Program Quality Enhancement/Maintenance Incentives

Goals

The goal of program quality enhancement/maintenance incentives is to help programs meet, maintain, and achieve higher quality improvement standards by offering financial incentives.

Practice Features

This includes one-time bonus/awards or periodic/predictable incentives (such as higher reimbursement rate for subsidized care) for participating child care facilities.

Target Audience

Child care facilities

Incentives Snapshot

- **EC Profile Indicator:**
  - PLA40 - Average Star Rating for Children in 1-5 Star Care and Percent of Children in 4 and 5 star care or
  - PLA50 - Average Star Rating for Subsidized Children in 1-5 Star Care and Percent of Subsidized Children in 4 and 5 star care
- **Research supports** use within the early childhood community
- **Related Smart Start outcomes:**
  - Improved program quality
  - Decrease in teacher/director turnover
- **Training required:** No
- **Smart Start information or guidance:**
  - Consult Smart Start cost principles for items or services that are allowed
  - Incentives must be used in combination with consultation/ coaching for facilities below 4 stars

Documented Outcomes

	Type of Study	Outcomes		
		Improved program quality*	Decreased teacher turnover**	Increased application for accreditation
Boller & Del Grosso (2010)[i]	Experimental	✓	✓	
Mitchell (2012)[ii]	Descriptive			✓
Gormley & Lucas (2000)[iii]	Descriptive			✓
Yazejian & Iruka (2015)[iv]	Descriptive	✓		

This table contains outcomes found to be associated with the program or approach. Individual studies may contain additional outcomes that were tested and not found to be associated with the program or approach.

*Aligned with the Smart Start outcome *Improved program quality*
**Aligned with Smart Start outcome *Decrease in teacher turnover*

Research Evidence for Incentives

- Preliminary research shows incentives have been associated with increases in observed quality which may or may not be reflected in actual quality rating system scores.
- However, the strongest study only considered incentives in combination with technical assistance.

Review of Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Studies

Citation	**Boller, K., Blair, R., Del Grosso, P., & Paulsell, D. (2010). The Seeds to Success modified field test: impact evaluation findings. Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. Retrieved from: http://qrisnetwork.org/sites/all/files/seeds_to_sucess_impact.pdf**
Population and Sample	52 family child care homes and 14 centers in two communities in Washington State; included teachers, directors, and family child care providers.
Methodology	Experimental
Purpose	The study was designed to address whether Seeds: (1) improved the quality of child care available in participating child care businesses; (2) increased the amount of education, training, and technical assistance services accessed by participating child care businesses; and (3) improved the level of education and experience of the workforce employed in participating child care businesses.
Measures & Assessments	• Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) • Group size and child-adult ratio observed during conduct of ERS • Caregiver Interaction Scale • Questionnaires and Interviews

Study Implementation	• Family child care homes and centers were randomly assigned to intervention and comparison groups.
	• Each group home/center received a Seeds rating based on their scores on two quality categories: curriculum and learning environment and professional development and training.
	• Intervention group participants received:
	  ○ 8 hours of coaching per month. Coaching hours for center classrooms were divided between lead teachers and assistants, with more hours intended for lead teachers. Providers and coaches developed quality improvement plans (QIPs) that were used to guide the coaching sessions.
	  ○ Quality improvement grants based on their Seeds rating, with higher-rated programs receiving more funding.
	  ○ Professional development opportunities, including funds for training and course work. In addition, participating providers had access to funds to cover the costs of child care expenses, release time, and books.
	• The control group received only professional development opportunities, including access to funds to cover the costs of child care expenses, release time, and books.

Staff Qualifications	• Child care specialist, coach, mentor to provide TA
Key Findings	• More center teachers from the intervention groups enrolled in education and training than center teachers from the control group. • The intervention was associated with (a) decreased teacher turnover and (b) higher quality in intervention sites. • Coaching and quality improvement grants did not have a relation with Seeds scores but did impact observed quality.

Review of Meta-Analyses

None

Review of Descriptive and Non-Experimental Studies

Citation	**Gormley, W. T., & Lucas, J. K. (2000). Money, accreditation, and child care center quality. Working Paper Series. Foundation for Child Development, New York, NY.**
Population and Sample	N/A
Methodology	Descriptive
Purpose	The report presented the findings from an NAEYC study that examined the merits of providing higher reimbursement rates to accredited child care sites, as well as the merits of other policies that support and promote higher quality child care.

Measures & Assessments	• Varied across study
Study Implementation	• The NAEYC data were obtained for all centers that first applied for accreditation between January 1, 1995, and October 31, 1999. Centers from Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Utah, and Wisconsin were included in the analysis, because differential reimbursement programs had begun in those states during the time period for interest. Although several other states also implemented programs during that time, they occurred too late in 1999 for meaningful interpretation to be possible. • The data were subjected to time-series analysis to calculate the impact of the policy intervention over time while controlling for seasonal variation or other outside effects.
Staff Qualifications	• Not addressed
Key Findings	• In some instances, differential reimbursement was associated with increased accreditation application rates. • Other strategies that may have associations with increased accreditation applications include other monetary incentives and technical assistance.

Citation	**Mitchell, A. (2012). Financial incentives in quality rating and improvement systems: Approaches and effects. QRIS National Learning Network.**
Population and Sample	N/A
Methodology	Descriptive
Purpose	This short paper provides a summary of what incentives are, their uses, and effects
Measures & Assessments	• Varied across study
Study Implementation	N/A
Staff Qualifications	• Not addressed
Key Findings	• There is little research that isolates the effectiveness of incentives (as distinct from other quality enhancement strategies) • Tiered reimbursements appear to be linked to accreditation • There appears to be an association between the presence and amount of an incentive and site participation in a quality rating improvement system (QRIS) initiative • A comparison of QRIS initiatives across states suggests that incentives focus on major cost factors for quality early education, including teacher or professional compensation and the costs of quality enhancement and maintenance • Incentives appear to work best when combined with other state goals, standards, and systems, such as subsidy awards

Citation	**United States General Accounting Office (2002). Child Care: States have undertaken a variety of quality improvement initiatives, but more evaluations of effectiveness are needed. Author: Washington, DC.**
Population and Sample	The study incorporated data from state's reported use of Child Care Development and Block Grant (CCDF) funds.
Methodology	Descriptive
Purpose	The study's goal was to describe state expenditures and related quality improvement initiatives including initiatives supported by the CCDF 4 percent set-aside provision.
Measures & Assessments	• Survey • Case studies
Study Implementation	• Lead state agency officials in the 50 states and the District of Columbia were surveyed asking how much their state spent in each of nine categories, the percentage of funds spent from each funding source in each category, types of providers and caregivers that initiatives targeted, and other information. Responses were not independently verified. • Case studies were conducted in California, Massachusetts, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Wisconsin. Selection was based on geography and population density; representation of a variety of child care quality improvement initiatives; whether a state used tiered reimbursement rates as incentives for quality improvement; population's income distribution, licensing caseloads, use of Temporary Assistance for needy Families funds; and whether state licensing requirements reflect NAEYC recommendations for child-to-staff

	ratios. The purpose of the case studies was to collect data that would explain or enhance data collected by the survey.
Staff Qualifications	• Not addressed
Key Findings	• Some states use the set-aside funding for monetary incentives • Few states have studied the isolated effectiveness of incentives (grants and compensation support) for improving quality • Three states examined whether the incentives were linked to improvements in child development. One state found they were positively linked.

Citation	**Yazejian, N., & Iruka, I. U. (2015). Associations among tiered quality rating and improvement system supports and quality improvement. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 30, 255-265.**
Population and Sample	The study incorporated data from a tiered quality rating improvement system (TQRIS). The dataset included information on 412 programs, including 342 child care centers and 70 family child care homes. The Miami-Dade sites participated in the TQRIS from 2008 to 2013.
Methodology	Descriptive
Purpose	The study's goal was to assess the relation between Miami-Dade's TQRIS (Quality Counts) and improvement in the quality of Miami-Dade child care facilities.
Measures & Assessments	• Quality Counts rating system
Study Implementation	• The data for the study were from the Quality Counts data system, managed in the web-based Early Learning System (WELS), and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Data collections for the system included: ○ Classroom observations conducted by contract agency personnel who were trained by the environmental rating scale (ERS) developers, ○ Staff and provider qualifications gathered from the state registry system, ○ Staff education levels obtained from college transcripts and uploaded into the data system, ○ Ratio and group sizes self-reported by program directors and verified by the contracting agency that conducted classroom observations when they were onsite, and ○ Family engagement and program administration documents reviewed and verified on site by TQRIS program staff. • The periodic error and missing data checks are conducted and corrections made as necessary but detailed information about the reliability of the data is not documented.
Staff Qualifications	• Not addressed
Key Findings	• Financial support to providers was significantly related to child care center quality improvements. • Future studies should examine both the amount of awards available and specific types of purchases or uses for the funds.

End Notes

[i] Boller, K., Blair, R., Del Grosso, P., & Paulsell, D. (2010). The seeds to success modified field test: impact evaluation findings. Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. Retrieved from: http://qrisnetwork.org/sites/all/files/seeds_to_sucess_impact.pdf

[ii] Mitchell, A. (2012). Financial incentives in quality rating and improvement systems: Approaches and effects. QRIS National Learning Network. Retrieved from: http://www.qrisnetwork.org/sites/all/files/resources/gscobb/2012-05-24%2015:13/Approaches%20to%20Financial%20Incentives%20in%20QRIS.pdf

[iii] Gormley, W. T., & Lucas, J. K. (2000). Money, accreditation, and child care center quality. Working Paper Series. Foundation for Child Development, New York, NY.

[iv] Yazejian, N., & Iruka, I. U. (2015). Associations among tiered quality rating and improvement system supports and quality improvement. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 30, 255-265.

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