) Reimbursement Differential as added incentives for programs to be rated in Parent Aware, given the focus on increasing access among families with children with high needs.

Suggested Improvements for Recruitment Strategies

Respondents were asked, “*How can recruitment efforts be improved?*” Over half (14) of respondents described the importance of clear and personal communication that emphasizes the experiences of providers that have participated in Parent Aware. Some respondents thought that using testimonials of providers expressing their positive experiences participating in Parent Aware would be a promising strategy. Furthermore, some respondents mentioned the importance of personalized and sincere communication, particularly with family child care providers.

“We really need to sit down and hear from providers themselves... With family child care, you can't treat them like a typical business; you can't treat them like child care centers... We [need to] just pull together some providers to sit down so we can hear from them directly and honestly.”

Several (4) respondents believe more incentives will drive recruitment for family child care providers as well. Some (2) thought about including free trainings, signing-up bonus, and paying stipends to rated family child care providers to act as mentors.

Two respondents described personalizing the Parent Aware model to specific types of providers, such as those serving children with high needs and family child care providers. Respondents recognized that these providers are struggling to complete Parent Aware requirements and recruitment would be easier if they were offered a more feasible and/or flexible process.

“Providers themselves have high needs. We have one model working with providers and we may need to alter that model and make sure we're taking into account that not everyone is going to move through at the same pace.”

“We need to look at ways to make the application process simpler... Parent Aware ratings are best suited to center based environments. We have to show that the system is also valuing family child care; otherwise there isn't a reason to sign up.”

About half (7) of respondents discussed the need for a separate recruitment staff. Additionally, respondents claimed that recruitment is a different skill set and that recruiters should have a background in sales and community outreach.

“The caseload for a coach is about 40, so imagine training 40+ providers [and] recruiting - all in different geographic locations...”

“We're selling a product. [We need] staff who have that set of skills and know different strategies to sell this product to people....”

Many (5) respondents believed community outreach and collaboration can be improved.

It is important to ... “Create[ing] more partnerships... to increase community awareness, increase child care provider’s awareness, [and] building capacity in the system to do more relationship- based recruitment through community leaders.”

Moreover, the idea of leveraging these partnerships to help communicate with providers was also described by respondents.

Lastly, a couple of respondents (2) reported that raising parents’ awareness of the program will increase the demand, which will impact provider participation.

“Some outside forces coming to bear on you to increase the pressure and nudge you in the right direction... We think that that outside force is going to be parents. Parents asking about a rating or changing their perceptions about what quality means... We are working hard on that and are making progress.”

Effectiveness of Incentives for Participation

Recognizing that scholarships are still in an early phase of roll-out, respondents were asked, “How well are Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge and/or state scholarships working as an incentive for programs to join Parent Aware?” Several (6) responded positively, stating that scholarships are successful in incentivizing participation and providers appreciate the extra support. Other respondents (5) believed it is too early to tell.

Several (4) respondents felt that scholarships are limited in scope and are thus not able to produce widespread benefits.

“The Race to the Top scholarship pool is very small. State scholarships will only reach nine percent of eligible kids so I don't think that we're really to the tipping point in terms of scale.”

“Scholarships provide an incentive but it's not a guaranteed incentive... [Scholarships are] not being experienced as a big incentive...”

Respondents believe there are misconceptions about scholarships, particularly among family child care providers.

Two respondents noted that some family child care providers think that scholarships are not meant for them, which is hurting the ability to recruit these providers. Another mentioned that some providers believe Parent Aware is mandatory.

“Having the scholarships available only for Parent Aware providers, gives providers the impression that Parent Aware is not voluntary... it has put more of a mandatory spin on Parent Aware.”

Respondents discussed improving messaging to both providers and parents as a way to influence future communications about Parent Aware.

Respondents were then asked how well they think tiered reimbursement will work as an incentive. Over half (13) of respondents were positive and expressed optimism in their responses.

“[Providers] can quantify [tiered reimbursement] and I think that that’s appealing to them. They know, if I do this work, I will get this versus the scholarship argument, which is if I do this work, I might get this.”

Several (5) respondents explained that the success of tiered reimbursement hinges on messaging and the clarity with which information about tiered reimbursement is communicated. On the other hand, a couple of respondents claimed this incentive is limited by Minnesota’s overall reimbursement rate for child care.

“The potential of the new reimbursement rate will be seen over time. It will take some time. It is of course tempered by the reality that child care reimbursement rates in Minnesota aren’t as high as we’d like them to be... The actual benefits that any provider can glean from a higher reimbursement rate are constrained by the overall reimbursement rate.”

Lastly, respondents were asked about other financial or non-financial incentives that would encourage programs to enroll. About half (9) of respondents discussed improving financial incentives such as increasing quality improvement funds to better compensate providers for their time and effort while also covering additional costs incurred. Two respondents also described incentivizing providers with increased access to Quality Coaches to assist providers through the full rating process.

Several (5) other respondents believed that smaller incentives (beyond the quality improvement dollars available) are equally important to consider, including non-financial incentives. Two respondents recommended the inclusion of gift cards, prizes, and/or food to enhance participation in Parent Aware and help build a sense of community within programs.

Summary of Key Informant Perceptions on Recruitment Strategies

- Personal approaches such as one-on-one conversations and small group meetings have become paramount in recruitment.

- Recruitment can be improved by clear and guided communication between Parent Aware and providers.
- Several respondents view scholarships as successful incentives, while many believe their scope is limited.
- Over half of respondents expressed optimism about tiered reimbursement as an incentive for both families and programs.
- Over half of respondents believe that recruitment will improve if there are stronger financial incentives to offer programs.

Training Indicators

The revised Parent Aware Rating Tool used in statewide expansion includes a number of indicators related to training that were not included in the tool used during the pilot from 2007-2011. Findings from the first year of implementation indicated concerns about training and providers' capacity to meet the new indicators. Indeed, over half of the key informants in 2012 answering questions about the rating process indicated that meeting the training indicators and enrolling in the Minnesota Center for Professional Development Registry were the most difficult part of the rating process for providers. To learn more about how these issues were proceeding in the second year of statewide expansion, interview respondents were asked a series of questions about the implementation of training indicators, barriers to meeting the indicators, resources provided to programs to support their work on training indicators, and experiences with the professional development Registry. Sixteen respondents answered the questions in this section.

Training Indicators Met with Ease or Difficulty

Respondents were asked, *“Which training requirements are providers meeting with ease?”* Several (6) respondents perceived that the indicators related to training on early childhood development were the easiest for providers to meet, including the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPS).

When asked to identify difficult trainings, about half (8) of respondents indicated that curriculum and assessment trainings were challenging for providers. Of those respondents, the majority (7) clarified that difficulty originates from the availability and time it takes to complete trainings, not to the content of the trainings.

“The curriculum and assessment training requirements... are very difficult for the providers because of this lack of availability of training that is specific to a curriculum or assessment that they might be using...”

Other trainings at the Three and Four Star levels were identified as being difficult by a couple of respondents. Because they are newer requirements which many providers may not be familiar with, nutrition and obesity prevention trainings were noted by one respondent as being challenging. Also, one respondent commented that training specific to working with children with special needs is more difficult in terms of content and implementation.

Challenges or Barriers to Meeting Training Indicators

Respondents were asked, “*What challenges or barriers are providers encountering in meeting training requirements?*” Most (15) respondents perceive that the availability of trainings on specific curricula is lacking. One respondent briefly discussed the reasons behind the issue related to assessment tools.

“To make this training available has been so challenging because they aren't readily available through publishers and we are in the process of trying to make those available. We'll hopefully be able to make more training on specific tools available.”

Over half (10) of respondents referred to training availability issues as challenges or barriers. Accessibility in rural areas was cited as being difficult for many providers, regardless of online learning options.

“Access in rural areas [is a challenge]... Online was an option that opened up but not everyone has access to the bandwidth required for those trainings.”

About half (9) of the respondents indicated that cost is a factor in meeting training indicators. These respondents discussed the limitations of having programs pay for trainings. To some degree, respondents believed that for programs (centers were named) cost is prohibitive. One respondent noted that non-Building Quality programs may still experience challenges in paying for all trainings up front.

Time was noted by about half (7) of the respondents as being a barrier to meeting training indicators, particularly for family child care providers. Implicit in this comment is a perception that providers must have all Parent Aware– required training completed in order to go through the full-rating process.

“The time reality [is a challenge]... If you have to do the full rating and take all of the trainings, it's over 50 hours of training... Providers are already busy people and family child care providers work long hours already and imagine taking all of that training on top of it. It's just a lot.”

About half (8) of respondents also mentioned concerns about communication. Respondents noted that providers are confused about what trainings count for Parent Aware.

“We don't have a methodology in identifying what clearly counts for Parent Aware. That creates confusion for practitioners, for programs that want to ensure that their staff have the training that they need.”

Resources Provided to Meet Training Indicators

When asked what resources are provided to help programs meet professional development indicators, the majority (13) of respondents listed financial supports. Supports include the Building Quality Grant (which awards \$500 to eligible providers), quality improvement funds, discounted trainings, and TEACH Scholarships. In addition, financial incentives specific to family child care programs would be helpful. A couple of respondents described the need to

pay for family child care providers' substitute teachers, which would give providers more time to attend trainings.

About half (9) of respondents mentioned additional resources including coaches, advisers, and an indicator guide, which matches previously taken trainings with Parent Aware indicators.

Respondents were then asked, *“What other resources would be helpful to programs in meeting training indicators?”* Several (4) respondents indicated the need for additional trainers and Professional Development Advisors in local Child Care Aware agencies. Moreover, a couple of respondents believed that more trainings need to be developed and refined. For example, respondents suggested improving trainings on specific tools and curricula, promoting credit-based trainings, and clarifying which trainings align with Parent Aware. In addition, one respondent thought providing more language options and support for providers who speak languages other than English would be beneficial.

Three respondents noted that providers need to be more aware of resources available to them. Respondents discussed the Registry as the main resource providers should use to search for professional development opportunities.

Links with Professional Development System

Next, respondents were asked, *“What linkages are in place between Parent Aware and the Professional Development System? How could linkages be improved?”* In general, respondents discussed the linkages in place with the data system and Registry. Several respondents (5) said that they are aware of improvements and progress being made to address issues with these systems.

“We've taken on this massive project to completely revamp it [the Registry]. There is going to be a whole new look and feel - a very different approach to the Registry coming out in the next few months: much stronger, much more user-friendly, much better look and feel. The Parent Aware rating system will happen through the Registry. Now it will be just one database. Both Parent Aware and the Registry will be combined, making for more efficient data.”

Some respondents (4) explained that there is a need for alignment and unification of data systems, for example, combining the Registry with MNStreams and aligning the Head Start and school district professional development systems.

“School districts and Head Start have had professional development systems for a long time; we need to make sure we align them when possible...”

A few respondents (3) reflected on challenges they have encountered with the training and trainer approval processes. These respondents explained that the approval processes are complicated and that there are long waiting times. A few respondents (3) discussed difficulties with service delivery of the Registry, including long waiting times, lost documents, and upset providers.

“The biggest struggle that we have had and one of the reasons that some of the providers have said that they’ll never join Parent Aware is the issues with the Registry. The Registry has been very challenging for providers joining; documents being lost... there have been a number of issues.”

A couple of respondents (2) noted that there is a need for increased assistance and flexibility for providers who have recently immigrated to the United States and providers who speak languages other than English. These respondents explained the difficulties that these providers face with accessing and navigating the Registry, having sufficient documentation of their educational attainment, and the lack of training options offered in their home languages. Another couple of respondents (2) voiced the need for more clarity on which trainings count for Parent Aware, more trainings listed on the Registry with labels indicating that they are Parent Aware approved, and clear instructions for providers about which trainings they have previously taken that count towards their rating.

Several respondents (6) expressed unique ideas about the linkages between Parent Aware and the professional development system including:

- Needing to stay aware of new training requirements prompted in the last legislative session
- The need for cross-training on the new systems so everyone understands them and is able to answer questions
- Proactively getting people on the Registry prior to enrolling in Parent Aware
- Making steps to ensure that students know about all of the professional development offerings available to them

The Upgraded Registry

The Registry underwent a series of technical upgrades implemented in September, 2013. These upgrades allowed for faster processing, more coordinated data collection, increased communication with users, and improved customer service. Because these changes occurred just prior to the time of the interviews, it is likely that respondents were still learning about and adjusting to the changes. Thus, the responses should be viewed in the context of changes that were very recent.

Respondents were first asked, *“Could you describe any changes you’ve seen with the new Registry? What has been the effect of the changes on programs so far and their experience in Parent Aware?”* In general, respondents described improvements made to the new Registry, but many expressed that negative perceptions still exist.

Several respondents (4) generally explained that they have seen improvements to the Registry and voiced appreciation for the work being done. Respondents (4) were able to cite specific improvements to the Registry, such as increased user friendliness, linkages with licensing, new search options, better technical assistance, improved interfaces, and more.

“In the end, it’s going to be a much better system. More user friendly. The Registry will connect with other data bases so it will be integrated...Easier for people no matter what setting they are in to use the system and get connected.”

While many respondents discussed improvements, several respondents (6) expressed concerns about continued challenges with the new Registry. These respondents described that the new system has glitches, loses documents, and has caused delays for trainer approvals. Other respondents explained that providers are having difficulties navigating the new system and that there are problems with email and web access.

“I think the Registry is still a problem. We still have a fair amount of providers who send in documentation and when they send in a learning record it’s wrong. We have a fair amount of providers who can’t get approved as a trainer. Even though I think there have been some improvements - the perception of the Registry lives on.”

Overall, some respondents (5) thought that it was too early to tell what kind of effect the Registry changes have had on providers so far and their experience in Parent Aware.

Summary of Key Informant Perceptions of Parent Aware Training Indicators

- Compared to other training indicators, providers are meeting those related to introductory child development with ease.
- About half of the respondents reported that curriculum and assessment trainings are challenging due to amount of time needed and training availability issues.
- Additionally, availability and accessibility of trainings, especially in rural areas, is discussed by informants as being a major barrier in meeting the training requirements.
- Resources exist to help providers meet professional development indicators include the Building Quality Grant, quality improvement funds, and discounted trainings; however, many respondents thought that financial supports could be improved.
- Several respondents noted that improvements are being made to the Registry but further work in linking it with other data systems is needed.
- Several respondents mentioned positive changes in the Registry, while some expressed concerns about existing challenges and others felt it was too early to make a judgment about the effect of the upgraded Registry on providers’ experiences.

Parent Aware in the Context of Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Grant

The final portion of the interview focused on Parent Aware in the context of the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant. On average, 20 key informants answered questions about the successes, challenges, and ideas for new strategies to support Parent Aware implementation in the context of the grant.

Successes of Parent Aware Implementation in the Context of RTT-ELC

Respondents were asked, *“In your opinion, what have been the successes this year of implementing Parent Aware in the context of MN’s RTT-ELC grant?”* Several respondents (5) said that the number of programs recruited into Parent Aware through the APR process has been a huge success. Across the different types of APR programs – accredited center-based programs, accredited family child care programs, Head Start/Early Head Start programs, and school-based pre-kindergarten programs, targets for recruitment have been exceeded.

Another success noted by respondents (4) is the cross-agency work and collaboration around Parent Aware.

“It has helped improve communication. Our ability to communicate across agencies and address challenges together overall helps strengthen Parent Aware.”

Respondents (4) expressed that Parent Aware has been successful in raising the bar of early childhood quality in Minnesota. They see Parent Aware serving as the framework for early childhood in the state around which resources can be aligned and which can increase accountability to providing high quality services for children and families.

“I think the biggest success is that Race to the Top really did and has set Parent Aware out there as Minnesota's quality framework. I think that it has really helped push Parent Aware into a place where people accept that it is the state's quality framework and are trying to align resources around it.”

Several respondents (4) discussed the availability of scholarships linked to Parent Aware as a success of Race to the Top. Some respondents mentioned other successes, including:

- The increased availability and alignment of professional development offerings (2)
- The collaboration with the Center for Inclusive Child Care (2)
- An increased focus on health (2)
- The creation of the Office of Early Learning (2)
- Availability of mini-grants (1)
- Progress made in recruiting family child care programs (1)

Challenges of Parent Aware Implementation in the Context of RTT-ELC

Next, respondents answered the question “What have been the key challenges this year of implementing Parent Aware in the context of the ELC grant?” Over half of the respondents (13) explained challenges related to meeting the targets for rated programs set in the Race to the Top proposal. These respondents expressed difficulties with reaching recruitment goals, especially for family child care enrollment, and moreover, that there is extreme pressure on implementers to improve the numbers. Some also voiced their desires to re-evaluate these targets and set more realistic goals based on how implementation is proceeding.

“The targets are high...I know they did their best to look at the uptake in the pilot and extrapolate from that but even when you do that it's still guesswork. So, the challenge is that these are the targets we have to meet and everything else in the grant relies on this as the linchpin. I think there is a lot of pressure and we need to be more realistic about the time, money, and capacity we have.”

“Race to the Top has such large targets. And by large I don't just mean big numbers, but also as in visible, being held accountable for. I think that puts some pressure on us to make the targets look better. And at the end of the day, that may not be the right thing long-term for Parent Aware.”

Several respondents (7) referred to challenges regarding the pace set by Race to the Top. These respondents discussed that the fast pace has caused issues, such as delays in getting trainings ready, quick decision-making, and hurried recruitment strategies.

“The pace. I’ve talked to other QRIS folks around the country and we all say that ‘Race to the Top’ is the right word for it. It’s a race! We’re all running it and stopping to breathe.”

While some respondents feel cross-agency coordination is a success of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, other respondents (4) described challenges related to coordination amongst state agencies and at the broader early childhood system level. Some respondents (3) raised issues with respect to workloads, explaining that most of the staff working on Parent Aware implementation have too much on their plates and that there are worries about burnout. A couple of respondents (2) voiced concerns about the sustainability of Parent Aware after Race to the Top. Some respondents (3) mentioned that there are challenges around how to allocate the grant money most effectively and use it to the fullest extent.

Changes or New Strategies Needed to Support Parent Aware Implementation in the Context of RTT-ELC

Lastly, respondents were asked, *“What is your perception of changes or new strategies that may be needed to support implementation of Parent Aware in the context of the ELC grant?”* The responses to this question varied greatly and several respondents had unique ideas about new strategies.

Respondents (4) explained that more collaborative work needs to be done in terms of leveraging partners, and working effectively and efficiently across agencies and at the broader systems level. As noted above, respondents (4) discussed changes needed in terms of recruitment, such as alleviating some of the pressure around meeting target numbers. Two respondents thought that intense recruitment coupled with the high stakes nature of Parent Aware changes the nature of the experiences providers have in the system.

“Historically, it has always been about guiding providers and meeting them where they’re at...Having the freedom and the time to help people to move... And now, with Race to the Top, it’s very high stakes and the pace is really, really fast and there isn’t enough money or incentives to get people over that hump.”

A few respondents (3) expressed that new strategies are needed to ensure the sustainability of Parent Aware. These respondents explained that more planning is needed to ensure the program is supported after Race to the Top funding ends at the end of 2015.

“One of the big challenges is that the grant is going to end and we need to ensure that funding is in place to support the continued operation of Parent Aware after the grant ends.”

Respondents (13) shared ideas about the following changes or new strategies:

- Clearly linking Parent Aware with scholarships and having coordinated outreach (2)

- Shifting the budget to either allocate more dollars towards offering free training and curriculum and assessment tools (1) or to invest more in accreditation facilitation for family child care programs (1)
- Aligning Parent Aware with licensing (2)
- Receiving more feedback from providers and communities (2)
- Allowing coaches /recruiters more flexibility when working with providers (1)
- Promoting Parent Aware to low-income parents and communities (1)
- Including teacher's aides and assistants in the Parent Aware standards (1)
- Refining the Parent Aware indicators (1)
- Increasing focus on quality improvement (1)

Summary of Key Informant Perceptions of Parent Aware Implementation in the Context of RTT-ELC

- Respondents named a variety of successes in 2013 including effective work across agencies and high enrollment of programs through the APR process. Others described the success of establishing Parent Aware as Minnesota's quality framework.
- Over half of respondents explained that it has been challenging to meet the targets set in the proposal and difficult to keep up with the fast pace of Race to the Top.
- Respondents had a variety of ideas for changes or new strategies to support implementation, including continuing to improve upon collaborations, finding effective ways to handle recruitment pressures, and looking ahead to ensure the sustainability of Parent Aware after Race to the Top funding ends.

Summary of Key Informant Perceptions of Parent Aware Implementation

Interviews with key informants about the second year of statewide expansion of Parent Aware highlight the complexity of implementing a system-wide initiative. Respondents discussed both the successes and challenges in 2013 while also sharing their thoughts on important goals for Parent Aware in the coming years. Common themes emerged on certain issues (for example, recruitment as a key challenge, particularly in the context of Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge targets for program enrollment in Parent Aware). Yet on many issues covered in the interviews, the responses were characterized more by their diversity than their consensus. The key informants highlighted issues and made recommendations for improvement based on their unique role in Parent Aware implementation.

Success of Parent Aware implementation in year two included the general notion of finding stride. Many respondents felt that during the second year many kinks were smoothed, which created a more efficient and productive system for programs enrolling in Parent Aware and for the implementation team. Themes from the key informant interviews in the *first* year of implementation emphasized concerns about communication and messaging between Parent Aware and participating or eligible programs and between the agencies and partners implementing Parent Aware. While these topics still emerged in the year two interviews, respondents perceived improvements in communication and process. Effective collaboration across agencies was a perceived success. Respondents also mentioned the high enrollment of programs through the APR process as an additional success in the second year.

Respondents were in consensus on two related challenges of Parent Aware implementation. First, recruitment, particularly in family child care programs, posed a major challenge in implementation of Parent Aware in 2013. Respondents described the variety of recruitment strategies in use in year two and the new strategies that will be implemented in year three of statewide expansion. The second major challenge is meeting the targets outlined in the Early Learning Challenge Grant. Respondents felt that it was difficult to keep up with the fast pace required by Race to the Top performance measures. Many voiced wishes to reexamine the proposal and set more feasible goals.

Respondents offered suggestions for improvement. Continuing to increase communication and collaboration among providers, the community, and Parent Aware staff was one idea to further aid implementation. They also talked about the importance of creating more productive ways to address recruitment pressures. Many reported the effectiveness of personal recruitment approaches (such as one-on-one communication) and believed future recruitment efforts should be centered on this path as well. They also suggested that steps need to be taken to ensure that quality is promoted throughout the Parent Aware indicators and rating process.

Sustainability – and ensuring that Parent Aware outlasts the Early Learning Challenge Grant – is a concern for many respondents. Some respondents stated that an enduring program allows for continuous work to refine the system, which respondents say is needed. In addition, they also see the importance of addressing specific needs based on program type. Respondents envision a tailored system for various providers that can support their individual needs. Respondents expressed concern in fitting all types of programs in one model and believe that customizing Parent Aware implementation would further foster success. Overall, the perception of the second year is marked by measurable improvements and clarity about next steps in areas needing work. While respondents noted concerns, they also offered working solutions, including the need for continued communication and collaboration among key organizations working on the implementation of Parent Aware.

Section 4. Quality Improvement in Parent Aware

Purpose of this Section:

This section provides an overview of the quality improvement services provided to fully-rated programs that join Parent Aware either directly or through first completing Building Quality, a pre-rating preparation process. This section of the report covers information and findings in three sections. The first section includes a description of quality improvement in Parent Aware and the role of Quality Coaches, Professional Development (PD) Advisors, and Grant Administrators in supporting programs. Second, data that document the quality improvement supports provided to programs in 2013 is presented (including the contacts programs have with Quality Coaches and PD Advisors, the activities they engage in with their Quality Coaches, and the amount of funds they receive for quality improvement). Third, findings from a survey of Quality Coaches that offers a portrait of their perceptions and experiences working with programs in the second year of implementation are presented. The concluding section is a brief set of implications and recommendations based on the findings.

Key Findings:

- The most common activities Quality Coaches spend their time on are 1) Assisting with completion of the Quality Documentation Packet (QDP) - the information submitted to Parent Aware which demonstrates how programs are meeting each of the quality indicators and 2) Supporting programs as they assess the quality of the learning environment (using the Environment Self Assessment) and make changes to the environment.
- Programs received similar amounts of Quality Coaching during the period between July and December 2013 whether they were in Building Quality, had completed Building Quality and moved into Parent Aware, or went directly into Parent Aware.
- Programs at the One Star level received an average of 10.3 hours of coaching, 10.7 hours at Two Stars, 11.8 hours at Three Stars, and 12.3 hours at the Four Star level in the six months prior to rating.
- Programs rated at One, Two, and Three Stars receive similar amounts of PD Advising (One Star: 23 minutes, Two Stars: 17.4 minutes, Three Stars: 17.5 minutes) in the six months prior to rating while Four Star rated programs receive an average of 40.8 minutes.
- Programs in Building Quality and programs that have received their rating spend the majority of their quality improvement funds they receive from Parent Aware on improvements related to learning and the environment.
- Quality Coaches have mostly positive views about their recruitment efforts. They believe that the most effective strategies for attracting programs to Parent Aware are spreading information by word-of-mouth and by hosting Information Sessions with programs.
- Coaches believe the top challenges they face are 1) a lack of time to fully engage with programs, 2) a lack of adequate training for Coaches to prepare them to fully meet programs' needs, 3) working with challenging providers, and 4) recruitment difficulties.
- One-time funds made available through DHS allowed programs to receive additional quality improvement grants totaling \$1000 in 2013. They spent those grant funds on curriculum tools (\$514.03 on average, by 288 programs), training on how to use assessment tools (\$460.23 on average, by 150 programs), assessment tools (\$416.97 on average, by 308 programs), and training on how to use curriculum tools (\$397.44 on average, by 70 programs).

Overview of the Parent Aware Model of Quality Improvement

As described earlier in this report, Parent Aware offers unique rating pathways for programs. One is the Accelerated Pathways to Ratings (APR) process available to accredited programs, Head Start/Early Head Start, and school-based pre-kindergarten programs. The second rating pathway is the full rating process available to licensed, non-accredited child care centers and family child care programs. Within the full rating process, programs enter Parent Aware in one of two ways: Programs with specific characteristics may enter by participating in a pre-rating preparation process called Building Quality. The second way programs begin is by directly entering Parent Aware.¹¹ A Quality Coach places recruited child care centers and family child care programs into Building Quality if they serve children with high needs, while other programs are placed directly into Parent Aware. However, not all programs that are eligible for Building Quality choose to participate; some eligible programs decide to forego Building Quality and enter Parent Aware directly. Child care centers qualify for Building Quality if 25% of their children have “high needs” as defined in the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant application. Programs that serve children with high needs but do not meet the 25% benchmark can enter Building Quality if space is available. Family child care programs that are licensed to serve between 1 and 6 children qualify if at least one child has high needs; family child care programs serving 7 to 14 children qualify for Building Quality if two children have high needs. Children are considered to have high needs if they are from low-income families, have a disability or developmental delay, are English Language Learners, reside on Indian lands, are in foster care or are homeless. Programs that do not serve children with high needs enroll directly in Parent Aware.

Programs can begin the full-rating process in either January or July of each year. Those that enter through Building Quality receive six months of focused quality improvement support (e.g., assistance with setting goals related to quality, being observed in their interactions with children, receiving feedback related to their goals and the results of the observation) followed by three to four months of technical assistance (e.g., help completing the QDP, assistance with completing the Environment Self Assessment) prior to submitting their documentation for their rating. Those entering directly into Parent Aware receive four to five months of technical assistance prior to submitting for a rating. Programs that enter Parent Aware after completion of Building Quality must submit their quality documentation one month earlier than programs that did not participate in Building Quality.

Programs going through Building Quality and Parent Aware receive Relationship-Based Professional Development from professionals in three different roles¹²: a Quality Coach, Professional Development (PD) Advisor, and a CLASS coach¹³. Grant Administrators also provide support to programs by helping them access appropriate quality improvement funding.

The role Quality Coaches play in working with programs varies depending on whether the program they are coaching is in Building Quality or has entered Parent Aware directly. In

¹¹ See Section 1 for further details about a Parent Aware full rating process and the Accelerated Pathways to Ratings (APR) process.

¹² Minnesota defines Relationship-Based Professional Development as one of four types of professional development – coaching, mentoring, consultation and technical assistance. Retrieved from <http://www.mncpd.org/rbpd.html>

¹³ CLASS coaching supports are only available to child care centers, not family child care programs.

Building Quality, Quality Coaches work with programs in multiple ways to help them improve their quality of care. Quality Coaches engage in a cyclical process of observing, modeling, and reflecting on the teachers' or family child care providers' behavior and interactions with children. In addition to general coaching, programs in Building Quality receive \$500 they can use toward quality improvement and CLASS coaching for center-based programs going for a Three or Four Star rating.

Programs in Parent Aware, regardless of whether or not they previously participated in Building Quality, receive technical assistance focused on developing evidence to submit the Quality Documentation Packet, the evidence used by the Department of Human Services to determine programs' ratings. The technical assistance they receive includes a few face-to-face visits with a Quality Coach, guidance on how to complete the Environment Self-Assessment, and a review of the rating process. After a rating is issued, programs can receive up to \$1000 in quality improvement grants if they achieve a One, Two, or Three Star rating. Programs that earn a One, Two, or Three Star rating continue to receive technical assistance from a Quality Coach and PD Advisor for up to six months with the goal of continued improvement of quality. Programs in Parent Aware that receive CLASS coaching do so only after their rating has been issued.

PD Advisors work with programs in similar ways regardless of whether they are in Building Quality or enter Parent Aware directly. PD Advisors focus on explaining the training requirements needed to achieve each star level, reviewing records to determine if previous trainings taken by teachers or a family child care provider meet requirements for Parent Aware quality indicators, assisting teachers and family child care providers in joining the Minnesota Center for Professional Development Registry¹⁴ and providing overall professional development planning.

The quality improvement model used in Parent Aware was developed by staff from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Center for Early Education and Development at the University of Minnesota, and the Child Care Aware of Minnesota Coordinating Office to guide the work of Quality Coaches, PD Advisors and Grant Administrators. The current iteration of the model has been in use since October of 2013. It is a revision of an earlier model and was modified based on experiences with implementation in the first year and a half of Parent Aware. The primary difference between the two models is that the current model organizes Quality Coaches' work by activity (e.g., developing relationships, observing the provider, developing a quality improvement plan) instead of using a stage-based approach.

Parent Aware Quality Improvement Supports in 2013

Data about quality improvement activities in Parent Aware come from three sources: 1) a database maintained by Child Trends that houses information about the work of Quality Coaches, CLASS coaches¹⁵, PD Advisors, and Grant Administrators; 2) the Parent Aware Rating Tool (PART) database managed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services; and, 3) a survey of Quality Coaches administered by Child Trends in the fall of 2013.

¹⁴ As of February 1, 2014, the Minnesota Department of Human Services grant contract for the MN Center for Professional Development moved from Metropolitan State University to The Registry, Inc..

¹⁵ A limited amount of data was collected about the activities related to CLASS coaching.

Child Trends' Coaching Database: From July through December 2013, data about the work of Quality Coaches, PD Advisors, and Grant Administrators were collected and housed in a web-based database managed by Child Trends. This database was used to collect and maintain data (e.g., license number, program type, star rating goal) about the programs receiving quality improvement support during that timeframe (regardless of their cohort), data about Quality Coaches' work with programs (e.g., total monthly contact time, total monthly contacts, primary contact purposes), data about PD Advisors' activities (e.g., total contact time, total number of contacts), and Grant Administrators' reports of how quality improvement funding was spent by programs (e.g., environment improvements, professional development, health and safety provisions). This database was created to offer a temporary process for collecting data while the new case management data system is being developed. Data from this database are analyzed in the following sub-sections of this report: *Overview of Quality Improvement Supports*, *Quality Improvement Supports and Programs' Rating*, and *Coaches' Impressions of the Implementation of Parent Aware*.

MN DHS Data: Quality ratings for programs were obtained from the Minnesota Department of Human Services in January, 2014. Data from MN DHS are analyzed in the *Quality Improvement Supports and Programs' Rating* sub-section of this report.

Quality Coach Survey: During the fall of 2013, Quality Coaches were surveyed to assess their experiences and impressions of Parent Aware implementation over the past year. The topics of this survey included: education and training credentials and history; experience with program recruitment; the coaching model; coaching activities; communication and support; and impressions of Parent Aware. Data from the Quality Coach Survey are analyzed in the *Coaches' Impressions of the Implementation of Parent Aware* sub-section of this report.

Quality improvement data (e.g., total hours of coaching contact time with programs, total number of phone/email contacts with programs) presented in this section of the report are limited to programs that received supports from July through December, 2013. Quality improvement data from January through June, 2013 were collected using another system that was phased out of use during the middle of the year. The data from that system could not be analyzed in a systematic way and are not included in this report.

Due to the newness of the data collection approach used to collect data and its role as a temporary system until a more robust one is available, the data reported on in this section should be considered to be suggestive of the trends that were occurring in quality improvement during the latter half of 2013 with the caveat that more robust data that is collected in 2014 will provide a firmer picture of these supports. Additionally, the latter six months of 2013 were a period of flux for quality improvement in Parent Aware because the old model was being phased out in preparation for the new model to take its place in January of 2014. Because the data presented here is reflective of the old model, caution is warranted in drawing strong conclusions about the results. Implementation of the new model in 2014 will offer a fresh look at the impact of quality improvement activities in next year's report.

Summary of the Quality Improvement Supports Provided in 2013

Data¹⁶ provided by Child Care Aware of Minnesota Coordinating Office and data from the Child Trends' Coaching Database were combined to report on overall participation in Building Quality and Parent Aware in 2013. A total of 355 programs participated in Building Quality, and a total of 249 programs went through the full rating process to receive a rating in 2013.

Parent Aware programs receiving quality improvement supports fall into two groups: those in Building Quality and those in Parent Aware. Building Quality programs can be further subdivided as to whether they are currently receiving Building Quality or whether they have completed the Building Quality portion of their participation and moved on to Parent Aware to begin to prepare their documentation to receive a rating. In the analysis below, Building Quality programs are sometimes presented as a singular group and other times they are split based on their current participation status. We describe the following “groupings” of programs:

Programs in Building Quality: This group includes programs that received Building Quality supports in the last six months of 2013.

Building Quality Programs in Parent Aware: This group includes programs that received Building Quality supports in the first six months of 2013 and Parent Aware supports when they joined the July 2013 cohort in the last six months. Data are only available about the Parent Aware supports these programs received.

All Building Quality Programs: This group includes programs receiving Building Quality supports during the last six months of 2013 and those that received Building Quality during the first six months of 2013 and had moved into the Parent Aware cohort in the last six months of the year. A full year of data about programs in Building Quality is not available at this time so for some analyses in this report, we present data that are available from the last six months of 2013 by combining the data from “Programs in Building Quality” and “Building Quality Programs in Parent Aware” as a proxy for a full year of experiences in Building Quality.

Parent Aware Only Programs: This group includes programs that never participated in Building Quality and went straight to Parent Aware starting in July 2013.

Post-Rating Programs: This group includes all programs that received a rating in June 2013, regardless of whether they entered through Building Quality or directly into Parent Aware.

Quality improvement data in this section of the report is presented using the different options for entering Parent Aware as a fully-rated program described above to compare experiences and outcomes (ratings) in Parent Aware. An additional approach would be to analyze experiences and outcomes by program type (for example, family child care programs compared to center-based programs). At this time, there aren't enough programs of both types to complete that type of comparative analyses but as additional cohorts of programs progress through Parent Aware, such analyses will be possible.

¹⁶ Data in this section are reported as significant if the appropriate statistical test resulted in a p value of <.05. Statistical tests were not run on all data points; some of the data presented in this section include descriptive statistics alone.

Quality Coaching

Quality coaching data were collected on a monthly basis through Quality Coaches' reports of the amount of contact time with programs, the number of phone/email contacts, the number of in-person contacts, and the most common coaching activities for that month. Partial coaching data are available for analyses for 39 coaches and 322 of 406 programs for the last six months of 2013. Programs were included in the analysis if coaching data was reported for all variables for at least five of the six months of service.

The caseloads¹⁷ of Quality Coaches for the six month period between July and December 2013 ranged from 2 to 36 programs with an average caseload size of 12.

Data from July through December 2013 show that Quality Coaches spend similar amounts of time with programs, over a similar number of in-person contacts, regardless of the programs' process for entering the Parent Aware full rating (Table 8). The one variation in this trend is that Coaches have statistically significantly more phone/email contact with Parent Aware Only Programs (average of 33.1 contacts) than with Programs in Building Quality (23.7 contacts) and Building Quality Programs in Parent Aware (21.3 contacts).

Table 8. Programs' average total contact time, number of phone/email contacts, and in-person contacts with Quality Coaches by type of Parent Aware entry

	n=	Average Total Contact Time (hours)	Average Total Number of Phone/Email Contacts	Average Number of In-Person Contacts
Programs in Building Quality	197	11.6	23.7	6.3
Building Quality Programs in Parent Aware	74	11.7	21.3	6.1
Parent Aware only programs	51	11.1	33.1	6.1
Total	322	11.5	24.6	6.2

Source: Child Trends' Coaching Database, January 2014

The quality improvement model that guides Quality Coaches' work suggests that programs should receive between 20 and 30 hours of coaching during their participation in Building Quality and 2 to 15 hours in Parent Aware for a total target of 22 to 45 hours over the course of both components (Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2013). Overall, coaches are meeting their targets for contact time with Building Quality programs with an estimated average of 23.3 hours over both components (11.6 hours for Building Quality programs plus 11.7 hours for Building Quality programs in Parent Aware).

While Quality Coaches are meeting their targets for total contact time over both components, the distribution of that time was different than planned in the quality improvement model. Building Quality programs are receiving less than the minimum coaching during their time in

¹⁷ Caseloads were determined by including all programs a coach worked with at any time during the six months between July and December of 2013. This includes programs of all types, programs that had been issued a rating in June of 2013, and programs that dropped out at some point during that six month period.

Building Quality (average of 11.6 hours) but are receiving on the high side of coaching during Parent Aware (11.7 hours, average).

The data suggest that Coaches are working with their programs in ways that may have not been initially expected; instead of front-loading their contact time during the six months of Building Quality and having less contact during the six months of Parent Aware, they are spreading their contact time evenly over the entire year of a program's participation. One possible reason for this shortfall is the amount of time Quality Coaches spend on traveling to and from visits with programs. Quality Coaches spent significantly more travel time on programs in Building Quality (6.1 hours) compared to Building Quality Programs in Parent Aware (3.9 hours) and Parent Aware Only programs (3.8 hours). It is unclear whether this additional travel time is due to more trips, greater trip length, or a combination of both factors. Additional reasons as to why the amount of coaching programs are actually receiving is not meeting the target that was set out in the coaching manual are discussed in the *Impressions of Parent Aware* sub-section later in this report.

Quality Coaches are meeting their contact time targets with programs in Parent Aware by spending an average of 11.7 hours with programs that came to Parent Aware through Building Quality and 11.1 hours with programs that came directly to Parent Aware.

In addition to reporting the number, type and length of contacts, Quality Coaches reported the coaching activities they spent most of their time on each month, from July through December of 2013. Although there was some variation by month, working with programs to complete the Quality Documentation Packet was the most common coaching activity overall, particularly with programs in Parent Aware. Quality Coaches indicated that the most common activities they spent their time on with programs in Building Quality were activities related to the environment like helping the program complete the Environment Self Assessment and helping the provider with the environment. Appendix A contains the full list of coaching activities.

Professional Development Advising

The amount of time PD Advisors spend with programs varies based on how the program enters the Parent Aware full rating process and the point in time of their participation (Table 10). Programs in Building Quality and those that went directly to Parent Aware are not receiving significantly more contact time with their PD Advisors (27.5 and 25.2 minutes) than programs that have completed Building Quality and moved on to Parent Aware (18.9 minutes). However, adding time across the Programs in Building Quality and Building Quality Programs in Parent Aware (as a proxy for a full year of experience) indicates that all Building Quality programs receive 46.4 minutes over a year of participation (estimated). A similar pattern is seen with the average number of contacts PD Advisors have with programs: they have more contact with Parent Aware Only programs during the six month period between July and December 2013 (6.4 contacts) but more for All Building Quality programs over the course of a full year of participation (8.9 contacts estimated).

Table 9. Programs’ average contact time and average number of contacts with PD Advisors, by type of Parent Aware entry

	n=	Average Total Contact Time (minutes)	Average Total Number of Phone/Email Contacts
Programs in Building Quality	174	27.5	5.2
Building Quality Programs in Parent Aware	58	18.9	3.7
Parent Aware Only Programs	40	25.2	6.4
Total	272	25.3	5.0

Source: Child Trends’ Coaching Database, January 2014

PD Advisors report that their work involves researching and resolving issues related to the training and professional development indicators of Parent Aware. As such, PD Advisors report that much of their time is not spent in direct contact with programs but rather on what they refer to as “prep time.” PD Advisors spend more prep time on programs that went directly into Parent Aware (104.8 minutes) than those in Building Quality (82.5 minutes) or Building Quality programs in Parent Aware (52.7 minutes) although PD Advisors spend more prep time on All Building Quality programs over the course of their full year of participation (135.2 minutes estimated). It will be important to track PD Advisor prep time across the next cohorts to document any reductions in prep time that occur as the training requirements and the courses that will count toward meeting them become more transparent.

Grant Administration

Programs can receive quality improvement funding up to \$500 when they participate in Building Quality and up to \$1000 following issuance of their rating if they receive a One, Two, or Three Star. Programs are required to spend their quality improvement funds on specific things such as professional development (e.g., training costs), learning and the environment (e.g. curriculum, certain types of equipment), and health and safety (e.g., smoke detectors, fencing, hand sanitizers). Programs in Building Quality and all programs post-rating spend the majority of their funding on improvements related to learning and the environment (Table 11).

Table 10. Average grant funds in dollars by spending category, by program type

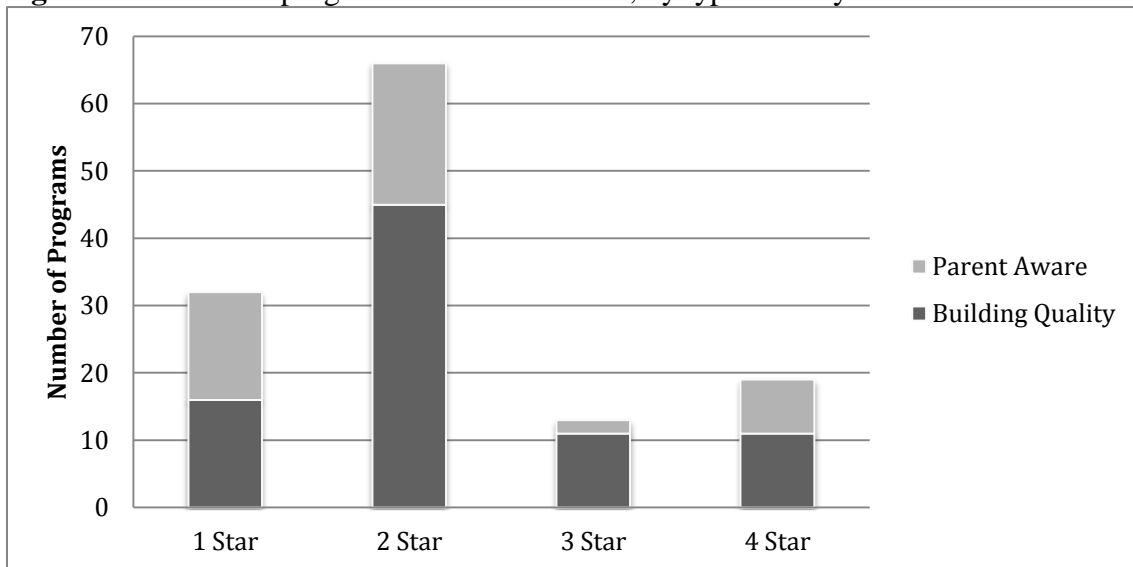
	All Programs in Building Quality (n=217)	Programs Rated in June 2013, Post-Rating (n=60)
Professional Development	\$149.01 (30.5%)	\$111.27 (11.3%)
Learning and Environment	\$308.03 (63%)	\$769.64 (77.9%)
Health and Safety	\$31.75 (6.5%)	\$106.67 (10.8%)
Total	\$488.79	\$987.58

Source: Child Trends' Coaching Database, January 2014

Quality Improvement Supports and Programs' Ratings

Of the 136 programs that received a rating in December 2013 by going through the full-rating process, 130 programs had coaching data available for the six month period between July and December. The ratings for these programs follow a similar pattern regardless of whether they had participated in Building Quality or went directly into Parent Aware (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Number of programs at each Star level, by type of entry to Parent Aware



Source: MN DHS Data, December 31, 2013

Overall, about half of the programs receive a Two Star rating. The proportion of Building Quality Programs (54%) and Parent Aware Only Programs (45%) receiving a Two Star rating was similar. More programs that went directly into Parent Aware (34%) received a One Star rating as compared to programs that had participated in Building Quality (19%). Few Parent Aware Only programs (4%) received a Three Star rating as compared to a Four Star rating

(17%). An even number of Building Quality programs received Three and Four Star ratings (13% of programs at each rating level). The pattern of distribution of programs across Star level rating was not statistically significantly different by type of entry to Parent Aware.

Table 11. Number and percent of programs rated at each star level, by type of entry to Parent Aware entry, December 2013 ratings

	1 Star	2 Stars	3 Stars	4 Stars	Total
Building Quality Programs¹⁸	16	45	11	11	83
<i>(% within row)</i>	(19.3%)	(54.2%)	(13.3%)	(13.3%)	(100%)
<i>(% within column)</i>	(50%)	(68.2%)	(84.6%)	(57.8%)	(63.8%)
Parent Aware Only Programs	16	21	2	8	47
<i>(% within row)</i>	(34.0%)	(44.7%)	(4.3%)	(17.0%)	(100%)
<i>(% within column)</i>	(50%)	(31.8%)	(15.4%)	(42.2%)	(36.2%)
Total	32	66	13	19	130
<i>(% within row)</i>	(24.6%)	(50.8%)	(10.0%)	(14.6%)	(100%)
<i>(% within column)</i>	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)

Source: MN DHS Data, December 31, 2013

During Parent Aware, programs set a Star level goal and prepare their Quality Documentation Packet targeting that specific goal. Quality Coaches assist their programs in choosing an appropriate goal when they begin working with them in Parent Aware by guiding them through a series of program assessments including the Environment Self Assessment and the Quality Checklist (the Quality Checklist is a self assessment tool that provides an estimate of a programs' rating to help them determine the appropriate Star level goal). The intention is that programs' rating goals will match the final rating they receive. Most of the 130 programs (75%) received a rating that matched their rating goal. A small number of programs (4%) received a rating that exceeded their goal while 21% received a rating below the goal they set (Table 13).

Table 12. Difference between programs' rating goals and actual rating

Difference Between Goal and Rating	Number of programs	Percent
+3	1	.8
+2	0	0
+1	4	3.1
0	97	74.6
-1	19	14.6
-2	9	6.9
-3	0	0

Sources: MN DHS Data, January 2014; Child Trends' Coaching Database, January 2014

¹⁸ These programs participated in Building Quality from January through June 2013

The coaching manual does not state whether programs setting different rating goals should receive different levels of technical assistance while in Parent Aware. The assumption is that programs will receive the technical assistance they need to prepare for a rating, within the range of 2 to 15 hours. There was not a significant difference in the amount of coaching contact time programs at each star level received (Table 14). Programs rated at the One Star level received 10.3 hours of coaching on average while in Parent Aware as compared to programs at the Four Star level that received 12.3 hours.

Table 13. Average Quality Coaching contact time in hours, by star level achieved

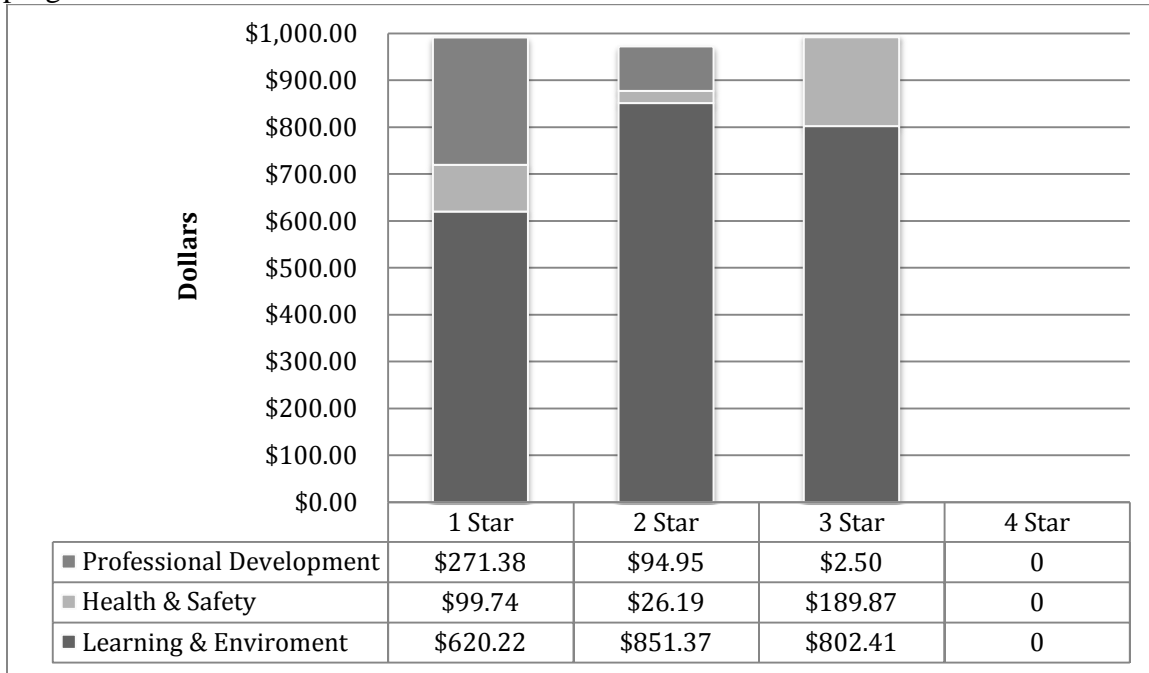
	Number of programs	Average contact time (in hours)
1 Star	32	10.3
2 Stars	66	10.7
3 Stars	13	11.8
4 Stars	19	12.3
Total	130	10.9

Sources: MN DHS Data, December 31, 2013; Child Trends' Coaching Database, January 2014

The amount of PD Advising received by programs rated at the first three star levels was similar: One Star received an average of 23.0 minutes, Two Star received 17.4 minutes, and Three Star received 17.5 minutes. Programs rated at the Four Star level received significantly more PD Advising than other programs with an average of 40.8 minutes received.

Finally, programs are spending very close to the entire \$1000 they receive after their rating is issued, with the exception of Four Star programs that do not receive quality improvement funding (Table 15). Programs at the One, Two, or Three Star levels spent the bulk of their funding on improvements related to learning and the environment. Programs rated at One Star spent somewhat less on learning and environment improvements (\$620.22) than programs at the Two Star (\$851.37) and Three Star (\$802.41) levels. Programs at One Star also spent more on Professional Development than programs at the other star levels.

Figure 4. Average post-rating grant spending by programs, by category and star level, for programs rated in June 2013



Source: MN DHS Data, December 31, 2013

Coaches' Experiences and Impressions of the Implementation of Parent Aware

In October and November of 2013, Child Trends administered a survey to Quality Coaches to gather information about their experiences coaching programs over the past year and their opinions about the implementation of Parent Aware. Thirty-seven of 40 coaches (93%) participated in this web-based survey which covered a number of topics, including: education and training credentials and history; program recruitment; the coaching model; coaching activities; communication and support; and impressions of Parent Aware.

Education and Training

Coaches were asked a series of questions related to their education and training credentials and their experience in the field of early care and education. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of coaches have a Bachelor's degree while 16% have an Associate's degrees. Around 30% of coaches majored or specialized in the field of Child Development while 19% had majored in K-12 Education.

Coaches' years of experience in the field of early care and education in a coaching role varied widely from one month to 25 years. The average length of coaching experience was 6.5 years. Coaches' experience specifically as a coach in Parent Aware ranged from one month up to six years, with an average length of 1.7 years.

Coaches were asked what education and training they have received to prepare them for their work as coaches. The most common coaching-specific preparation that coaches reported receiving was on-the-job professional development (92%); coaches also reported that classes taken to obtain a Bachelor's Degree (46%) were important to their preparation (Table 16).

Table 14. Education and training coaches have received to prepare them for coaching work (n=37)

Education/Training Type	Number of Coaches	Percent
Professional development and training while employed as a coach	34	92
Classes taken to obtain a Bachelor's Degree	17	46
Prior paid work experience as a coach	13	35
Internships or other unpaid experience in coaching/technical assistance	7	19
Classes taken to obtain an Associate's Degree	6	16
Classes taken to obtain a Master's Degree	5	14

Source: Quality Coach Survey, December 2014

Coaches were also asked what specific on-the-job training they had received to be a Quality Coach in Parent Aware. Almost all had completed trainings on mandated reporting (95%) and core competencies (97%). Fewer, although still a majority, of coaches completed the trainings related to CLASS (Pianta, La Paro and Hamre, 2008) including CLASS overview (78%), Putting CLASS into Practice (57%), and CLASS reliability (62%) (Table 17).

Table 15. On-the-job training coaches have received to prepare them to be Parent Aware coaches (n=37)

Parent Aware Training	Number of Coaches	Percent
Core competencies	36	97
Mandated reporting	35	95
Reflective practice	34	92
Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs)	32	86
Environment Rating Scales (ERS)/Environment Self Assessment (ESA)	32	86
Motivational interviewing	32	86
Curriculum overview	31	84
Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) overview	29	78
Implementation overview	24	65
CLASS reliability training	23	62
Putting CLASS into practice	21	57

Source: Quality Coach Survey, December 2014

Program Recruitment

In the second year of implementation, recruitment of programs into Parent Aware was an important component of Quality Coaches' work. Coaches were also asked which recruitment

strategies they find most effective in attracting programs to Parent Aware. The recruitment strategy Quality Coaches find to be most effective is personal and tailored contact (30%) followed by information sessions (24%) and drawing programs in through word-of-mouth (16%).

Although program enrollment targets for 2013 were not met (see Section II), most coaches have a positive view of the success of their recruitment strategies. Seventy-three percent of coaches felt that recruitment had gone somewhat or very successfully over the past year. When probed for additional information about how to improve upon the recruitment efforts for Parent Aware, the most common responses were that Parent Aware should hire and support dedicated recruitment staff (19%) and that financial incentives should be increased (8%). The strategy of hiring recruitment staff aligns closely with the one that the Department of Human Services is implementing as of January 2014; as of the writing of this report, DHS has funded the hiring of recruitment staff in Child Care Aware district offices around the state whose time will be dedicated to recruiting programs, especially non-accredited programs and programs in hard-to-reach areas.

Coaching Activities

For most of 2013, Quality Coaches used a revised coaching model that had been provisionally introduced in October 2013 and went to full use in January of 2014. Coaches were asked a series of questions in regards to how closely they followed the model that was in place prior to revision and most (73%) indicated that they follow the model exactly or change only one or two things.

Coaches were asked to rank the activities outlined in the model that they consider to be the most important to a successful coaching program in Parent Aware. The activity most frequently ranked number one - selected by nearly a quarter (24%) of Quality Coaches - was working with the provider on the environment, including, conducting and reviewing the Environment Self Assessment. Coaches ranked the next most important activities as orientation (19%) and support the provider with completing the Quality Documentation Packet (QDP) (16%). Quality Coaches' rankings of their most important activities align with the data presented earlier on the activities they actually spend the most time on with programs (as documented in their monthly data). In the survey, they reported that activities related to the environment are the most important, and their time usage data show that it is the activity that they spend the second highest amount of time on with programs. Similarly, the QDP was the activity Quality Coaches spent the most time on (according to their monthly data), and they ranked provision of support on the QDP as one of their most important activities.

CLASS coaching is available to center-based programs that are going through the full rating process and have set a star rating goal of Three Star or Four Star. Between July and December of 2013, 12 programs received CLASS coaching. Twenty Quality Coaches (54%) indicated that they were trained to provide CLASS coaching to programs, but many of them were spending little of their time on this specialized type of coaching. Half of Quality Coaches (50%) spend five or less hours CLASS coaching. Another smaller but still substantial group of Quality Coaches (30%) focus heavily on CLASS coaching spending between 21 and 40 hours with their programs that receive CLASS coaching.

Feedback, Communication, and Support

Quality Coaches were asked to report on aspects of Parent Aware implementation that affect their daily work. Several changes to the implementation of Parent Aware have been instituted over the past year with varying levels of input from Quality Coaches. Most Coaches (97%) gave input to guide the revision of the Quality Documentation Packet while fewer (59%) report that they provided feedback on the coaching model revision (59%) and the new case management data system currently under development at DHS (32%).¹⁹

Another important aspect of implementation for Quality Coaches is the frequency of communication and support that they receive. Seventy-three percent of Quality Coaches report that they communicate with other coaches at least once per week, 68% communicate with their supervisor at least once per week, and 57% communicate with PD Advisors at least once per week (Table 18). Quality Coaches have less frequent communication with Grant Administrators and staff at the Child Care Aware of MN Coordinating Office, their primary contact for questions about Parent Aware after their supervisors, and report communicating with staff from DHS once a month or less.

Table 16. Frequency of communications between coaches and other Parent Aware staff (n=37)

	Once a month or less	Every other week to every week	One or more times per week
Other Quality Coaches	1 (3%)	9 (24%)	27 (73%)
PD Advisors	2 (5%)	14 (38%)	21 (57%)
Grant Administrators	9 (24%)	22 (59%)	6 (16%)
Quality Coach Supervisor	2 (5%)	10 (27%)	25 (68%)
Staff at CCAMN	13 (35%)	21 (57%)	3 (8%)
Staff at DHS	31 (84%)	6 (16%)	0 (0%)

Source: Quality Coach Survey, December 2013

Quality Coaches indicated that they receive strong support and feedback from their supervisors and that their supervisors have a good understanding of the work they do (Table 18). Fewer coaches, but still a majority, indicated that staff at the Child Care Aware of MN Coordinating Office and DHS also have a good understanding of their work and are available to support them when necessary.

¹⁹ Feedback from coaches about the new case management system did not systematically begin being collected until the beginning of 2014, after the completion of the Coach Survey.

Table 17. Coaches' level of agreement with statements about support they receive from their supervisors, Child Care Aware of MN, and DHS

	n=	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Strongly Agree/ Agree
My supervisor has a good understanding of the work I do.	37	10.8%	89.2%
My supervisor is available to support me when I face challenges.	37	10.8%	89.2%
My supervisor provides me with timely feedback on the work I'm doing.	37	13.5%	86.5%
Staff at Child Care Aware of MN have a good understanding of the work I do.	37	16.3%	83.7%
Staff at Child Care Aware of MN are available to support me when I face challenges.	37	21.6%	78.4%
Staff at DHS have a good understanding of the work I do.	37	29.7%	70.2%
Staff at DHS are available to support me when I face challenges.	37	37.8%	62.1%

Source: Quality Coach Survey, December 2013

Coaches were asked about their level of agreement with a series of statements intended to capture their satisfaction with their work, their career intentions and their overall dedication and satisfaction with the work they are doing (Table 19). All of the Quality Coaches responded that they agree or strongly agree that they feel committed to their work. Similarly high percentages said that they are able to do their job well (97%), are working in their chosen field (95%), and feel that the work they do is challenging (94%). Less than half of Quality Coaches responded that they are working in a career that is a stepping stone to another career (44%) and only a small number of Coaches (9%) indicated that they frequently feel like quitting.

Table 18. Coaches’ level of agreement with statements about their perceptions of the their work

As a coach for Parent Aware I...	n=	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Strongly Agree/ Agree
feel committed to my work.	36	0.0%	100.0%
put a lot of effort into my work.	35	0.0%	100.0%
am able to do my work well.	36	2.8%	97.2%
fully understand my job responsibilities.	35	2.9%	97.1%
am working in my chosen field and career.	36	5.6%	94.4%
feel the work I do is challenging.	35	5.7%	94.3%
am working in a job that is a personal calling.	35	11.4%	88.6%
am helping someone out.	34	11.8%	88.2%
am provided the appropriate tools and resources to do my job well.	36	16.7%	83.3%
am provided opportunities to grow professionally.	36	16.7%	83.3%
am working in a job just for the paycheck.	34	38.2%	61.8%
am working in a career that is a stepping stone to a related career or profession.	36	55.6%	44.4%
frequently feel like quitting.	35	91.4%	8.6%

Source: Quality Coach Survey, December 2013

Impressions of Parent Aware

Quality Coaches have a generally positive view of the implementation of Parent Aware. Sixty-seven percent indicated they have a positive opinion of the program, 30% have a neutral opinion, and 3% have a negative opinion.

To assess Coaches’ impressions of the effectiveness of their work with programs, they were asked about their agreement with a series of statements about the impact of the work they are doing (Table 20). In response to these statements, they indicated a high level of agreement that they are “establishing collaborative relationships with providers that lead to improved quality” (100%), are “trusted by providers as a knowledgeable source of information about child care quality” (100%), and are “improving interactions between providers and children” (95%).

Table 19. Coaches' level of agreement with statements related to their career

As a coach for Parent Aware I am...	n=	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Strongly Agree/ Agree
establishing collaborative relationships with providers that lead to improved quality.	37	0.0%	100.0%
trusted by providers as a knowledgeable source of information about child care quality.	37	0.0%	100.0%
improving the interactions between providers and children.	37	5.4%	94.6%
focused on assisting providers with the completion of paperwork.	37	8.1%	91.9%
recognized as an integral part of improving child care quality in the state of MN.	35	8.6%	91.4%
effectively using the process of observation and feedback to help providers meet their Parent Aware goals.	37	16.2%	83.8%
have enough time with providers to see improvements in their quality.	37	35.1%	64.9%
helping providers meet their professional goals that are not specific to Parent Aware.	37	40.5%	59.5%

Source: Quality Coach Survey, December 2013

Coaching Challenges

Quality Coaches were asked in an open-ended question to report on the challenges they face in their work. Eighteen coaches reported **not having enough time** to do all that is expected of them. They noted the challenges of covering their workload in a 40 hour work week (Table 21). A couple of Coaches believed previously established relationships with programs are dwindling because there is not enough time to manage their caseload. Furthermore, coaches described having one-on-one meetings with providers was difficult, which they also described as hindering their ability to build relationships. One Coach stated that there are too many required meetings during a time when providers are most available for visits.

The concern that Quality Coaches voiced about a lack of time to adequately complete their work suggests one possible reason for the discrepancy between the amount of time they are spending with Building Quality programs (11.5 hours) and the amount of time recommended in the coaching manual (20 to 30 hours). There are likely several reasons behind this discrepancy and addressing coaches' perception of a lack of time is one possible strategy to attempt to increase the actual amount of coaching time Building Quality programs receive.

Table 20. Most common implementation challenges noted by Quality Coaches in open-ended survey questions (n=37)

Themes	Number of Coaches
Time	18
Coaches lacking training	17
Challenging providers	11
Recruitment	11
Multiple changes to expectations	6
Rating process issues	4
Lack of information to do the work appropriately	3
Negative perceptions of Parent Aware	3

Source: Quality Coach Survey, December 2013

The second most common challenge cited by coaches (17) was a **lack of proper training** to deliver coaching supports to providers. Some Quality Coaches expressed feeling “lost” when trying to coach programs on topics such as curriculum and assessment on which they feel they haven’t received enough training. Lacking foundational knowledge in child development, conducting first coaching visits without getting to know the program prior to that, and uncertainty in knowing what documentation is needed to meet individual indicators were also concerns expressed by some coaches. One Coach described her own confusion in trying to understand the implementation of Parent Aware and the resulting difficulty in conveying implementation information to programs.

“The bumps in the road as this process rolls out and being the person who bears the brunt of these challenges, providers look to me when certain aspects of the PA process don't make sense. I am just thankful to know that people are listening and making changes to make this process more successful and comprehensible.”

Eleven Quality Coaches noted that working with **challenging providers** introduces increased difficulty into their work. A few Coaches (3) reported that it is hard to work with programs that are not ready for Building Quality and Parent Aware, but are targeted because of the population of children they are serving. For example, Coaches mentioned the challenges of working with programs that cannot follow foundational licensing guidelines due to excessive citations, untrained staff, and disregarding guidelines for background checks. A couple of Quality Coaches stated that working with programs in which staff are non-native English language learners increases the complexity in providing the core components of the coaching model and is an area in which they need further support.

Recruitment was also noted as a top challenge for eleven of the coaches. A couple of Quality Coaches stated recruitment has been especially difficult because they are new to the coaching position.

Coaching Successes

Twenty Quality Coaches noted that there has been an **improvement in the quality of the coaching support they are offering to providers** to teach, guide, and help them get rated (Table 22). As described earlier in the description of implementation (Section III), coaches also

appear to be finding their stride in their roles. Coaches stated that becoming more proficient at coaching has helped providers develop the skills necessary to carry out lesson plans and make changes to their program. One Coach described greater understanding of quality among the programs she works with, and comments such as “I get this now. It makes sense.” are common.

Table 21. Most common coaching successes mentioned by Quality Coaches in open-ended survey questions (n=37)

Themes	Number of Coaches
Improvements in the coaching they provide to providers	20
Increased motivation of providers	16
Personal coaching achievements and work satisfaction	15
Building relationships with programs	12
Deeper quality improvements	7
Recruitment	4
Benefiting children	4
Provider confidence	4

Source: Quality Coach Survey, December 2013

Increased motivation of providers was the second most common success noted by 16 coaches. Coaches said providers are more often stepping up to the challenges inherent in pursuing a rating and are showing greater commitment to participating in Building Quality and Parent Aware. In addition, Coaches reported that programs are reaching their goals and receiving the ratings they intended. A few (3) Quality Coaches noted providers are excited to get rated and implement the quality improvements they’ve learned.

Fifteen Coaches described general **coaching satisfaction** and **personal coaching achievements** as an important success over the past year. Quality Coaches stated feeling satisfied in the work they are doing to benefit the providers and children and they enjoy seeing their providers achieve their rating goals. Other positive coaching experiences they had were learning and building off of their coaching practices from previous years, completing coaching trainings, successfully coaching using CLASS model, and learning to successfully manage their time.

Building relationships with providers was noted as being the top success by twelve coaches. Many reported an increased sense of community among providers, other coaches, and organizations that are doing work that is connected to the Parent Aware initiative. Establishing relationships that are positively focused on quality was seen as a success by Quality Coaches.

Mini-Grant Administration

In 2013, approximately \$373,000 of one-time funding became available due to a 2012 federal fiscal year increase in Minnesota’s Child Care Development Fund allocation. This money was made available in the form of “mini-grants” totaling \$1000 to the following types of programs/sites:²⁰ 1) programs that were rated in Parent Aware (including APR) 2) programs that

²⁰ A program is typically a child care center or family child care home. A site is a unique Head Start or School-Based building (or site). A Head Start grantee may include 10 unique sites. For the purposes of understanding how

had signed a participation agreement with the intention to join the July 2013 Parent Aware cohort, or 3) programs that qualified for an APR rating and committed to seeking that APR rating within the next six months.

Mini-grants were intended to serve a very specific purpose of purchasing curriculum and/or assessment materials. Additionally, mini-grants could be used to cover training costs for lead staff in the use of curriculum and/or assessment materials.

The mini-grant was unexpected to most programs. Distribution of the money began in February 2013. Applications for the grant were processed through district Child Care Aware offices. The money was awarded on a first-come, first-served basis and may have served as an incentive to sign a participation agreement.

Child Trends interviewed four individuals knowledgeable about how the administration of the mini-grants worked for programs in the interest of learning: 1) if there were systematic approaches to how programs spent their mini-grant, 2) to what extent Quality Coaches or Grant Administrators helped programs determine how to spend the grant, and 3) whether and how mini-grant money differed from other Parent Aware quality improvement funds.

Mini-grants differed from typical quality improvement financial supports because they could be accessed by both fully-rated and Accelerated Pathways to Rating programs. Typically in Parent Aware, only programs going through the full-rating process have access to quality improvement support dollars as part of their participation in Building Quality (programs eligible for Building Quality receive \$500 in pre-support dollars) or as part of the post-rating improvement supports (\$1000 are awarded to One Star, Two Star, and Three Star rated programs). The mini-grants provided one way for programs in the Accelerated Pathways to Rating (APR) to receive a grant to purchase curriculum or assessment materials and/or to meet the additional training indicators.

According to final data from the Department of Human Services, 490 programs or sites received a mini-grant. Of those 490 programs, 64% were APR and 36% were fully rated. A breakdown of APR versus fully-rated programs that were awarded mini-grants is displayed in Table 22.

Table 22. Type of Parent Aware Program Receiving Mini-Grant

Type of Program	Program Type % (n)
Accelerated Pathways to Rating	
Accredited Child Care Center	43% (135)
Accredited Family Child Care	2% (5)
Head Start site	31% (98)
School-Based Pre-K site	24% (75)
Fully Rated Programs	
Child Care Center	25% (44)
Family Child Care	75% (133)
Total	490 programs

mini-grants were awarded, each unique Head Start site within the same grantee could have received a mini-grant. The same is true for unique school-based sites within a school district.

Source: MN Department of Human Services, December 4, 2013

Mini-grants were intended to only be used to cover costs related to curriculum and assessment materials or trainings. The strict nature of the mini-grant policy drove programs' purchasing decisions. In large part, programs did not have a choice about how to spend their mini-grant money. If fully-rated programs had questions about the appropriate use of their mini-grant funds, they asked their Quality Coach, not a Grant Administrator. PD Advisors sometimes became involved in the process by helping programs determine which staff at a center or site needed additional curriculum or assessment-related training to meet the indicators. APR programs did not have access to anyone to help them determine how to spend the money. Overall, programs more frequently spent their mini-grant money on curriculum or assessment tools as opposed to trainings (Table 23).

Table 23. Mini-grant spending by type

Type of Mini-Grant Expenditure	Total amount spent by programs during 2013	Accessed by number of programs/sites	Average amount spent per program/site
Curriculum tool	\$148,041	288	\$514
Assessment tool	\$128,428	308	\$417
Training on assessment tool	\$69,035	150	\$460
Training on curriculum tool	\$27,821	70	\$397
Total	\$373,325		

Source: MN Department of Human Services, December 4, 2013

Mini-grant funding was available in 2013 only. The standard set of quality improvement supports will continue to be administered including: grants available to fully-rated programs and quality improvement funds through the Accreditation Facilitation Project (AFP). Accredited child care programs, Head Start and school-based sites in the Accelerated Pathways to Rating do not have access to on-going quality improvement dollars through Parent Aware.

Summary of Quality Improvement in Parent Aware

Coaches perceive increased clarity around quality improvement expectations and processes. With the recent revision of the coaching model, quality improvements supports like those provided by Quality Coaches, PD Advisors, and Grant Administrators are poised to enter a new stage of greater consistency across cohorts and types of entry into Parent Aware. This consistency should provide increased clarity in the expectations of Quality Coaches and PD Advisors on the amount of time they should be spending assisting programs and the activities they should be focusing on for each type of entry to Parent Aware.

There is a need for greater clarity in expectations for Quality Coaching contact time. Quality Coaches are meeting their minimum contact time targets for programs in Building Quality but monthly coaching data suggests that instead of spending the majority of their time with programs while they are in Building Quality, they are spreading their contact time evenly over the entire year of a program's participation. Quality Coaches noted they would like to have more time to assist programs. It is possible that the reduction in contact time with programs in

Building Quality is “made up for” when those programs are in Parent Aware. Addressing this deviation from the intended implementation of Quality Coaching will likely involve both retraining Coaches to the guidelines laid out in the implementation manual and an assessment of whether caseloads and other limitations are preventing Coaches from implementing the model as intended. Alternatively, modifications to the model may be needed to adjust for the way Coaches work best with programs in Building Quality.

Analysis of additional cohorts of data and improved data collection procedures will be beneficial. As additional programs join Parent Aware through the full-rating pathway, the amount of information available about the effectiveness of quality improvement supports will grow and add to the preliminary findings described in this report. Data from additional cohorts will allow for more sophisticated analyses including ones that examine the experiences of Building Quality programs over a full year of participation and additional comparative analyses, like those analyzing the differences between family child care programs and center-based programs that go through the full rating process.

In the summer of 2014, DHS will launch a new data system, Develop, Minnesota’s Quality Improvement and Registry Tool, that will include case management functions and house data related to quality improvement at the level of each individual contact between Coaches and program. This improved way of collecting quality improvement data should provide the ability to complete richer analyses about the impact of quality improvement supports. Develop should also improve upon the quality of the data and make more robust comparative analyses possible.

Coaches provide insights into recruitment efforts. Coach-based recruitment efforts to bring programs into Parent Aware have produced some successes over the past year. Coaches’ suggestions for how to improve Parent Aware recruitment align with steps already taken by the MN Department of Human Services in their plan to hire dedicated recruitment staff in the Child Care Aware system. As these new recruitment staff begin their work, they will be building new relationships with programs and providers, Quality Coaches, and other Parent Aware stakeholders. These budding connections present opportunities for improved effectiveness in recruitment and challenges in terms of keeping an ever-widening group of stakeholders informed and involved in the recruitment process. As Quality Coaches’ reduce their role as direct recruiters, new opportunities present themselves for them to act as ambassadors of Parent Aware to the communities in which they work to help facilitate the efforts of the dedicated recruitment staff.

Struggling programs need greater supports. Quality Coaches perceive that provider motivation plays a primary role in determining a program’s success at sticking with Parent Aware and receiving the rating they set as a goal. Coaches mentioned that there are certain characteristics of programs that increase the complexity of their needs and the amount and type of quality improvement support they require to achieve success. Attention to these struggling providers’ needs may help to increase their motivation for participating in Parent Aware and improve long-term recruitment and retention targets for the initiative as a whole.

Section 5. Initial Validation Analyses

Purpose of this Section:

One goal of the Parent Aware Evaluation is to examine the validity of the Parent Aware Rating Tool. Validation analyses proposed for the Parent Aware evaluation require administrative data from an adequate number of rated programs (with targets for initial analyses set originally at 150 programs). Validation analyses are limited in this report to one piece of the Parent Aware Rating Tool – the Environment Self Assessment (ESA). The purpose of this section is to conduct initial analyses to better understand the use of the Environment Self Assessment, a tool used in the full-rating process that serves as a prerequisite for programs seeking to achieve at least a Two Star rating. Later reports will address the complete set of Parent Aware quality indicators and ratings and their linkages with observed quality and children’s development.

Key Findings:

- Patterns of scoring differ for the two child care center ESA forms (for Preschool and Infant/Toddler classrooms) and the Family Child Care (FCC) ESA. Item variability on the Preschool and Infant/Toddler ESA Checklists reveals that more than half of the items on the tools have a variability score of 10% or less which means that over 90% of teachers rated the items as a practice they “always” do. In contrast, Family Child Care providers’ responses on the ESA are somewhat more variable. Only about one third of FCC items have a variability score of 10% or less.
- Provider *practice* items were more likely to elicit a negative rating from providers (indicating that they do not or only “sometimes” or “rarely” engage in the practice), compared with items about the classroom or program *environment*.
- Provider practice items identified as reflecting a more enhanced or enriched set of practices and provider behaviors elicited more variation than did items identified as more standard, developmentally appropriate practices.
- Child care center teachers’ patterns of scoring the ESA items do not correlate with the Star rating their program received. That is, there is no statistically significant difference in Star-rating level among Preschool or Infant/Toddler classroom teachers who reported more variation on their ESA compared to teachers who reported less variation on their ESA.
- However, Family Child Care providers’ patterns of scoring the ESA items do correlate with the Star rating their program received. Providers who identified more areas of need in their programs were more likely to be in programs with lower ratings.

Validation of the Parent Aware Rating Tool involves a set of research activities to understand whether and how the rating process and the ratings that are awarded identify programs with elements of quality that are different in meaningful ways. Over the course of the evaluation, Child Trends will address validation questions using different interrelated strategies including: (1) a scan of the research literature²¹ supporting the Parent Aware quality indicators to identify

²¹ The scan will be available in a mid-year report in 2014 and supplements an existing research review conducted by a cross-agency workgroup that made recommendations for the Parent Aware Rating tool, building on the experiences gained with the original Parent Aware Rating Tool used in the pilot from 2007-2011.

indicators with stronger levels of research evidence (2) an analysis of the indicators and rating process to understand patterns of scoring; (3) an analysis of the ratings programs receive and associations with measures of observed quality and other program characteristics; and, (4) an analysis of whether and how children’s developmental gains are related to program ratings and/or specific features of program quality. This analysis strategy is aligned with guidance provided by other researchers engaged in validation analyses nationally (Zellman & Fiene, 2012).

At this stage of the evaluation, with a limited number of fully-rated programs, validation analyses can provide only initial evidence about how the rating process is working. In this report and in an indicator analysis to be produced in the early spring of 2014, we focus on validation strategy 2 described above. Analyses in Year 3 and Year 4 of the evaluation will provide more in-depth information using validation strategies 3 and 4.

Specifically, this section of the report addresses a tool used for one of the Parent Aware quality indicators – the Environment Self Assessment Checklist – which is required to achieve a 2-Star rating for fully-rated programs.

Why focus on the Environment Self-Assessment Checklist?

The Environment Self Assessment (ESA) is a tool used by programs and providers participating in the full-rating process of Parent Aware to review and assess the quality of their environment. The ESA prompts providers to examine their environment and practices with children and families and to identify areas of strength and need. Once the review is complete, providers work with their Quality Coach to develop quality improvement goals. There are three separate versions of the ESA checklist for different programs and classrooms. There is a version tailored for preschool classrooms in child care centers, a second version for infant and toddler classrooms in child care centers and a third version for family child care programs.

Some providers complete the ESA independently and reflect on their results with their Quality Coach, while others review and complete the ESA with their Quality Coach during one of their visits (further details about Quality Coaching are available in Section 4 of this report). Quality Coaches take a six-week online training offered through the Assessment and Training Center at the Center for Early Education and Development. The goal of the training is to help Coaches become familiar with how the ESA is scored and to learn how to have a facilitated discussion with providers about the ESA.

Programs going through the full-rating process meet the requirement for the Physical Health and Wellbeing indicator PH2b if they submit a copy of the completed Environment Self Assessment as part of their Quality Documentation Packet and include a completed “Goals” section in which they identify at least three quality improvement goals based on items in the ESA and the steps they will take to achieve them.

Because the ESA requires an investment of time from providers and from Quality Coaches and is intended to provide information to guide quality improvement activities, it is important to understand whether and how the tool and process are working. If the tool identifies important areas of need, aggregated data from the tool could be used to identify opportunities for the development of new training or relationship-based professional development to support

programs in their quality improvement. In addition, the ESA is a new tool that was created by Parent Aware staff for the statewide expansion of Parent Aware. It was constructed using examples of self assessment tools used in other state QRIS, but the degree to which it is helping programs identify areas of strength and areas of concern has not been studied. Thus, the analyses presented in this section are a first step in examining the ESA and provide descriptive details that can inform an understanding of how well the tool is working.

Process for Examining the Environment Self Assessment Checklists

Child Trends received electronic copies of each completed ESA Checklist from the Minnesota Department of Human Services and entered data in spreadsheets for analysis.²² The ESAs were from programs going through the full-rating process as part of the July 2012 and January 2013 cohorts. The sample included 221 ESAs from 153 unique programs seeking a full Parent Aware rating (Table 25) including 113 family child care providers and 40 fully-rated child care centers. In most child care centers, ESAs were completed by the teacher or center director in more than one classroom of either classroom age group. Across the Parent Aware fully-rated child care centers (for which one or more ESAs were available), 15% completed one ESA, 40% completed ESAs from two classrooms, and 45% completed ESAs from three or more classrooms.

Table 24. ESAs by Program Type and Unique Parent Aware Fully-Rated Program

Type of Environment Self-Assessment Checklist	Number of ESAs reviewed by researchers	Number of unique fully-rated programs
Family Child Care	113	113
Center-Based Preschool classroom	54	37
Center-Based Infant/Toddler classroom	53	31

Source: Preschool Environment Self Assessments, 2014

Three questions are addressed in the analyses:

1. How are providers scoring their programs on the ESA overall?
2. Which ESA items elicit more variation in provider scoring such that providers report that they engage in a practice only sometimes or rarely?
3. Are providers' patterns of scoring on the ESA related to the Star rating the program receive

The Environment Self-Assessment Checklists

The ESA checklists are to be completed by a provider who is familiar with the program or classroom within a program.²³ The provider is instructed to read each statement carefully and note whether the item is met. Some items use a "Yes/No" response format, while other items use a three-category response format asking the provider to rate an item as occurring

²² Note that with planned implementation of a new data system, Develop, the ESA Checklist may be completed online by providers and data downloads will be more readily available for analysis.

²³ In this section, we refer to a "provider" as the primary respondent to the ESA, or, for child care center classrooms, we refer to a "teacher" as the primary respondent, though it is important to note that the ESA may be completed by a teacher or director in collaboration with a Quality Coach.

“Always/Sometimes/Rarely. Instructions provide guidelines to select “Always” if the teacher can say yes to the item at least 90 percent of the time; “Sometimes” indicating that the teacher can say yes to the item at least 50 percent of the time, and “Rarely” indicating that the teacher can say yes to the item 20 percent of the time or less (or never).

The three checklists vary in numbers of items. The Preschool ESA checklist contains 168 items; 86 of these use the “Yes/No” response format and 82 items use the “Always,” “Sometimes” or “Rarely” response format. The FCC checklist contains 216 items; 95 of these use the “Always,” “Sometimes” or “Rarely” response format and 121 items use the “Yes/No” response format. The child care center Infant/Toddler Classroom ESA checklist contains 196 items; 90 of these use the “Always,” “Sometimes” or “Rarely” response format and 106 items use the “Yes/No” response format.

Items are organized within 11 content areas and 26 subcontent areas:

- **Foundational Quality:** Infection Control, Safety, Supervision, Furnishings for Play and Learning
- **Adult Child Relationships:** Language, Social-Emotional, Classroom Atmosphere
- **Books, Literacy, and Writing:** Books, Writing
- **Blocks and Dramatic Play:** Blocks, Dramatic Play
- **Fine Motor, Math, and Science Learning:** Fine Motor, Math, Science Learning
- **Music, Movement, and Art:** Music & Movement, Art
- **Physical Activity and Development:** Physical Environment, Adequate Time, Types of Activity, Educating Parents About Physical Activity
- **Provisions for Children with Special Needs**
- **Screen Time**
- **Healthy Eating:** Eating Environment, Menus, Parent Education
- **Promoting Acceptance and Diversity**

Because these analyses were descriptive in nature and aimed at providing initial information about the tool, items were analyzed within each checklist overall and in broad subcategories (Table 26). As can be seen on sample on Appendix B, ESA items fall under headers labeling them as either “Environment” or “Practice.” Most of the Environment items use a “Yes/No” response format, while most of the Practice items use the three-category response format asking to rate a practice as occurring “Always/Sometimes/Rarely.” Based on these labels, items were grouped into Environment and Practice subcategories. These subcategories were analyzed separately. Then, a few smaller subcategories of Environment and Practice items of particular interest were examined.

The first smaller subcategory of items examined was Foundational Quality. Each ESA begins with a section labeled Foundational Quality which contains 14 Environment items addressing Infection Control, Safety, Supervision, and Furnishings for Play and Learning. The second pair of smaller subcategories of items were created by the research team to examine the possibility that teachers may report more variability (that is, checking “sometimes,” “rarely,” or “no”) when the practice is more difficult to perform or would be conducted less frequently. To assign practice items to these two subcategories, research staff knowledgeable about provider practices in early childhood settings reviewed the Practice items within each form and identified two

types of items. One set of practice items reflected those that could be considered basic developmentally appropriate practice when caring for young children (“Basic Practice”), while other practice items tapped more difficult, enhanced practice, albeit still important practices to promote in early childhood settings (“Enhanced Practice”). An example of Basic Practice from the Preschool form is *“Book/literacy area has pictures and storybooks that reflect the different cultures of children and families served in the program.”* An example of an item representing Enhanced Practice is *“Teachers read to preschoolers to enhance their listening skills and active participation in storytelling and reading. Staff read to small groups of children to allow for interactive reading. They ask questions such as what might happen next, how the story character feels, what do you think the characters should do now?”*

Table 25. Numbers of items overall and by subcategory on each ESA form

Categories of items	# of items		
	Preschool Form	FCC form	Infant/Toddler form
All Items	168	216	196
Environment Items^a	101	130	120
Foundational Quality Items^a	14	14	14
Practice Items^a	67	86	76
Basic Practice Items^b	55	68	64
Enhanced Practice Items^b	12	14	12

^a As labeled in the ESA form.

^b As categorized by research staff.

How are providers scoring their programs overall on the ESA Checklist?

All ESA items are worded positively, in that a response of “Always” or “Yes” indicates a provider’s self assessment of positive environment or practice on that item. To examine whether each item more or less frequently elicited an “Always” or “Yes” response, variability in responses was calculated by counting the number of responses that were not “Always” or “Yes,” (i.e., those that were “Sometimes” or “Rarely” on categorical items or “No” on Yes/No items).²⁴ Each item’s count of “Sometimes/Rarely” or “No” was then divided by the total number of responses to that item to adjust for any missing data. This calculation of *item variability* assists with identifying those items that elicit “not perfect” responses from teachers. These item variability scores can be interpreted as follows: an item with 2% variability means that only 2% of all teachers’ responses to that item were “sometimes/rarely” or “no”; similarly,

²⁴By using this method, “Rarely” was treated the same as “Sometimes.” This results in some lost information. However, “Rarely” was only used 3% of the time on the Preschool form (only 139 responses of “Rarely” were given out of 4,220 total preschool teacher responses), only 5% of the time on the FCC form (only 516 responses of “Rarely” were given out of 10,326 total responses), and only 2% of the time on the Infant/Toddler form (only 163 responses of “Rarely” were given out of 8,082 total responses).

an item with 50% variability means that half of the responses to that item were “sometimes/rarely” or “no.”

Examination of Preschool ESA item variability overall reveals that providers’ responses on the ESA are primarily positive. Averaging across all three forms, 49% of items are rated “Yes/Always.”

Variability of the items differs by form. More than half of preschool ESA items (85 items) have a variability score of 10% or less. In contrast, about one third of FCC items (74 items) have a variability score of 10% or less. Infant/Toddler ESA item variability was even lower than Preschool ESA item variability. More than 60% (121 items) have a variability score of 10% or less.

Which ESA items elicit more variation in provider scoring?

To further understand how providers are scoring their program or classrooms on the ESA, the research team examined all items and subcategories of items. Note that some of the subcategories were based on the item or area labels as they appear in the ESA form (i.e., Environment, Practice, and Foundational Quality items), while other subcategories were determined by the research team (i.e., Basic Practice and Enhanced Practice items). Table 26 displays the number of items for each ESA by category and subcategory: *Environment* items (which are further broken down to highlight the group of *Foundational Quality* items designated as such in the tool itself), and *Practice* items (which are further broken down into *Developmentally Appropriate Practices* and *Enriched Practices* designated by the research team as described above).

Table 27 displays the percent of items with an item variability score of 10% or less within each category and subcategory. Two-thirds of Preschool ESA Environment items and Infant/Toddler ESA Environment items have low variability; in contrast, 39% of FCC Environment items have low variability. About one-quarter of Preschool and FCC Practice items have low variability; in contrast, nearly 50% of Infant/Toddler Practice items have low variability.

Table 26. Percent of items on each ESA checklist within categories with a variability score of 10% or less

Categories of items	% of items within category with low variability		
	Preschool Form	FCC form	Infant/Toddler form
All Items	52%	34%	62%
Environment Items	66%	39%	67%
Foundational Quality	64%	71%	71%
Practice Items	27%	26%	46%
Developmentally Appropriate Practice Items	29%	27%	56%
Enriched Practice Items	17%	0%	25%

Source: Child Trends’ calculations of 54 Preschool ESA Checklists, 113 FCC ESA Checklists, and 53 Infant/Toddler ESA Checklists

Foundational Quality Items

As a subgroup, Foundational Quality items elicited different variability in providers' responses compared with all Environment items across settings. The Foundational Quality items are the first 14 items on the ESA and address Infection Control, Safety, Supervision, and Furnishings for Play and Learning.

Preschool teachers reported they were as likely to meet Foundational Quality items as the full set of Environment items (64% of Preschool Foundational Quality items and 66% of all Environment items had low variability). Five of the Preschool Foundational Quality items appeared to elicit more variability than others (i.e., they had variability rates of 10% or higher). These five items were:

1. Infection Control: the environment is cleaned, sanitized, and disinfected on a regular basis (floors, tables, and toys)
2. Safety: Classroom uses infant bottles, plastic containers and toys that do not contain polyvinyl chloride (PVC), biphenyl A (BPA), phthalates or lead
3. Safety: On a monthly basis, program checks for information about the recall of products that are in use in the home.
4. Safety: There are special storage bins to put toys for cleaning that have been in a child's mouth.
5. Supervision: Extra supervision is provided to children who are physically aggressive (such as children who push, hit or bite) to reduce the possibility of injuries.

In contrast, FCC providers reported they were more likely to meet Foundational Quality items than the full set of Environment items (71% of FCC Foundational Quality items had low variability, compared with only 39% of all Environment items). Four of the FCC Foundational Quality items appeared to elicit more variability than others (i.e., they had variability rates of 10% or higher). These four items were:

1. Safety: On a monthly basis, provider checks for information about the recall of products that are in use in the home.
2. Safety: There are special storage bins to put toys for cleaning that have been in a child's mouth.
3. Furnishings for Play and Learning: There is a cozy area where one to two can rest or play quietly.
4. Furnishings for Play and Learning: Furnishings are child-sized and there is enough low, open shelving for toys and materials to be available.

Infant/Toddler classroom teachers were similar to Preschool classroom teachers, in that they reported they were as likely to meet Foundational Quality items as the full set of Environment items (71% of Infant/Toddler Foundational Quality items and 67% of all Environment items had low variability). Four of the Infant/Toddler Foundational Quality items appeared to elicit more variability than others (i.e., they had variability rates of 10% or higher). These four items were:

1. Furnishings for Play and Learning: There is a cozy area where one to two can rest or play quietly.
2. Safety: Classroom uses infant bottles, plastic containers and toys that do not contain polyvinyl chloride (PVC), bisphenol A (BPA), phthalates or lead.
3. Supervision: Extra supervision is provided to children who are physically aggressive (such as children who push, hit or bite) to reduce the possibility of injuries.
4. Safety: On a monthly basis, program checks for information about the recall of products that are in use in the home.

These Foundational Quality items may be met less frequently because they are particularly difficult (and thus aren't done as frequently as other practices) or because providers need basic information about the importance of these items (which may in turn help them focus more on these items). In either case, the findings indicate an opportunity for Quality Coaches to work with providers on these dimensions of their program.

Enhanced Practice Items

As a subcategory of Practice items, the Enhanced Practice items elicited more variability in providers' responses than Basic Practice items on all three forms. Item variability for the 12 Preschool Enhanced Practice items ranged from 8% to 53%, with ten out of the 12 items' variability above 10%. Item variability for the 12 FCC Enhanced Practice items ranged from 10% to 55%; all of the 14 items' variability was above 10%. Item variability for the 12 Infant/Toddler Enhanced Practice items ranged from 2% to 83%, with 10 out of the 12 items' variability above 10%. Tables 28 - 30 showcase the Enhanced Practice items for the Preschool checklist (Table 28), Family Child Care checklist (Table 29), and Infant/Toddler checklist (Table 30) that elicited the most variability.

Table 27. Preschool Enhanced Practice Items Eliciting Variability above 10%

ESA Content Area <i>ESA Subcontent Area</i>	Enhanced Practice Item	Item Variability (the % of respondents who answered "No," "Sometimes," or "Rarely")
Healthy Eating <i>Parent Education</i>	The program provides parents/guardians with education materials to support good health	53%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	Teachers expose children to a variety of music and introduce musical instruments from many cultures	51%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Opportunities are provided for children and their families to share experiences through storytelling, puppets, or other props. This supports the oral tradition common among	44%

ESA Content Area <i>ESA Subcontent Area</i>	Enhanced Practice Item	Item Variability (the % of respondents who answered “No,” “Sometimes,” or “Rarely”)
	many cultures.	
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Teachers offer dramatic play beyond the classroom through guests, field trips, books or other activities. Dramatic play materials are available to and within reach of the children. The play accessories represent various cultural and ethnic groups within the families, communities and society in general.	44%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Planned art activities encourage creativity, develop skills, extend children’s understanding of art (e.g. artistic guests, or 3 D creations, field trips, art appreciation, books on fine art, or videos on art topics).	28%
Fine Motor, Math, and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Teachers provide opportunities for conversation using everyday words to indicate space, location, shape and size of objects.	15%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Teachers communicate positive and supportive messages about flexible male/female roles, while showing respect for the traditional role of men and women in other cultures.	14%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Teachers encourage children to use scribbles, shapes or pictures to represent (stand for) their thoughts or ideas.	11%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	Teachers read to preschoolers to enhance their listening skills and active participation in storytelling and reading. Staff read to small groups of children to allow for interactive reading. They ask questions such as what might happen next, how the story character feels, what do you think the characters should do now?	11%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	The mealtime environment is safe, pleasant and encourages healthy eating. Food is never used as a reward or punishment; children are encouraged but not forced to eat. (The two-bite rule is an example of forcing children to eat.)	11%

Source: Preschool Environment Self Assessments, 2014

Table 28. FCC Enhanced Practice Items Eliciting Variability above 10%

ESA Content Area <i>ESA Subcontent Area</i>	FCC Enhanced Practice item	Item Variability (the % of respondents who answered “No,” “Sometimes,” or “Rarely”)
Adult and Child Relationships <i>Books</i>	Book/literacy area of your home has pictures and storybooks that reflect the different cultures of children and families served in the program.	35%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Opportunities are provided for children and their families to share experiences through storytelling, puppets, or other props. This supports the oral tradition common among many cultures.	47%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Provider offers dramatic play beyond the classroom through guests, field trips, books or other activities. Dramatic play materials are available to and within reach of the children. The play accessories represent the various cultural and ethnic groups of the families and community.	52%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Dramatic play materials are available and within easy reach of infants and toddlers. Play materials are representative of various cultural and ethnic groups of the children receiving care, and of the community.	38%
Fine Motor Math and Science Learning <i>Math</i>	Provider encourages children to recognize objects that can be measured by height, weight, length and time.	50%
Fine Motor Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Provider encourages children to explore and observe nature and make predictions about natural events (growing seeds, caring for animals, watching weather chart).	45%
Music, Movement, and Art <i>Art</i>	Planned art activities encourage creativity, develop skills, extend children’s understanding of art (e.g., artistic guests, or 3 D creations, field trips, art appreciation, books on fine art, or videos on art topics).	42%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs	The provider works with families and other professionals to promote child development and independence.	19%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	Family-style meal service is provided so young children have some choice in the types and amounts of food selected.	55%
Healthy Eating <i>Parent Education</i>	The provider has education materials available for parents/guardians to support	32%

	their role in promoting and supporting good health.	
Promoting acceptance and diversity	The provider communicates positive and supportive messages that challenge male/female roles while showing respect for the traditional role of men and women in other cultures.	19%
Promoting acceptance and diversity	The home language of children and their parents is valued.	10%
Promoting acceptance and diversity	The provider promotes diversity in regard to all aspects of diversity – cultural, ethnic and lifestyle differences.	25%
Promoting acceptance and diversity	The provider has anti-bias policies and procedures that are written in families’ home languages.	41%

Source: FCC Environment Self Assessments, 2014

Table 29. Infant/Toddler Enhanced Practice Items Eliciting Variability above 10%

Content Area AGE GROUP	ESA Item	Item Variability (the % of respondents who answered “No,” “Sometimes,” or “Rarely”)
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers communicate positive and supportive messages about flexible, male/female roles, while showing respect for the traditional roles of men and women in other cultures.	10%
Music, Movement and Art TODDLERS	Children are given opportunities to use a variety of art materials to express their ideas and creativity. Teachers describe, discuss and accept the process as well as the product of children’s activities with creativity and the arts.	13%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	The program promotes diversity in regard to all aspects of cultural, ethnic and lifestyle differences.	14%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers seek health consultation (environmental adaptation, care provision, plan development, training) for infants with special health needs.	20%
Books and Literacy INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Book area has pictures and storybooks that reflect the different cultures of children and families served in the program and the	23%

	community	
Blocks and Dramatic Play INFANTS	Blocks and dramatic play materials are available to and within reach of the children. The play accessories are representative of the various cultural and ethnic groups within both the families' communities and society in general.	26%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS AND TODDLERS	The program offers information about physical activity and growth to families.	31%
Blocks and Dramatic Play TODDLERS	Dramatic play materials are available to and within reach of the children. The play accessories are representative of the various cultural and ethnic groups within both the families' communities and society in general.	36%
Blocks and Dramatic Play TODDLERS	Opportunities are provided for children and their families to share experiences through storytelling, puppets or other props to support the oral tradition common among many cultures.	41%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Using family-style meal service provides young children some choice in the types and amounts of food selected.	83%

Source: FCC Environment Self Assessments, 2014

Are providers' patterns of scoring on the ESA related to the Star rating the program receives?

The analyses described above provide initial information about how different *items* function on the ESA. A second strategy for looking at the ESA Checklist is to identify whether certain *providers* score the ESA in ways that indicate more or less positive responses. If the ESA is effectively helping teachers identify areas of the environment and practices with children and families that need attention, one prediction is that providers in programs with lower Parent Aware Star ratings would identify more items on the ESA that need attention than providers in programs with higher Star ratings. However, it also may be the case that more variable responses on the ESA are related to greater time spent reflecting on the items, characteristics of the providers (such as their beliefs, training or education) that influence their understanding of an item, or interactions with their Quality Coach that promote more thoughtful responses. While the analyses here look only at variability and Star rating, future analyses will examine additional associations when contextual data are available (and when more ESAs have been completed).

In order to examine teachers' variability in ESA responses and associations with the program's Parent Aware Star Rating, providers were grouped by their individual response variability. The Preschool Low Variation group included 33 teachers who responded "Always" or "Yes" on 90% or more of the 168 Preschool ESA items. The Preschool More Variation group included 21 teachers who responded "Always" or "Yes" to less than 90% of ESA items. The FCC Low Variation group included 44 providers who responded "Always" or "Yes" on 90% or more of the 216 FCC ESA items. The FCC More Variation group included 69 providers who responded "Always" or "Yes" to less than 90% of ESA items. The Infant/Toddler Low Variation group included 27 providers who responded "Always" or "Yes" on 90% or more of the 216 FCC ESA items. The Infant/Toddler More Variation group included 26 providers who responded "Always" or "Yes" to less than 90% of ESA items. Notably, the More Variation FCC group is a larger percentage of all FCC providers (61%) compared with the More Variation groups as a percentage of all preschool teachers (39%) and all infant/toddler teachers (49%).

Parent Aware Star ratings were compared across teachers in the Low Variation and the More Variation groups dividing ratings into Lower (One or Two Star) and Higher (Three or Four Star) groups.²⁵ Tables 31 – 33 present the results of these comparisons for each type of program.

Table 30 presents the results of this comparison among Preschool programs. The analyses did not reveal any statistically significant differences between the two groups of preschool teachers and the Star ratings of their programs²⁶. In other words, teachers who identified more areas of need in their programs were not more likely to be in programs with lower ratings.

Table 30. Number and Percentage of Lower (One and Two Star) Ratings and Higher (Three and Four Star) Ratings by Teacher Response Patterns (Low Variation compared to More Variation teachers) on the Preschool ESA

	1 or 2 Star Rating	3 or 4 Star Rating
Low Variation Teachers (n=29 teachers⁵)	16 (55% of 1 or 2 Star rating group)	13 (62% of 3 and 4 Star rating group)
More Variation Teachers (n=21 teachers)	13 (45% of 1 and 2 Star rating group)	8 (38% of 3 and 4 Star rating group)

Source: Preschool Environment Self-Assessments, 2014

Table 31 presents the results for FCC programs. The results demonstrate that there were statistically significant differences between the two groups of FCC providers and the Star ratings of their programs. Providers who identified more areas of need in their programs were more likely to be in programs with lower ratings. These results suggest that ESA may be

²⁵ Star ratings as of January 2014 were available for 33 of the 37 Preschool programs, 100 of 113 FCC programs, and 28 of the 31 Infant/Toddler programs for which ESA data had been analyzed.

²⁶ Findings in this section are considered statistically significance if the resulting p value is <.05.

effectively helping FCC providers identify areas of the environment and practices with children and families that need attention.

Table 31. Number and Percentage of Lower (One and Two Star) Ratings and Higher (Three and Four Star) Ratings by Provider Response Patterns (Low Variation compared to More Variation providers) on the FCC ESA

	1 or 2 Star Rating	3 or 4 Star Rating
Low Variation Providers (n=44 providers)	15 (27% of 1 and 2 Star rating group)	26 (59% of 3 and 4 Star rating group)
More Variation Providers (n=69 providers)	41 (73% of 1 and 2 Star rating group)	18 (41% of 3 and 4 Star rating group)

Source: Family Child Care Environment Self-Assessments, 2014

Table 32 presents the results of this comparison among infant/toddler classrooms. Similar to preschool classrooms, the analyses did not reveal any statistically significant differences between the two groups of infant/toddler teachers and the Star ratings of their programs. In other words, teachers who identified more areas of need in their programs were not more likely to be in programs with lower ratings.

Table 32. Number and Percentage of Lower (One and Two Star) Ratings and Higher (Three and Four Star) Ratings by Provider Response Patterns (Low Variation compared to More Variation teachers) on the Infant/Toddler ESA

	1 or 2 Star Rating	3 or 4 Star Rating
Low Variation Providers (n=22 providers)	12 (52% of 1 and 2 Star rating group)	10 (48% of 3 and 4 Star rating group)
More Variation Providers (n=22 providers)	11 (48% of 1 and 2 Star rating group)	11 (52% of 3 and 4 Star rating group)

Source: Infant/Toddler Environment Self-Assessments, 2014

Summary of Initial Validation Analyses on the Environment Self Assessment

Completing the Environment Self Assessment tool is required for all programs seeking at least a 2-Star rating. In some child care centers, this will equate to completing an ESA for all preschool

and infant-toddler classrooms. Quality Coaches are involved in this process as well, by spending time consulting with programs during an on-site coaching visit to help staff complete the ESA or to help them develop goals. Completing the ESA requires a significant investment of time on behalf of programs and Coaches. This initial analysis of the ESA is a first look into whether and how the tool is working to differentiate quality in a meaningful way.

The results indicate that:

- The Family Child Care ESA checklist elicits more variation in responses than the Preschool or Infant/Toddler ESA checklists. It will be important to understand more about the relationship family child care providers have with their Quality Coaches to identify the source of this variation. It could be that family child care providers complete the tool with more guidance than child care center teachers and thus report more variation in their practices.
- Neither preschool nor infant/toddler classroom teachers' patterns of scoring the ESA items correlate with the Star rating their program received. That is, there is no statistically significant difference in Star-rating level among teachers who reported more variation on their ESA compared to teachers who reported less variation on their ESA.
- However, Family Child Care providers' patterns of scoring the ESA items do correlate with the Star rating their program received. Providers who identified more areas of need in their programs were more likely to be in programs with lower ratings.
- Provider practice items identified as reflecting a more enhanced set of practices and provider behaviors elicited more variation than did items identified as more standard, basic practices.

Examining the extent to which the ESA is capturing programs' needs is important for programs' goal development and may have other potential uses as well. For example, analyzing aggregated data from programs about areas of environment or provider practice that are less frequently met may provide guidance on training needs and quality improvement supports for programs.

In the future, it will be important to examine the associations between the ESA and observed levels of quality and possible associations with Quality Coaching that programs receive. Researchers will also survey Parent Aware providers to examine how provider characteristics may influence the way that individual providers complete the tool and about their perceptions of the tool itself.

Section 6. Summary and Implications

The purpose of this report is to provide an analysis of activities and early outcomes of Parent Aware after the second year of statewide expansion. The report presents details about Parent Aware enrollment and ratings, implementation successes and challenges, quality improvement supports, and initial validation analyses examining a tool used in the Parent Aware Rating Process. The findings can be used to highlight focal areas for improvements and to guide priorities in the third year of implementation. In this section, we summarize key findings from the report and their implications for the Year 3 of statewide expansion. When relevant, we note how the evaluation will address or track particular findings in Year 3.

New policy and legislative initiatives changed the context for Parent Aware in 2013. Most notably, the state legislative session resulted in an additional \$40 million for scholarships to support access to high quality early care and education programs among children with high needs. While this infusion of money may incentivize program participation in Parent Aware and quality improvements to achieve higher ratings, the scope may be limited due to the number of children that can be served by the scholarships (estimate at 9% of eligible children). Program surveys early in 2013 (before the new infusion of funding) among Head Start and School-based Pre-K programs indicated that scholarships were a key factor in Parent Aware enrollment for about one-third of the programs.²⁷ Scholarships were not a predominant factor for enrollment of other program types. The evaluation will continue to track provider perceptions of the scholarships and their influence on Parent Aware participation. The influence of other legislative actions related to improving access to Parent Aware-rated programs through Child Care Assistance Program tiered reimbursement and support for continuity of participation will be important to evaluate along with the effect of increases in required annual training hours for family child care providers from 8 to 16 hours. The new training requirement may support Parent Aware participation among family child care providers because Parent Aware offers access to low cost or free training that could count toward the annual hours. However, the increase in training hours could also provide a disincentive to participation if family child care providers are concerned about the change and don't want to take on the challenge of enrolling in Parent Aware.

The number of Parent Aware-rated programs increased to over 1,300. Three-quarters of rated programs have a Four Star rating through the APR process. Parent Aware exceeded goals in 2013 for enrolling and rating APR programs including accredited child care centers and family child care programs, Head Start/Early Head Start programs and School-based Pre-Kindergarten programs. Key informants perceive APR participation to be a clear success of Parent Aware.

Nearly 300 programs, one-quarter of those enrolled in Parent Aware, completed the full rating process. The most common rating among fully-rated programs is a Two Star. In the Parent Aware pilot, ratings at the lower star levels were uncommon. In June 2011, 15% of programs had a Two Star rating and 3% had a One Star rating. In contrast, as of December 2013, 45% of fully-rated programs received a Two Star rating and 23% received a One Star

²⁷ Cleveland, J. (2013) *Provider Perceptions of Parent Aware*. Retrieved from <http://www.pasrmn.org/work/research>

rating. Analyses of the Parent Aware indicators in 2014 will provide further information about the patterns of scoring on the Parent Aware Rating Tool.

Nearly 80% of programs receiving a full-rating in Parent Aware achieve or exceed their “goal rating”. It is noteworthy that many programs enter Parent Aware seeking a One or Two Star rating. Efforts to bring programs into Parent Aware across the quality spectrum appear to be successful.

Enrollment targets for fully-rated family child care programs and child care centers were not met in 2013. Density of program participation is low. Approximately 4% of eligible family child care programs and 9% of eligible child care centers are enrolled in Parent Aware. As a result, **recruitment of programs was a focus of implementation in Year 2 and will continue to be prioritized in Year 3.** New strategies for recruitment include a shift from Quality Coaches responsible for coaching and recruiting. The new recruitment approach includes recently hired recruitment staff solely responsible for recruiting. These new staff have training and backgrounds in communications and community organizing and provide outreach to eligible programs. Provider surveys in 2014 will track early results of these efforts.

As in the first year of Parent Aware implementation, the pressure of Minnesota’s RTT-ELC grant, particularly the targets for enrollment, continues to be recognized by key informants as a challenging context for their work. The tight timeline for the grant and ambitious targets for program participation are at the forefront of work on Parent Aware and shape the work and priorities for implementation. There is concern among some key informants that the ambitious targets set for program participation will need to be adjusted.

Despite acknowledging challenges with recruitment, key informants perceive increased collaboration, streamlining of documents and processes, and finding an “overall stride” as clear successes of the second year of implementation. A number of the “kinks” in implementation noted in the first year of implementation have been addressed, and key informants participating in the system are generally more satisfied with how the system is functioning overall.

Quality Coaches and Professional Development Advisors report positive experiences overall in their work to support quality improvement for child care programs. Though some Quality Coaches would like to have more time available for their work with programs, they uniformly report that they are establishing collaborative relationships that will help programs improve their quality. Quality Coaches also report that they are strongly committed to their work in the field of early care and education. Future reports will continue to address coaching including CLASS coaching (which was not covered in this report).

Rated child care programs spend the majority of their post-rating grants on supports for learning and the environment. Quality Coaches also report that they spend a bulk of their time with programs working on aspects of the environment. The evaluation will continue to track spending patterns and to survey providers about their perceptions of quality improvement in Parent Aware.

Initial validation analyses of the Environment Self Assessment Checklists used in Parent Aware revealed different patterns of effectiveness. An examination of the Self Assessment Checklist used in child care centers indicated little variation in scoring across a high percentage of the items and no association with Parent Aware star rating. However, analyses of the Family Child Care Environment Self Assessment Checklist indicated more variation in scoring and an association with Parent Aware Star Ratings. Some items on the tool elicited more varied responses than others. The differences in ESA use among providers may be a function of how the tool is used in Quality Coaching. It will be useful to share these data with Quality Coaches to help them shape their interactions with providers and to promote use of the tool that is more reflective of actual practice and that can shape goal-setting. Future surveys of providers and coaches will collect their perceptions of the tools and more details about how the self-assessments are used to guide quality improvements.

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Appendix A: Coaching Activity Categories

1. Orientation
2. Completing the Quality Checklist
3. Observing the provider; Giving observation feedback to provider
4. Determining Goals; Goal Setting
5. Determining Star Level; Declaring Star Level
6. Environment Self Assessment; Reviewing ESA; Providing feedback on ESA; Helping provider with the environment
7. Determining how to spend Grant dollars; Allocation of grant funds
8. Sharing resources; Directing provider to community resources
9. Consulting about professional development or trainings; Contacting the PD Coordinator
10. Completing the Quality Documentation Packet; Working on QDP
11. CLASS coaching

Appendix B: Images example pages of the Preschool ESA form

Adult Child Relationships

LANGUAGE

Environment	Yes/No	Practices	Always	Sometimes	Rarely
Are there frequent adult-child and child-child conversations?		Teachers routinely expand on children's language, introduce a rich and varied vocabulary, and ask open-ended questions that challenge children to express their ideas. ("Expand" means using more words than the child uses.) For example, for every single word a child gives you, you add two or three more words. For everything a child notices about something, introduce two more ideas/concepts.			
Do teachers talk with all children throughout the day?		Teachers provide clear instructions that help children move from simple directions to more complex (three-four steps) directions.			
		Teachers listen and respond to children's attempts to communicate both verbally and non-verbally.			
		Teachers talk with children about a variety of topics and use language to ask questions, give answers, make statements, share ideas, or use pretend, fantasy or word play.			

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

Environment	Yes/No	Practices	Always	Sometimes	Rarely
Are teachers attentive, quick to smile, and do they show physical affection? Is it obvious that the teachers enjoy the children and their work?		Teachers show an emotional connection to children. Teachers are physically near children and join in their activities. They appear genuinely interested (make eye contact, get down to a child's eye level, use appropriate physical contact). They use a warm and calm voice. They match the children's affect, for example, when children are smiling, teachers are smiling.			
Are the teachers respectful of children's feelings, helping them to identify how they feel and offering ideas for how the children can appropriately express their feelings?					

Appendix C: Preschool ESA Item Variability

Preschool ESA Content Area <i>ESA Subcontent Area</i>	Preschool ESA Item	Item Variability (% Sometimes/Rarely/No)
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	Using family-style meal service provides young children some choice in the types and amounts of food selected.	78%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	Does the program use family-style meal service? (This means that children serve themselves, or when that is not safe – such as when foods are too hot – the staff take direction from the child on how much to serve.)	63%
Foundational Quality <i>Safety</i>	On a monthly basis, program checks for information about the recall of products that are in use in the home.	53%
Healthy Eating <i>Parent Education</i>	The program provides parents/guardians with education materials to support good health.	51%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	Teachers expose children to a variety of music and introduce musical instruments from many cultures.	51%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Teachers change dramatic play themes, responding to the interests and ages of children. Planned activities are designed to add to dramatic play experiences such as including prop boxes or taking field trips to community settings. Teachers encourage make-believe through role play or with objects.	44%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Opportunities are provided for children and their families to share experiences through storytelling, puppets, or other props. This supports the oral tradition common among many cultures.	44%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Teachers offer dramatic play beyond the classroom through guests, field trips, books or other activities. Dramatic play materials are available to and within reach of the children. The play accessories represent various cultural and ethnic groups within the families, communities and society in general.	44%
Physical Activity and Development	Teachers regularly lead activities involving moderate to vigorous physical activity.	39%

<i>Types of Activity</i>		
Physical Activity and Development <i>Types of Activity</i>	Teachers regularly lead activities that promote the development of age-appropriate motor skills, at least two or more active games and/or movement each day.	39%
Screen Time	The program has and follows a written policy on screen time in preschool classrooms that includes staff behaviors, education and screen time use.	39%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Math</i>	Teacher encourages children to recognize objects that can be measured by height, weight, length and time.	37%
Screen Time	Do children ages 2 and older have no more than 30 minutes total screen time per week?	37%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	The curriculum used includes traditional holidays celebrated by the majority culture, as well as those holidays that are unique to the culturally diverse children and families served in my early childhood program or setting.	36%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Living things (plants/animals)	35%
Screen Time	Teachers do not use TV, DVDs, computers with children under 2 years of age.	34%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	The program has and follows anti-bias policies and procedures, which are written in families' home languages.	34%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Language</i>	Teachers routinely expand on children's language, introduce a rich and varied vocabulary, and ask open-ended questions that challenge children to express their ideas. ("Expand" means using more words than the child uses.) For example, for every single word a child gives you, you add two or three more words. For everything a child notices about something, introduce two more ideas/concepts.	33%
Healthy Eating <i>Parent Education</i>	Parents receive information about nutrition when they first enroll their children.	32%
Healthy Eating <i>Parent Education</i>	Do parents of children enrolled in the program receive information about healthy eating?	29%

Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Teachers encourage children to explore and observe nature and make predictions about natural events (growing seeds, caring for animals, reading weather chart).	27%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Planned art activities encourage creativity, develop skills, extend children's understanding of art (e.g., artistic guests, or 3 D creations, field trips, art appreciation, books on fine art, or videos on art topics).	27%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Collections of natural objects (leaves, rocks)	27%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Math</i>	Teacher offers opportunities for children to explore numbers, measurements and patterns.	25%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Writing</i>	Teachers use literacy games and books to help children learn word recognition, vocabulary and print concepts. These activities help children make the connection between words and pictures.	25%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Teachers share information on observation through conversation and pictures.	25%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	Book/literacy area has pictures and storybooks that reflect the different cultures of children and families served in the program.	25%
Screen Time	Teachers do not use television/video viewing as a reward in preschool classrooms.	23%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Writing</i>	Writing props in dramatic play, block or other area	22%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Are child care menus planned to accommodate cultural and ethnic diversity?	22%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Do teachers communicate with children using the child's home language for common objects, people, etc.?	21%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Teachers are taught techniques to meet the needs of children with different abilities.	21%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	The program promotes diversity in regard to all aspects of cultural, ethnic and lifestyle differences.	21%

Foundational Quality <i>Supervision</i>	Extra supervision is provided to children who are physically aggressive (such as children who push, hit or bite) to reduce the possibility of injuries.	21%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Writing</i>	The program displays writing examples in the classroom environment.	21%
Healthy Eating <i>Parent Education</i>	Are parents/guardians encouraged to provide feedback to staff on the children's menus?	21%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	Teachers help children learn about sequences in books such as beginning, middle and end.	21%
Foundational Quality <i>Safety</i>	There are special storage bins to put toys for cleaning that have been in a child's mouth.	21%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Educating Parent About Physical Activity</i>	Staff members provide parents with information about the importance of physical activity to their children's overall growth, development and learning.	20%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	Teachers intentionally introduce children to a variety of musical experiences every day through singing during transitions or routines, playing different types of music, and dancing.	20%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Types of Activity</i>	Teachers regularly join in children's active play and/or suggest ways the children can extend their active play.	20%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs	Are the plans available for staff to see when working with the children?	19%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	Concept books include opposites such as up and down, in and out, same and different, and cause and effect.	19%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Physical Environment</i>	A variety of equipment is available and in good repair.	19%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Social-Emotional</i>	Teachers show an emotional connection to children. Teachers are physically near children and join in their activities. They appear genuinely interested (make eye contact, get down to a child's eye level, use appropriate physical contact). They use a warm and calm voice. They match the children's affect, for example, when children are smiling, teachers are smiling.	19%

Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Teachers provide opportunities for children to develop an understanding of space (filling and emptying, building, observing from different viewpoints).	19%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Shape sorters	18%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	Do the teachers sit with the children and eat the same foods served to the children?	17%
Screen Time	Is children's use of computers limited to periods of 15 minutes or less per week?	17%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	The child care director and staff support and model healthy eating behaviors.	17%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Teachers select opportunities to display the abilities and talents of children in care through books, posters or materials.	17%
Foundational Quality <i>Infection Control</i>	The environment is cleaned, sanitized and disinfected on a regular basis (floor, tables, and toys).	17%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Classroom Atmosphere</i>	Teachers show an emotional connection to children. Teachers are physically near children and join in their activities. They appear genuinely interested (make eye contact, get down to a child's eye level, use appropriate physical contact). They use a warm and calm voice. They match the children's affect, for example, when children are smiling, teachers are smiling.	16%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Teachers provide opportunities for conversation using everyday words to indicate space, location, shape and size of objects.	15%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Adequate Time</i>	Children are given ample physical activity each eight-hour day. Toddlers should be given 60 to 90 minutes; preschoolers should be given 90 minutes to two hours.	15%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Physical Environment</i>	Large-motor activities are planned daily that provide children the opportunity to use many large muscle movements such as balancing, climbing, jumping, and pedaling.	15%

Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Teachers communicate positive and supportive messages about flexible male/female roles, while showing respect for the traditional role of men and women in other cultures.	15%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Teachers present new concepts (such as same/different, cause and effect) and challenge children to learn concepts in different ways, such as learning shapes through books, blocks, puzzles and dramatic play.	15%
Foundational Quality <i>Safety</i>	Equipment and materials are in good repair and there are no hazards indoors or outdoors (e.g., up-to-date, well-stocked first aid supplies and accessible first aid manual or flip chart available, sanitation procedures used, electrical outlets covered, no easy access to busy roads or streets).	15%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	The mealtime environment is safe, pleasant and encourages healthy eating. Food is never used as a reward or punishment; children are encouraged but not forced to eat. (The two-bite rule is an example of forcing children to eat.)	15%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Math</i>	Comparisons activities (nested cups, abacus, dominoes, playing cards)	15%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Math</i>	Tools for measuring (balance, tape measure, ruler, scale, Unifix Cubes, measuring cups)	15%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Diversity in play materials (dolls, food or clothing)	14%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Prop boxes in storage or available through resource library or support group	14%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Language</i>	Teachers provide clear instructions that help children move from simple directions to more complex (three-four steps) directions.	14%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	Teachers avoid playing loud background music that interferes with conversations.	14%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Teachers provide opportunities to experience and describe time (seasons, daily and weekly events).	13%

Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Children are given opportunities to use a variety of art materials to express their ideas and creativity. Teachers describe, discuss and accept the process as well as the product of children’s activities with creativity and the arts. Use caution when using materials containing lead.	13%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Play furniture (woodworking bench with tools)	12%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Dress-up clothes/accessories (hats, purses, ties) and materials that support a variety of occupations without regard to gender	12%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Nature/science books, games (fact books, weather chart)	12%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	Teachers promote and maintain a pleasant mealtime environment, encouraging interaction and conversation.	12%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Are children exposed to languages other than their own?	12%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Teachers encourage children to use scribbles, shapes or pictures to represent (stand for) their thoughts or ideas.	12%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Adequate Time</i>	Children have the opportunity to engage in at least 60 minutes — and up to several hours — of unstructured physical activity each day.	12%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	Teachers read to preschoolers to enhance their listening skills and active participation in storytelling and reading. Staff read to small groups of children to allow for interactive reading. They ask questions such as what might happen next, how the story character feels, what do you think the characters should do now?	11%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Blocks</i>	Teachers add or exchange dramatic play items, blocks and block accessories from storage or other resources. Blocks are available (and within reach) to the children.	11%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs	Teachers follow Individual Education Plan (IEP, 504 Plan, or Individual Family Services Plan (IFSP) for children with a disability, as requested by parents.	11%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs	Have teachers been trained in meeting the needs of the children with special needs?	11%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs	If special adaptive furnishings are used, are they used as directed by IEP, 504 Plan, IFSP or agreed upon by parents and staff?	11%

Healthy Eating <i>Parent Education</i>	Snack and lunch menus are posted in a place convenient for parents to review.	11%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Language</i>	Teachers listen and respond to children's attempts to communicate both verbally and non-verbally.	10%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Physical Environment</i>	Ride-on toys	10%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Do program materials and the environment reflect diverse cultures and abilities positively?	10%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Are teachers trained and skill to respond to children's culture, race and gender to promote a multicultural community?	10%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	Book/literacy area has pictures and storybooks that reflect the different cultures of children and families served in the program.	9%
Foundational Quality <i>Safety</i>	Classroom uses infant bottles, plastic containers and toys that do not contain polyvinyl chloride (PVC), bisphenol A (BPA), phthalates or lead.	9%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs	Teachers seek health consultation (environmental adaptation, care provision, plan development, training) for preschool children with special needs.	9%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Teachers prepare healthy meals and snacks that are age and developmentally appropriate for children in the program.	9%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	The teachers value the home language of children and their parents.	9%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Tools for investigating the environment (magnets, magnifying glasses, binoculars, maps)	8%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Nature/science activities (sink/float, sand/water, magnets, gardening, cooking)	8%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Language</i>	Teachers talk with children about a variety of topics and use language to ask questions, give answers, make statements, share ideas, or use pretend, fantasy or word play.	8%

Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Writing</i>	Teachers encourage children's interest and attempts to copy or write letters and their own name.	8%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	3-D materials include Play Doh, clay, pipe cleaners, modeling compound.	8%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	Teachers provide multiple opportunities through large-group, small-group and free-play activities for children to use language to share experiences, discuss and plan activities, study and solve problems.	8%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Teachers provide adequate time and appropriate materials for small motor, drawing, cutting and handwriting development.	7%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Do curricula and activities provide children opportunities to learn about, be tolerant of and empathize with different cultures?	7%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Do materials and resources used in the program show images of people in non-traditional roles?	7%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	<i>Does the program have at least one book per child, plus five other books from the following categories?</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Multicultural (different races/cultures) 2. Bilingual books 3. Abilities (individuals with disabilities) 4. Rhyme/repetition 5. Concept (literacy, math, nature/science) 6. Fantasy (pretend stories) 7. Problem-solving/sharing 	7%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Writing</i>	Templates, stamps, letter/word cards, activity books/mazes, Pictionary	7%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs	All children can use the program's materials and equipment, including children with special needs.	6%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	The child care center has menus that provide healthy meals and snacks following the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans. http://myplateresources.com http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/	6%

Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Math</i>	Shape recognition activities (matching cards, magnetic shapes)	6%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Telephone	6%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Physical Environment</i>	Fixed equipment/structures	6%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Physical Environment</i>	There is an appropriate designated space for indoor active play when weather prohibits going outside.	6%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	CDs, records or tapes; three types – e.g., reggae, jazz, classical	6%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	Musical instruments (e.g., 10 children/five instruments)	6%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	Movement toys (scarves, ribbons, bean bags)	6%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	Children can predict when they will eat next and learn to regulate their eating accordingly.	5%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Do program materials and the environment reflect children's diverse abilities and talents?	5%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Classroom Atmosphere</i>	Teachers help children understand and respect all people. Children and their families are not stereotyped or left out of any activity because of race, gender, ethnicity, ability or any other personal characteristic.	5%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Writing</i>	Literacy games/activities	4%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs	The program makes adjustments as needed to allow children of all abilities and skill levels to participate.	4%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Math</i>	Collection of objects to count/sort (bears, play money, pegboards)	4%

Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Math</i>	Number recognition games/activities (clocks, calendar, number puzzles)	4%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Blocks</i>	Does the classroom have block accessories such as toy people, cars/trucks, animals, road signs, and garages?	4%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Puzzles with different number and sizes of pieces (with and without frames, such as floor or jigsaw puzzles)	4%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Interlocking blocks/fit-together toys (Lincoln Logs, bristle blocks, Tinkertoys, magnetic blocks)	4%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Types of Activity</i>	Children are offered the opportunity each day for unstructured play, which can promote imagination, creative thinking and social skills.	4%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Do child care menus limit (or avoid) foods that are high in sugar, saturated fat and salt?	4%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Are child care menus planned to accommodate food allergies and other special dietary needs?	4%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Is drinking water available and accessible to the children at all times?	4%
Foundational Quality <i>Supervision</i>	Program has supervision policies and procedures.	4%
Foundational Quality <i>Infection Control</i>	Appropriate supplies are accessible for maintaining cleanliness.	4%
Foundational Quality <i>Furnishings for Play and Learning</i>	There is a cozy area where one to two can rest or play quietly.	4%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Writing</i>	Boards (magnetic, chalk, wipe, flannel, chart paper)	2%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs	Programs work with families and other professionals to promote child development and independence.	2%

Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Teachers follow the requirements for milk and water that were modified in The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.	2%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Puppets/dolls	2%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Kitchen/housekeeping materials (pots, pans, dishes, food)	2%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Classroom Atmosphere</i>	Do they set limits to help children manage their emotions and behavior, rather than use harsh or abusive actions or language?	2%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Blocks</i>	Does the classroom have at least two different sets of 20 blocks per set?	2%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Blocks</i>	Does the classroom have at least two sets of blocks that are different in weight, size or shape?	2%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Blocks</i>	Does the classroom have block accessories such as toy people, cars/trucks, animals, road signs, and garages?	2%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Manipulative toys (beads and strings, lacing cards, pegs with peg boards, snap block, nuts and bolts, Mr. Potato Head, toy train tracks)	2%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Physical Environment</i>	Portable equipment	2%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Does the program follow CACFP or USDA requirements in regard to milk served? Children ages 12 to 23 months are served only whole milk; children older than 2 must be served low-fat (1 percent) or fat-free (skim) milk.	2%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	Are meals and snacks served on a regular schedule?	2%
Foundational Quality <i>Infection Control</i>	Program practices are used that eliminate the spread of germs, for example: hand-washing procedure from the Minnesota Department of Health is used; Diapering procedure from the Minnesota Department of Health is used; Sick child exclusion regulations from Minnesota Licensing are followed.	2%
Foundational Quality <i>Infection Control</i>	Children are taught to use age-appropriate health practices such as washing hands, brushing teeth, using tissues to blow noses and covering sneezes. www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/infectioncontrol/pre/standard.html	2%

Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Painting (easel, watercolors, brushes, sponges)	2%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Collage (yarn, felt, sticky tape, buttons, assorted paper, glitter, feathers, foam, sequins)	2%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Construction (clay, modeling clay or Play Doh, wood, popsicle sticks, pipe cleaners)	2%
Foundational Quality <i>Supervision</i>	Licensing ratios are met and children are within sight and hearing of a teacher at all times, consistent with licensing regulations.	0%
Foundational Quality <i>Furnishings for Play and Learning</i>	Furnishings are child-sized and there is enough low, open shelving for toys and materials to be available.	0%
Foundational Quality <i>Furnishings for Play and Learning</i>	Toys are at children's levels and are available to the children any time they are not involved in a routine such as eating, sleeping or on a field trip.	0%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Language</i>	Are there frequent adult-child and child-child conversations?	0%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Language</i>	Do teachers talk with all children throughout the day?	0%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Social-Emotional</i>	Are teachers attentive, quick to smile, and do they show physical affection? Is it obvious that the teachers enjoy the children and their work?	0%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Social-Emotional</i>	Are the teachers respectful of children's feelings, helping them to identify how they feel and offering ideas for how the children can appropriately express their feelings?	0%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Classroom Atmosphere</i>	Is the classroom tone positive?	0%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Classroom Atmosphere</i>	Do teachers use positive guidance and redirection?	0%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Classroom Atmosphere</i>	Are the teachers respectful of children's varying developmental stages, abilities and needs?	0%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Classroom Atmosphere</i>	Are the teachers respectful of the various cultures and economic status of the children in their care?	0%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Writing</i>	Lined/unlined paper, writing tools	0%

Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Writing</i>	Teachers offer opportunities for children to draw and print using markers, crayons and pencils.	0%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Drawing (markers, crayons, colored pencils, chalk)	0%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Art tools (scissors, stencils, stamps/stamp pad, punchers, glue sticks)	0%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Physical Environment</i>	Well-organized, safe space, with enough room for active play	0%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Adequate Time</i>	Age-appropriate amounts of active play time are scheduled each day.	0%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Types of Activity</i>	Teachers provide opportunities for structured and unstructured active play each day.	0%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	Dining furniture and eating utensils are age-appropriate and developmentally suitable for children.	0%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	Are children provided adequate time to eat meals and snacks?	0%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Are children provided healthy beverages (e.g. water, 100 percent fruit juice and low-fat milk) and are CACFP (Child & Adult Care Food Program) meal patterns followed to meet their fluid needs?	0%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Is curriculum used that reflects a variety of cultures, languages, abilities and talents, including those of families served by the program?	0%

Appendix D: Family Child Care ESA Item Variability

Family Child Care ESA Content Area <i>ESA Subcontent Area</i>	Family Child Care ESA Item	Item Variability (% Sometime/Rarely/No)
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	Family-style meal service is provided so young children have some choice in the types and amounts of food selected.	55%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	Provider plays a variety of music for children and introduces musical instruments from other cultures.	53%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Provider offers dramatic play beyond the classroom through guests, field trips, books or other activities. Dramatic play materials are available to and within reach of the children. The play accessories represent the various cultural and ethnic groups of the families and community.	52%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Math</i>	Provider encourages children to recognize objects that can be measured by height, weight, length and time.	50%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	Do you use family-style meal service? (This means that children serve themselves, or in cases where that is not safe – such as when foods are too hot – the adult takes direction from the child on how much to serve.)	48%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Infants and toddlers For infants, is a feeding plan completed by the family and posted?	48%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Opportunities are provided for children and their families to share experiences through storytelling, puppets, or other props. This supports the oral tradition common among many cultures.	47%
Healthy Eating <i>Parent Education</i>	Snack and lunch menus are posted in a place convenient for parents to review.	46%

Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Large pegs and pegboards	45%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Adequate Time</i>	Do you use mats under climbing and other play structures for child safety?	45%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Provider changes dramatic play themes, responding to the interests and ages of children. Planned activities are designed to add to dramatic play experiences such as prop boxes or field trips to community settings. Provider encourages children to try out various pretend roles in play or with objects used for make-believe.	44%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Living things (plants/animals)	43%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Collections of natural objects (leaves, rocks)	42%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Planned art activities encourage creativity, develop skills, extend children's understanding of art (e.g., artistic guests, or 3 D creations, field trips, art appreciation, books on fine art, or videos on art topics).	42%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs	If special adaptive furnishings are used, is it used as directed by IEP, 504 Plan, IFSP or agreed upon by parents and you?	42%
Screen Time	TV/video/computers are used according to the American Academy of Pediatric recommendations: no more than 30 minutes total screen time per week for children 2 years and older and no screen time for children 2 years and younger.	41%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	The provider has anti-bias policies and procedures that are written in families' home languages.	41%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Provider shares information on observation through conversation and pictures.	40%

Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Dramatic play materials are available and within easy reach of infants and toddlers. Play materials are representative of various cultural and ethnic groups of the children receiving care, and of the community.	38%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	The curriculum used includes traditional holidays celebrated by the majority culture, as well as those holidays that are unique to the culturally diverse children and families served in my early childhood program or setting.	38%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Provider should select opportunities to display the abilities and talents of children in care through books, posters or materials.	37%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Math</i>	Provider offers opportunities for children to explore numbers, measurements and patterns.	36%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Provider encourages children to explore and observe nature and make predictions about natural events (growing seeds, caring for animals, watching weather chart).	36%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs	Do you follow Individual Education Plan (IEP), 504 Plan, or Individual Family Services Plan (IFSP) for children with a disability, as requested by parents?	36%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	Book/literacy area of your home has pictures and storybooks that reflect the different cultures of children and families served in the program.	35%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Writing</i>	Provider displays writing examples throughout the home.	35%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Math</i>	Tools for measuring (balance, tape measure, ruler, scale, Unifix Cubes, measuring cups)	35%
Healthy Eating <i>Parent Education</i>	Parents receive information about nutrition when they first enroll their children.	35%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Hanging items to bat or grasp	34%

Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Infants and toddlers Provider offers older infants art materials such as finger paints with non-toxic, washable paint; small amounts of play dough; large crayons (such as old crayons melted in muffin tins and cooled) to grasp and make marks on paper.	34%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Types of Activity</i>	Provider regularly leads activities involving moderate to vigorous physical activity.	33%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Provider may need to be taught varying skills and techniques in order to meet the needs of children with different abilities.	33%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	Do you have materials that can be used with movement activities such as scarves, ribbons, parachutes?	32%
Healthy Eating <i>Parent Education</i>	The provider has education materials available for parents/ guardians to support their role in promoting and supporting good health.	32%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Have you had training and are you skilled in responding to children's culture, race and gender to promote a multicultural community?	32%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Provider offers opportunities to experience and describe time (seasons, daily and weekly events).	31%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	Preschool Provider introduces children to a variety of musical experiences every day through singing during transitions or routines, playing different types of music, and dancing.	31%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	3-D materials include Play Doh, clay, pipe cleaners, modeling compound.	31%
Screen Time	Provider does not use TV, DVDs or computers with children under 2 years of age.	31%
Screen Time	Do children ages 2 and older have no more than 30 minutes total screen time per week?	31%
Foundational Quality <i>Safety</i>	On a monthly basis, provider checks for information about the recall of products that are in use in the home.	30%

Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Blocks</i>	Provider adds or exchanges new dramatic play, blocks and block accessories from storage or other resources. Blocks are available (and within reach) to the children.	30%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Toddlers use simple art supplies each day. Provider encourages children to explore different materials such as paint brushes or other utensils/objects, play dough, crayons, large markers.	30%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Have you had training on infant feeding that includes storage and safe handling of breast milk?	30%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Play furniture (woodworking bench with tools)	29%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Provider offers opportunities for children to develop an understanding of space (filling and emptying, building, observing from different viewpoints).	29%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs	Are the plans available to refer to when working with the children?	29%
Healthy Eating <i>Parent Education</i>	Are parents/guardians encouraged to provide feedback to you on your menus choices?	29%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	Provider uses literacy games and books to help children learn word recognition, vocabulary and print concepts. These activities help children make the connection between words and pictures.	28%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Writing</i>	Writing props in dramatic play, block or other area	28%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Nesting cups	28%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Types of Activity</i>	Provider regularly leads at least two or more active games and/or movements each day (which promotes the development of age appropriate motor skills).	28%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Have you had training on how to respond to infants' cues during feeding?	28%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Tools for investigating the environment (magnets, magnifying glasses, binoculars, maps)	27%

Screen Time	Provider does not use television/video viewing as a reward in the child care program.	27%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Shape sorters	26%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Math</i>	Comparisons activities (nested cups, abacus, dominoes, playing cards)	26%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Do your families receive information on how to store and label breast milk they bring to your home?	26%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Provider presents new concepts (such as same/different, cause and effect) and challenges children to learn concepts in different ways, such as learning shapes through books, blocks, puzzles and dramatic play.	25%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	The provider promotes diversity in regard to all aspects of diversity – cultural, ethnic and lifestyle differences.	25%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Nature/science books, games (fact books, weather chart)	24%
Foundational Quality <i>Safety</i>	There are special storage bins to put toys for cleaning that have been in a child's mouth.	23%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	Provider helps children learn about sequences in books such as beginning, middle and end.	23%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Dolls and doll furnishings such as doll beds, strollers	23%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Provider offers opportunities for conversation using everyday words to indicate space, location, shape and size of objects.	23%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	Do you have at least three types of music (e.g., reggae, jazz, classical) available as CDs, records or tapes?	23%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	Do you have a variety of musical instrument (e.g., 10 children/five instruments)?	23%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Do materials and resources used in your program show images of people in non-traditional roles?	23%

Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Blocks</i>	Provider participates in block play according to the child's ability, such as stacking block towers and knocking them over. Block accessories are available near the block area so children can extend their play using these materials.	22%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Children are given opportunities to use a variety of art materials to express their ideas and creativity. Provider describes, discusses and accepts the process as well as the product of children's creative and art activities.	22%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Types of Activity</i>	Provider regularly joins in children's active play and/or suggests ways the children can extend their active play.	22%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Educating Parents About Physical Activity</i>	Do you provide parents with information about the importance of physical activity to children's overall growth, development and learning?	22%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs	Have you had training in meeting the needs of the children with special needs?	22%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs	All children can use the program's materials and equipment, including children with special needs.	22%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Language</i>	Provider routinely expands on children's language, introduces a rich and varied vocabulary, and asks open-ended questions that challenge children to express their ideas. ("Expand" means using more words than the child uses. For example, for every single word a child gives you, you add two or three more words. For everything a child notices about something, you introduce two more ideas/concepts.)	21%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Simple dress-up clothing such as caps/hats (washable), handbags, shirts	21%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Adequate Time</i>	Infants use such equipment as Exersaucers, swings and bouncy chairs less than 30 minutes per day.	21%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	Do you sit with the children and eat the same foods served to the children?	21%
Healthy Eating <i>Parent Education</i>	Do parents of children enrolled in the program receive information about healthy eating?	21%

Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Interlocking blocks/fit-together toys (Lincoln Logs, bristle blocks, Tinkertoys, magnetic blocks)	20%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Math</i>	Collection of objects to count/sort (bears, play money, pegboards)	20%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Math</i>	Shape recognition activities (matching cards, magnetic shapes)	20%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Math</i>	Number recognition games/activities (clocks, calendar, number puzzles)	20%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	Infants and toddlers Provider encourages development of rhythm by bouncing infant on lap, dancing with infant in arms, helping infant clap in time to music.	20%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Physical Environment</i>	Large-motor activities are planned daily that provide children the opportunity to use many large muscle movements such as balancing, climbing, jumping, and pedaling.	20%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Are your menus planned to accommodate cultural and ethnic diversity?	20%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Blocks</i>	Infants and toddlers Do you have blocks that are developmentally appropriate for infants and toddlers such as soft blocks, cardboard blocks, large colored cubes, hard and soft plastic blocks?	19%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Dress-up clothes/accessories (hats, purses, ties) and materials that support a variety of occupations without regard to gender	19%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	Provider avoids playing loud background music that interfere with conversations.	19%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs	The provider works with families and other professionals to promote child development and independence.	19%

Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	The provider communicates positive and supportive messages that challenge male/female roles while showing respect for the traditional role of men and women in other cultures.	19%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Soft animals that can be washed	18%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Provider offer opportunities for toddlers to play with objects that help them to develop the small muscles of their hands: pulling objects apart and putting them together, nesting (e.g. nesting cups), and inserting objects into specific shapes (e.g., puzzles).	18%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Science</i>	Nature/science activities (sink/float, sand/water, magnets, gardening, cooking)	18%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	Provider encourages toddlers to move and sing when playing music or singing or doing finger plays.	18%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Provider encourages children to use scribbles, shapes or pictures to represent (stand for) their thoughts or ideas.	18%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Adequate Time</i>	Children are given ample physical activity each eight-hour day. Toddlers should be given 60 to 90 minutes; preschoolers should be given 90 minutes to two hours.	18%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Are children exposed to languages other than their own?	18%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Puzzles with single or few pieces with knobs for easy grasping	17%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs	The provider makes adjustments as needed to allow children of all abilities and skill levels to participate.	17%
Screen Time	Is children's use of computers limited to periods of 15 minutes or less per week?	17%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Do you have a private space in your home for mothers to breastfeed?	17%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Provider offers opportunities for infants to mouth, shake, squeeze, grasp and let go of objects that are different in size, shape and texture.	16%

Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	The provider supports and models healthy eating behaviors.	16%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	Preschooler books: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multicultural (different races/cultures) • Bilingual • Abilities (individuals with disabilities) • Rhyme/repetition • Concepts (literacy, math, nature/science) • Fantasy (pretend stories) • Problem-solving/sharing 	15%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	Provider offers multiple opportunities through large-group, small group and free-play activities for children to use language to share experiences, discuss and plan activities, study and solve problems.	15%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Blocks</i>	Does room arrangement direct movement around, rather than through, activity areas?	15%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Provider allows adequate time and appropriate materials for small motor, drawing, cutting and handwriting development.	15%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	Do you have simple noise makers such as shakers and bells?	15%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Physical Environment</i>	A variety of equipment is available and in good repair.	15%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Do you use a curriculum and plan activities that reflect a variety of cultures, languages, abilities and talents, including those of families served by the program?	15%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Do program materials and the environment reflect children's diverse abilities and talents?	15%
Foundational Quality <i>Furnishings for Play and Learning</i>	There is a cozy area where one to two can rest or play quietly.	

Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	<p>Infant and toddler books:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board, cloth or plastic books • One picture to a page simple story books • Activity books such as Pat the Bunny • Books about routines such as eating and napping • Books with rhymes and repetition of phrases • Homemade books of family photos, photos of activities happening in your home 	14%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	Concept books include opposites such as up and down, in and out, same and different, and cause and effect.	14%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Writing</i>	Literacy games/activities	14%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Writing</i>	Templates, stamps, letter/word cards, activity books/mazes, Pictionary	14%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Writing</i>	Boards (magnetic, chalk, wipe, flannel, chart paper)	14%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Blocks</i>	Do you have at least two sets of blocks that are different in weight, size or shape?	14%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	<p>Infants/toddlers</p> <p>Rattles with different noises, colors, shapes and textures</p>	14%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Physical Environment</i>	Do you have developmentally appropriate large motor equipment and toys that can be used by children of various ages and skill levels?	14%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Physical Environment</i>	Ride-on toys	14%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Diversity in play materials (dolls, food or clothing)	13%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Toy telephones (cell and push-button)	13%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Easy fit-together toys such as large Duplos	13%

Physical Activity and Development <i>Physical Environment</i>	Fixed equipment/structures	13%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	The provider has menus that provide healthy meals and snacks following the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans. http://myplateresources.com http://health.gov/dietary-guidelines/	13%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Do program materials and the environment reflect diverse cultures and abilities positively?	13%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Atmosphere</i>	Provider offers opportunities for children to use different ways of expressing their feelings and controlling their impulses. Provider encourages children to express their feelings, to listen to one another and to solve their own conflicts.	12%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Blocks</i>	Do you have at least two different sets of blocks with at least 20 blocks per set?	12%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Blocks</i>	Do you have block accessories such as toy people, cars/trucks, animals, road signs and garages?	12%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Preschool Puzzles with different number and sizes of pieces (with and without frames, such as floor or jigsaw puzzles)	12%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	Do curricula and activities provide children opportunities to learn about, be tolerant of and empathize with different cultures?	12%
Foundational Quality <i>Furnishings for Play and Learning</i>	Furnishings are child-sized and there is enough low, open shelving for toys and materials to be available.	11%

Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	<p>Provider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reads to preschoolers to enhance their listening skills and active participation in storytelling and reading. • Reads to small groups of children to allow for interactive reading. • Asks questions such as what might happen next, how the story character feels, what do you think the characters should do now? • Reads books to infants while holding them or sitting close to them. • Encourages toddlers to turn pages of books. • Encourages toddlers to choose books to read. 	11%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Writing</i>	Provider encourages children’s interest in letters and their attempts to copy or write letters and their own names.	11%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Common animals, sets of people (different races, gender, ages), vehicles (cars, trucks).	11%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Manipulative toys (beads and strings, lacing cards, pegs with peg boards, snap block, nuts and bolts, Mr. Potato Head, toy train tracks)	11%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Collage (yarn, felt, sticky tape, buttons, assorted paper, glitter, feathers, foam, sequins)	11%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Construction (clay, modeling clay or Play Doh, wood, popsicle sticks, pipe cleaners)	11%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Adequate Time</i>	Children have the opportunity to engage in at least 60 minutes — and up to several hours — of unstructured physical activity each day.	11%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	The mealtime environment is safe, pleasant and encourages healthy eating. Food is never used as a reward or punishment; children are encouraged but not forced to eat. (The two-bite rule is an example of forcing children to eat.)	11%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Telephone	10%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	Do you use simple songs and finger plays?	10%

Music, Movement and Art <i>Music and Movement</i>	Are children given opportunities to listen to different kinds of music to encourage movement (swaying, marching, dancing, and clapping)?	10%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Painting (easel, watercolors, brushes, sponges)	10%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Developmentally appropriate art activities are available for older infants (12 months and older) and toddlers?	10%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Physical Environment</i>	Are the equipment and toys easily available for children to use?	10%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity	The home language of children and their parents is valued.	10%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Language</i>	Provider provides clear instructions that help children move from simple directions to more complex (three to four steps) directions, depending upon the child's age.	9%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Physical Environment</i>	Portable equipment	9%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Adequate Time</i>	Provider offers many opportunities throughout the day for infants to spend time on their tummies (which strengthens their neck and back muscles).	9%
Foundational Quality <i>Furnishings for Play and Learning</i>	Toys are at children's levels and are available to the children any time they are not involved in a routine such as eating, sleeping or on a field trip	8%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Language</i>	Provider talks with children about a variety of topics and uses language to ask questions, give answers, make statements, share ideas, or use pretend, fantasy or word play.	8%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Puppets/dolls	8%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning <i>Fine Motor</i>	Soft toys to grasp	8%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Physical Environment</i>	Do you have a space in your home that can be used for indoor active play when weather prohibits going outside?	8%

Foundational Quality <i>Safety</i>	Equipment and materials are in good repair and there are no hazards indoors or outdoors (e.g., up-to-date, well-stocked first aid supplies and accessible first aid manual or flip chart available, sanitation procedures used, electrical outlets covered, no easy access to busy roads or streets).	7%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Language</i>	Provider imitates the sounds, words, gestures that infants and toddlers make, and introduces new sounds, words and gestures for infants and toddlers to imitate.	7%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	The provider follows the requirements for water that were modified in The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.	7%
Foundational Quality <i>Supervision</i>	Provider has supervision policies and procedures.	6%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Social-Emotional</i>	Provider shows an emotional connection to children. Provider is physically near children and joins in their activities. Provider appears genuinely interested (makes eye contact, gets down to a child's eye level, uses appropriate physical contact). Provider uses a warm and calm voice. Provider matches the children's affect. For example, when children are smiling, the provider is smiling.	6%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	Do you have a variety of developmentally appropriate books in good condition that children are able to use independently, in a special area of your home?	6%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Transportation, animals, people	6%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Pots, pans, dishes, play food	6%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Adequate Time</i>	Provider plays with infants in daily physical activities (which encourages active exploration of the environment).	6%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	Children can predict when they will eat next and learn to regulate their eating accordingly.	6%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Food choices and how infants are fed are based on family cultural and parenting preferences.	6%

Foundational Quality <i>Infection Control</i>	The environment is cleaned, sanitized and disinfected on a regular basis (floor, tables, and toys).	5%
Foundational Quality <i>Infection Control</i>	Program practices are used that eliminate the spread of germs for example, - Hand-washing procedure from the Minnesota Department of Health is used. - Diapering procedure from the Minnesota Department of Health is used. - Sick child exclusion regulations from Minnesota Licensing are followed.	5%
Foundational Quality <i>Supervision</i>	Extra supervision is provided to children who are physically aggressive (such as children who push, hit or bite) to reduce the possibility of injuries.	5%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	Do you have at least one book per child, plus five other books?	5%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Books</i>	Provider reads children's favorite books often to give them the opportunity to notice the same sound patterns. Provider asks questions and allows children to respond to the story.	5%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Writing</i>	Provider offers opportunities for children to draw and print using markers, crayons and pencils.	5%
Blocks and Dramatic Play <i>Dramatic Play</i>	Kitchen/housekeeping materials (pots, pans, dishes, food)	5%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Art tools (scissors, stencils, stamps/stamp pad, punchers, glue sticks)	5%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	Are your dining furniture and eating utensils age-appropriate and developmentally suitable for children?	5%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	The provider follows the requirements for milk and water that were modified in The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.	5%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Are young infants fed according to a feeding plan that you and the child's parent(s) develop together?	5%
Promoting Acceptance and <i>Diversity</i>	Do you communicate with children in a positive manner using the child's home language for common objects, people, toys, etc.	5%

Foundational Quality <i>Safety</i>	Provider uses infant bottles, plastic containers and toys that do not contain polyvinyl chloride (PVC), bisphenol A (BPA), phthalates or lead.	4%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Language</i>	Provider listens and responds to children's attempts to communicate both verbally and non-verbally.	4%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Do you follow CACFP or USDA requirements in regard to milk served? Children ages 12 to 23 months are served only whole milk; children older than 2 must be served low-fat (1 percent) or fat-free (skim) milk.	4%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	The provider prepares healthy meals and snacks that are age and developmentally appropriate for children in the program.	4%
Foundational Quality <i>Supervision</i>	Licensing ratios are met and children are within sight and hearing at all times, consistent with licensing regulations.	3%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Atmosphere</i>	Provider helps children understand and respect differences in people.	3%
Books, Literacy and Writing <i>Writing</i>	Lined/unlined paper, writing tools	3%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i>	Drawing (markers, crayons, colored pencils, chalk)	3%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Adequate Time</i>	Infants are touched and cuddled throughout the day (which helps their physical growth and relieves stress).	3%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	The provider promotes and maintains a pleasant mealtime environment, encouraging interaction and conversation.	3%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Do you promote and support breastfeeding?	3%
Foundational Quality <i>Infection Control</i>	Children are taught to use age-appropriate health practices such as washing hands, brushing teeth, using tissues to blow noses and covering sneezes. www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/infectioncontrol/pre/standard.html	2%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Atmosphere</i>	Children and their families are not stereotyped or left out of any activity because of race, gender, ethnicity, ability or any other personal characteristic.	2%

Physical Activity and Development <i>Physical Environment</i>	Do you follow the recommended guidelines for age appropriate amounts of active playtime for all age groups that you care for in your home?	2%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Are your menus planned to accommodate food allergies and other special dietary needs?	2%
Foundational Quality <i>Infection Control</i>	Appropriate supplies are accessible for maintaining cleanliness.	1%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Language</i>	Are there frequent adult-child and child-child conversations?	1%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Atmosphere</i>	Do you set limits to help children manage their emotions and behavior, rather than use harsh or abusive actions or language?	1%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Adequate Time</i>	Infants and toddlers Do you encourage large motor activities including extending arms and legs, sitting, rolling, crawling, and walking with supports?	1%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Adequate Time</i>	Is your environment safe for infants to actively explore your home environment?	1%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Adequate Time</i>	Do you provide opportunities for structured and unstructured active play each day?	1%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Types of Activity</i>	Children are offered the opportunity each day for unstructured play, which can promote imagination, creative thinking and social skills.	1%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Do your menus limit (or avoid) foods that are high in sugar, saturated fat and salt?	1%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Is drinking water available and accessible to the children at all times?	1%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Language</i>	Do you talk with all children throughout the day?	0%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Language</i>	Infants and toddlers Do you acknowledge and respond to infants' and toddlers' use of simple sounds, words, gestures?	0%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Social-Emotional</i>	Are you attentive, quick to smile, and show physical affection? Is it obvious to others that you enjoy caring for children?	0%

Adult Child Relationships <i>Atmosphere</i>	Do you provide a warm and positive environment?	0%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Atmosphere</i>	Do you use positive guidance and redirection?	0%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Atmosphere</i>	Are you respectful of children's feelings, helping them to identify how they feel and offering ideas for how they can appropriately express their feelings?	0%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Atmosphere</i>	Are you respectful of children's varying developmental stages, abilities and needs?	0%
Adult Child Relationships <i>Atmosphere</i>	Are you respectful of the various cultures and economic status of the children in your care?	0%
Physical Activity and Development <i>Adequate Time</i>	Do you encourage toddlers to participate in large motor activities such as pushing/pulling, climbing, throwing, riding trikes?	0%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	Are children provided adequate time to eat meals and snacks?	0%
Healthy Eating <i>Eating Environment</i>	Are meals and snacks served on a regular schedule?	0%
Healthy Eating <i>Menus</i>	Are children provided healthy beverages (e.g. water, 100 percent fruit juice and low-fat milk) and are CACFP (Child & Adult Care Food Program) meal patterns followed to meet their fluid needs?	0%

Appendix E: Infant Toddler ESA Item Variability

Content Area AGE GROUP	ESA Item	Item Variability (% Sometimes/ Rarely/ No)
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music</i> INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Do teachers tape record a child or group singing and play it for children to hear?	88%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Using family-style meal service provides young children some choice in the types and amounts of food selected.	83%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Does the program use family-style meal service? (This means that children serve themselves, or in cases where that is not safe – such as when foods are too hot—the adult takes direction from the child on how much to serve.)	70%
Healthy Eating INFANTS	Does the program have a designated space for mothers to breastfeed their infants (not a rest room)?	46%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Have teachers been trained annually in meeting the needs of children with special needs?	42%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning TODDLERS	Lacing toys/cards (simple shapes)	41%
Blocks and Dramatic Play TODDLERS	Opportunities are provided for children and their families to share experiences through storytelling, puppets or other props to support the oral tradition common among many cultures.	41%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music</i> INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers expose children to a variety of music and introduce musical instruments from many cultures.	40%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS	Infants use Exersaucers, swings and bouncy chairs no more than 30 minutes per day.	37%
Blocks and Dramatic Play TODDLERS	Dramatic play materials are available to and within reach of the children. The play accessories are representative of the various cultural and ethnic groups within both the families' communities and society in general.	36%

Blocks and Dramatic Play TODDLERS	Accessories are stored near the block area so children know they can be used with blocks.	35%
Screen Time INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Infants and toddlers (under age 24 months) do not watch television or video, or use computers for any amount of time.	34%
Screen Time INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers do not use TV, DVDs or computers with children under 2 years of age.	33%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS AND TODDLERS	The program offers information about physical activity and growth to families.	31%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Does the program provide parents with information about the importance of physical activity to children's overall growth, development and learning?	29%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Parents receive information about nutrition when they first enroll their children.	29%
Screen Time INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers do not use television/video viewing as a reward in preschool classrooms	29%
Blocks and Dramatic Play INFANTS	Pots and pans	29%
Screen Time INFANTS AND TODDLERS	The program has and follows a written policy on screen time that includes staff behaviors, education and screen time use.	29%
Blocks and Dramatic Play INFANTS	Blocks and dramatic play materials are available to and within reach of the children. The play accessories are representative of the various cultural and ethnic groups within both the families' communities and society in general.	26%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning INFANTS	Hanging items to bat or grasp	26%
Healthy Eating INFANTS	Are teachers trained in ways to promote and support breastfeeding?	26%
Foundational Quality Safety	On a monthly basis, program checks for information about the recall of products that are in use in the home.	26%
Foundational Quality Supervision	Extra supervision is provided to children who are physically aggressive (such as children who push, hit or bite) to reduce the possibility of injuries	24%
Books and Literacy INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Book area has pictures and storybooks that reflect the different cultures of children and families served in the program and the community	23%

Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i> INFANTS	For older infants, the program provides exposure to art materials.	22%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Holidays and celebrations reflect rituals and practices of the majority culture, as well as those that are unique to the culturally diverse children and families served in the early childhood setting and the broader community.	22%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning INFANTS	Pop-up/activity boxes	21%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning TODDLERS	Bead mazes	20%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning TODDLERS	Nested cups (at least three in a set)	20%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music</i> INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers intentionally introduce children to a variety of musical experiences every day through singing during transitions or routines and through dancing.	20%
Foundational Quality Safety	Classroom uses infant bottles, plastic containers and toys that do not contain polyvinyl chloride (PVC), bisphenol A (BPA), phthalates or lead	20%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers seek health consultation (environmental adaptation, care provision, plan development, training) for infants with special health needs.	20%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	The program has and follows anti-bias policies and procedures and is written in families' home languages.	19%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Do teachers communicate with children using the child's home language for common objects and people?	19%
Healthy Eating INFANTS	Do families of infants receive information on how to store and label breast milk brought to the program?	19%
Foundational Quality Furnishings for Play and Learning	There is a cozy area where one to two can rest or play quietly	18%

Adult Child Relationships Language INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers routinely expand on children’s language, introduce a rich and varied vocabulary, and ask open-ended questions that challenge children to express their ideas. (“Expand” means using more words than the child uses. For example, for every single word a child gives you, you add two or three more words. For everything a child notices about something, introduce two more ideas or concepts.)	18%
Healthy Eating INFANTS	Are teachers trained in infant feeding that includes storage and safe handling of breast milk?	18%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Are children exposed to languages other than their own?	17%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Do curricula and activities provide children opportunities to learn about, be tolerant of and empathize with different cultures?	16%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	The child care director and teachers support and model healthful eating behaviors.	16%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music</i> INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers introduce music to infants by using different types of music and singing, and music and movement activities (clapping, dancing, or marching)	16%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music</i> INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Do teachers sing during transition times?	16%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Do the program menus limit (or avoid) foods that are high in sugar, saturated fat and salt?	16%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Are the program menus planned to accommodate cultural and ethnic diversity?	16%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Do parents of children enrolled in the program receive information about healthy eating?	16%
Healthy Eating INFANTS	The program has a policy that supports breastfeeding and is communicated to families of infants.	15%
Healthy Eating INFANTS	Teachers have training on infant feeding practices.	15%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs INFANTS AND TODDLERS	If special adaptive furnishings are used, are they used as directed by the IEP, 504 Plan, IFSP or as agreed upon by parents and staff?	15%
Healthy Eating	Do teachers sit and eat with the children?	15%

TODDLERS		
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Are teachers trained and skilled to respond to children's culture, race and gender to promote a multicultural community?	15%
Healthy Eating INFANTS	Is a feeding plan completed by the family and posted regularly?	14%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Does the physical environment reflect a variety of cultures, languages, abilities and talents, including those of families served by the program?	14%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	The program promotes diversity in regard to all aspects of cultural, ethnic and lifestyle differences.	14%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music</i> INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers initiate (begin) music experiences. Teachers avoid playing loud background music that interferes with conversations.	14%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music</i> INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers gently bounce infants on their laps to the rhythm of the song.	14%
Books and Literacy INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Staff members use books to help children learn word recognition, vocabulary and print concepts. These activities help children make the connection between words and pictures. (Concept books include opposites such as up and down, in and out, same and different, and cause and effect.)	13%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Children are given ample physical activity each eight-hour day. Toddlers should be given 60 to 90 minutes.	13%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i> TODDLERS	Three different art activities are offered at least three times a week.	13%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i> TODDLERS	Modeling clay or Play Do and rolling pin, small plastic utensils	13%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i> TODDLERS	Older toddlers can use simple art supplies each day. Teachers encourage children to explore different materials such as paints and brushes or other utensils, modeling clay or Play Doh, crayons.	13%

Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i> TODDLERS	Children are given opportunities to use a variety of art materials to express their ideas and creativity. Teachers describe, discuss and accept the process as well as the product of children's activities with creativity and the arts.	13%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	The mealtime environment is safe, pleasant and encourages healthy eating. Food is never used as a reward or punishment; children are encouraged, but not forced, to eat. (The "two-bite" rule is an example of forcing children to eat.)	13%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Teachers promote and maintain a pleasant mealtime environment, encouraging interaction and conversation.	13%
Books and Literacy INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Does the classroom have literacy games/activities?	13%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers should select opportunities to display the abilities and talents of children in care through books, posters or materials.	13%
Blocks and Dramatic Play TODDLERS	Soft animals (real-looking)	13%
Physical Activity and Development TODDLERS	Fixed equipment and structures with safety mats underneath equipment	13%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Are parents and guardians encouraged to provide feedback to staff on the children's menus?	13%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Are the plans available for teachers to see when working with the children?	12%
Adult Child Relationships Classroom Atmosphere INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers provide opportunities for children to use different ways of expressing their feelings and controlling their impulses. Teachers encourage children to express their feelings, to listen to one another and to solve their own conflicts Do they set limits to help children manage their emotions and behavior, rather than use harsh or abusive actions or language?	12%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Do program materials and the environment reflect children's diverse abilities and talents?	12%
Blocks and Dramatic Play INFANTS	There are pictures and non-breakable mirrors at eye level for crawling infants.	12%

Blocks and Dramatic Play TODDLERS	Puppets	12%
Blocks and Dramatic Play TODDLERS	Dress-up clothing and accessories (straw hat, firefighter hat, baseball cap, briefcase, purse, doctor or nurse scrubs, scarves)	12%
Blocks and Dramatic Play TODDLERS	Dolls and doll furnishings such as crib, stroller	12%
Blocks and Dramatic Play TODDLERS	Teachers encourage children to try out various pretend roles in play or with objects used for make-believe.	12%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers communicate positive and supportive messages about flexible, male/female roles, while showing respect for the traditional roles of men and women in other cultures.	10%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning INFANTS	Teachers provide opportunities for conversation using everyday words to indicate space, location, shape and size of objects.	10%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music</i> INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Do teachers initiate singing (while using puppets, in different pitches) with children?	10%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Art</i> TODDLERS	Collage materials (safe size, materials) on contact paper	10%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS AND TODDLERS	A variety of equipment is available and in good repair.	10%
Blocks and Dramatic Play TODDLERS	Types of blocks: hollow brick cardboard blocks, homemade blocks made from tissue boxes, large colored cubes, hard and soft plastic blocks.	9%
Blocks and Dramatic Play TODDLERS	Pots, pans, dishes, play food	9%
Blocks and Dramatic Play TODDLERS	Toy telephones (cell, push-button)	9%
Books and Literacy TODDLERS	Does the classroom have at least one book per child, plus five other books from at least four of the following categories? 1. Multicultural (different races/cultures) 2. Picture books 3. Books about routines (eating, sleeping) 4. Books with familiar objects used at home or child care 5. Rhyme, repetition	8%

	6. Concept books (nature, science) 7. Photo albums with pictures of the children in the program	
Provisions for Children with Special Needs INFANTS AND TODDLERS	The teachers work with families and other professionals to promote child development and independence.	8%
Adult Child Relationships Social-Emotional INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers show an emotional connection to children. Teachers are physically near children and join in their activities. They appear genuinely interested (make eye contact, get down to a child's eye level, use appropriate physical contact). They use a warm and calm voice. They match the children's affect. For example, when children are smiling, teachers are smiling.	8%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Do program materials and the environment reflect diverse cultures positively?	8%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers are taught techniques to meet the needs of children with different abilities.	8%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music</i> INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Music encourages children's language and motor development. Teachers encourage language and motor development through music and movement.	8%
Foundational Quality Infection Control	Children are taught to use age-appropriate health practices such as washing hands, brushing teeth, using tissues to blow noses and covering sneezes. www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/infectioncontrol/pre/standard.html	8%
Foundational Quality Safety	Equipment and materials are in good repair and there are no hazards indoors or outdoors (e.g., up-to-date, well-stocked first aid supplies and accessible first aid manual or flip chart available, sanitation procedures used, electrical outlets covered, no easy access to busy roads or streets)	8%
Healthy Eating INFANTS	Does the program's policy promote and support breastfeeding?	7%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Staff members follow the requirements for water that were modified in The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.	7%

Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning INFANTS	Fit-together toys	7%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning INFANTS	Teething toys	7%
Healthy Eating INFANTS	Are teachers trained in responding to infants' cues during feeding?	7%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning TODDLERS	Mobile toddlers can easily see and reach materials with little or no assistance from staff.	7%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS	Do teachers encourage large-motor activities including extending arms and legs, sitting, rolling, crawling, raising and lifting head, walking with supports?	7%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Children can predict when they will eat next and learn to regulate their eating accordingly.	6%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Do materials and resources used in the program show images of people in non-traditional roles?	6%
Blocks and Dramatic Play INFANTS	Teachers engage infants in play by making sounds, hiding an object or zooming a truck	6%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning TODDLERS	Puzzles with knobs, large pieces	6%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning TODDLERS	Interlocking blocks, beads to string	6%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning TODDLERS	Watercolor markers (large)	6%
Physical Activity and Development TODDLERS	Are there large-motor materials available such as push toys, materials for climbing or sliding?	6%
Blocks and Dramatic Play TODDLERS	Animals of various types (farm, zoo), sets of people (different races and ages), small vehicles (cars, trucks)	6%
Blocks and Dramatic Play TODDLERS	Blocks should be stored on low, open shelves where toddlers can easily see and reach them.	6%

Blocks and Dramatic Play TODDLERS	Staff members participate in block play according to the child's ability.	6%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music</i> INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Music activities are offered to infants and toddlers daily.	6%
Books and Literacy INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Staff members read to infants and toddlers to enhance their listening skills and active participation in naming people/animals/objects in the book, and answering simple "what" and "where" questions. Staff members provide opportunities and encourage toddlers to talk about the book, point at the page and ask questions.	6%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Is there an appropriate designated space for indoor active play when weather prohibits going outside?	6%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Is there an age-appropriate amount of active playtime scheduled each day?	6%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Children have the opportunity to engage in at least 60 minutes — and up to several hours — of unstructured physical activity each day.	6%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Are meals and snacks served to toddlers on a regular schedule?	6%
Blocks and Dramatic Play INFANTS	Toy telephones	6%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Do teachers follow an Individual Education Plan (IEP), 504 Plan or Individual Family Services Plan (IFSP) for children with a disability, as requested by parents?	5%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs INFANTS AND TODDLERS	All children can use the program's materials and equipment, including children with special needs.	4%
Provisions for Children with Special Needs INFANTS AND TODDLERS	The teachers make adjustments as needed to allow children of all abilities and skill levels to participate.	4%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music</i> INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Are different types of music played? (classical, jazz, lullabies, folk, vocal, instrumental)	4%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music</i> INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Are children given opportunities to listen to different kinds of music to encourage movement? (swaying, marching, dancing, clapping)	4%

Adult Child Relationships Language INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers imitate the sounds, words and gestures that infants and toddlers make, and introduce new sounds, words and gestures for infants and toddlers to imitate	4%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS	Is equipment such as Exersaucers, swings, bouncy chairs in good condition (free of rips, tears or cracks)?	4%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning INFANTS	Soft toys to grasp (animals, dolls)	4%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning INFANTS	Teachers provide toys and activities that are appropriate to each infant's abilities.	4%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS	Do teachers provide safe, open and interesting spaces for infants that encourage movement and activity with legs, feet, arms and hands?	4%
Healthy Eating INFANTS	Sufficient refrigerator and freezer space is available to store breast milk.	4%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Teachers follow the requirements for milk that were modified in The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.	4%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning INFANTS	Rattles to shake, squeeze and grasp, with varying noises, colors and shapes	3%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS	Children are offered the opportunity each day for unstructured play, which can promote imagination, creative thinking and social skills.	3%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	The child care center has menus that provide healthful meals and snacks following the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans. http://myplateresources.com ; http://health.gov/dietary-guidelines/	3%
Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning TODDLERS	Teachers provide opportunities for children to develop an understanding of space (filling and emptying, building, observing from different viewpoints).	3%
Music, Movement and Art Art TODDLERS	Large, non-toxic crayons with paper (ditto sheets are not used)	3%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Snack and lunch menus are posted in a place convenient for parents to review.	3%
Blocks and Dramatic Play	Does the room arrangement direct movement around, rather than through,	3%

TODDLERS	activity areas?	
Physical Activity and Development TODDLERS	Portable equipment (balls, riding toys)	3%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Does the program follow USDA requirements for milk served? Children ages 12 to 23 months are served only whole milk; children older than 2 must be served low-fat (1 percent) or fat-free (skim) milk.	3%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Is drinking water available and accessible to the children at all times?	3%
Blocks and Dramatic Play INFANTS	Soft dolls to grasp and squeeze	3%
Blocks and Dramatic Play INFANTS	Blocks of various sizes and materials (e.g. smooth sides, can be stacked)	3%
Blocks and Dramatic Play INFANTS	At least two different sets with at least 10 blocks per set	3%
Blocks and Dramatic Play INFANTS	Soft animals	3%
Books and Literacy TODDLERS	Teachers encourage children to choose books to read.	3%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music</i> INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Do teachers initiate finger-plays (Open, Shut Them, Eensy Weensy Spider, Pat-a-Cake) with children?	2%
Adult Child Relationships Classroom Atmosphere INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Children and their families are not stereotyped or left out of any activity because of race, gender, ethnicity, ability or any other personal characteristic.	2%
Music, Movement and Art <i>Music</i> INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Is there at least one musical instrument per child? (tambourine, rhythm sticks, drums, bells, homemade shakers, cymbals)	2%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Do teachers model, through their attitudes, actions and speech, respect for a variety of cultures, languages, abilities and talents?	2%
Promoting Acceptance and Diversity INFANTS AND TODDLERS	The home language of children and their parents is valued by staff.	2%
Foundational Quality Safety	There are special storage bins to put toys for cleaning that have been in a child's mouth.	2%

Adult Child Relationships Language INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers provide clear and simple instructions.	2%
Adult Child Relationships Language INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Teachers listen and respond to children's attempts to communicate both verbally and non-verbally	2%
Foundational Quality Infection Control	The environment is cleaned, sanitized and disinfected on a regular basis (floor, tables, and toys).	2%
Foundational Quality Furnishings for Play and Learning	Furnishings are child-sized and there is enough low, open shelving for toys and materials to be available.	2%
Foundational Quality Furnishings for Play and Learning	Toys are at children's levels and are available to the children any time they are not involved in a routine such as eating, sleeping or on a field trip	2%
Adult Child Relationships Classroom Atmosphere INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Are the teachers respectful of the various cultures and economic status of the children in their care?	2%
Foundational Quality Infection Control	Appropriate supplies are accessible for maintaining cleanliness.	0%
Foundational Quality Infection Control	Program practices are used that eliminate the spread of germ, for example, - Hand-washing procedure from the Minnesota Department of Health is used. - Diapering procedure from the Minnesota Department of Health is used. - Sick child exclusion regulations from Minnesota Licensing are followed.	0%
Foundational Quality Supervision	Licensing ratios are met and children are within sight and hearing of a teacher at all times, consistent with licensing regulations.	0%
Foundational Quality Supervision	Program has supervision policies and procedures	0%
Adult Child Relationships Language INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Are there frequent adult child and child-child conversations?	0%
Adult Child Relationships Language INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Do teachers talk with all children throughout the day?	0%
Adult Child Relationships Language INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Do teachers interact with children throughout the day, naming objects and actions, describing activities and routines, and asking questions?	0%

Adult Child Relationships Language INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Do teachers acknowledge and respond to infants' and toddlers' use of simple sounds, words and gestures?	0%
Adult Child Relationships Social-Emotional INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Are teachers attentive, quick to smile, and do they show physical affection? Is it obvious that the teachers enjoy the children and their work?	0%
Adult Child Relationships Classroom Atmosphere INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Is the classroom's tone positive?	0%
Adult Child Relationships Classroom Atmosphere INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Are the teachers respectful of children's feelings, helping them to identify how they feel and offering ideas for how they can appropriately express their feelings?	0%
Adult Child Relationships Classroom Atmosphere INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Do teachers use positive guidance and redirection? Do they set limits to help children manage their emotions and behavior, rather than use harsh or abusive actions or language?	0%
Adult Child Relationships Classroom Atmosphere INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Are the teachers respectful of children's varying developmental stages, abilities and needs?	0%
Books and Literacy INFANTS	Does the classroom have at least one book per child, plus five other books from the following categories? 1. Board, cloth or plastic books 2. Story books 3. Activity books (Pat the bunny, I Spy)	0%
Books and Literacy INFANTS	Does the classroom have a variety of sturdy books with appropriate content for infants (clear, colorful pictures with minimal text)?	0%
Books and Literacy INFANTS	Teachers read books to infants while holding them or sitting close to them	0%
Books and Literacy TODDLERS	Teachers encourage toddlers to turn pages of the book.	0%
Blocks and Dramatic Play INFANTS	Mirror	0%
Blocks and Dramatic Play TODDLERS	Does the program have a least two different sets of blocks with at least 10 blocks per set?	0%

Fine Motor, Math and Science Learning TODDLERS	Finger paints (non-toxic)	0%
Music, Movement and Art Art INFANTS	Are developmentally appropriate art materials available for older infants (12 months and older)? For example, finger paints with non-toxic paints; small amounts of modeling clay or Play Doh; large crayons (such as old crayons melted in muffin tins and cooled) to grasp and make marks on paper.	0%
Music, Movement and Art Art TODDLERS	Drawing (markers, crayons, colored pencils, non-toxic felt pens)	0%
Music, Movement and Art Music INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Are toys that make noise available to children? (push-pull, noise-making rattles)	0%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS	Do teachers provide a safe environment for active physical exploration?	0%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS	Infants are touched and cuddled throughout the day to stimulate physical growth.	0%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS	Teachers interact with infants in daily physical activities that encourage active exploration of their environment.	0%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS	Teachers structure time during the day for infants to spend time on their tummies, to strengthen their neck and back muscles.	0%
Physical Activity and Development TODDLERS	Do teachers encourage large-motor activities including kicking, pushing, pulling, jumping, climbing, throwing, and riding a trike with or without pedals?	0%
Physical Activity and Development TODDLERS	Children are offered the opportunity each day for unstructured play, which can promote imagination, creative thinking and social skills.	0%
Physical Activity and Development INFANTS AND TODDLERS	Is the classroom well organized and safe, with enough room for active play?	0%
Healthy Eating INFANTS	Are younger infants fed in accordance with a feeding plan developed in cooperation with the child's family?	0%
Healthy Eating INFANTS	Are children provided healthful beverages (e.g. water, 100 percent fruit juice, breast milk or formula, or milk) and are CACFP (Child & Adult Care Food Program) meal patterns followed to meet infants' fluid needs?	0%
Healthy Eating	Teachers and families communicate about infant feeding.	0%

INFANTS		
Healthy Eating INFANTS	The program supports mothers who breastfeed their infants.	0%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Are the dining furniture and eating utensils age-appropriate and developmentally suitable for children?	0%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Are children provided adequate time to eat meals and snacks?	0%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Are the program menus planned to accommodate food allergies and other special dietary needs?	0%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Are children provided healthful beverages (e.g., water, 100 percent fruit juice and low-fat milk) and are CACFP meal patterns followed to meet children's fluid needs?	0%
Healthy Eating TODDLERS	Teachers prepare and serve healthful meals and snacks that are age and developmentally appropriate for children in the program.	0%