



SLDS Topical Webinar Summary

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) and Early Childhood Integrated Data Systems (ECIDS)

Many states engaged in federal grant work related to early childhood care and education are building data systems to support program and policy decisionmaking related to young children and their families. Two systemic efforts, a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) and an early childhood integrated data system (ECIDS), draw on a variety of early childhood data sources to produce information relevant to the needs of their respective stakeholders. Although QRIS and ECIDS efforts serve different purposes within a state's early childhood and education communities, coordinating across the two systems can result in efficiencies in data collection as well as increased capacity to address policy and programmatic questions of statewide interest.

This publication describes the goals and purposes of a QRIS and an ECIDS as well as how states can approach coordinating work on both systems.

What Is a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)?

A QRIS is designed to measure, rate, and disseminate information about the quality of early care and education programs including licensed child care centers, home-based programs, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, and state prekindergarten programs. A QRIS publishes tiered quality ratings—using “stars” or other quality designations for the tiers—for each participating program based on its performance on quality standards related to curriculum, assessment, the learning and caregiving environment, staff-child interaction, family engagement, staff qualifications, and administrative practices.

QRISs are frequently administered by a state's human services or education agency in partnership with universities and other organizations providing support for early care and education. Although QRIS rating processes and objectives vary from state to state, the general goals of a QRIS are

- to improve the quality of early care and education programs;
- to increase the number of children with high needs who participate in high-quality programs;
- to support parent decisionmaking about early care and education; and
- to support and improve children's development and school readiness.

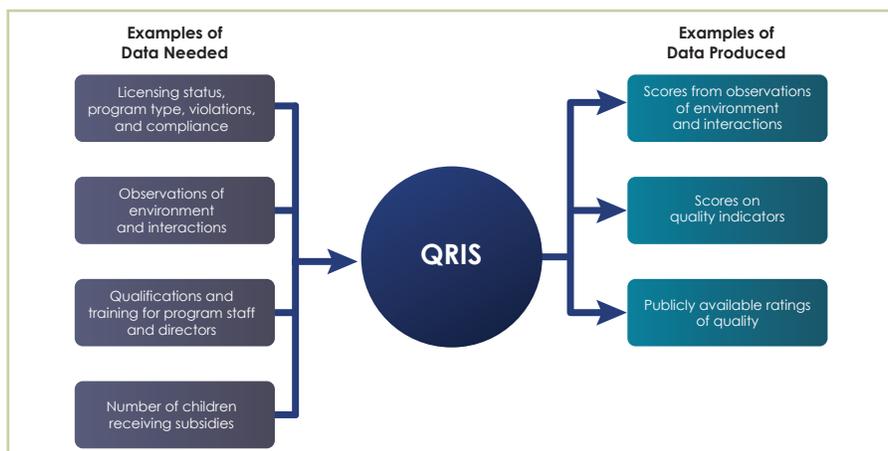


Figure 1. Examples of data needed and produced by a QRIS

This product of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) was developed with the help of knowledgeable staff from state education agencies and partner organizations. The content of this brief was derived from a Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) Grant Program monthly topical webinar that took place on October 1, 2014. The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the IES SLDS Grant Program. We thank the following people for their valuable contributions:

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For more information on the IES SLDS Grant Program or for support with system development, please visit <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/SLDS>.



To achieve these goals, QRISs collect data at the individual program level related to program licensing (including program type, current status, and any violations or compliance issues), staff qualifications and training, program administration data, and documentation about curriculum and assessment processes (see figure 1, previous page). Some also collect observations of the program environment and interactions. These data are reviewed, verified, and summarized to produce a rating. Increasingly, QRISs collect data on enrollment of children with high needs and children receiving child care subsidies to determine eligibility for incentives and for reporting purposes.

Participation in most QRISs is voluntary, meaning that programs must be recruited and enrolled to be evaluated and rated and to have their ratings published, usually online. In addition to coaching and mentoring to help programs improve their ratings, many states offer incentives such as recognition on the QRIS website, tiered reimbursement for children receiving child care subsidies, improvement grants, or scholarships for professional development to programs that participate in the QRIS. Even with incentives, most states see a participation rate of about 20 to 50 percent of early childhood programs taking part in the QRIS. Some states have made participation in the QRIS mandatory for programs serving children receiving subsidies or for center-based programs participating in the prekindergarten program. These mandatory features are related to higher participation rates in QRISs.

What Is an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS)?

An ECIDS collects data from multiple agencies serving young children ages birth to 8 with the goal of integrating, maintaining, storing, and reporting information about early childhood that is not available from any individual agency's data system. Like a QRIS, an ECIDS might include data from a range of early childhood care and education providers, including public preschools, Head Start and Early Head Start, private centers, Part B Section 619 special education programs, and Part C programs for children with disabilities. However, rather than evaluating individual programs, an ECIDS is designed to provide more comprehensive information about early childhood services and outcomes in the state. In addition, an ECIDS may form part of a P-20W+ (early childhood through workforce) statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) used to answer broader questions about the education, health, and social services children receive and the impact of those services on future education and workforce outcomes.

ECIDS work is often led by a state education, health, or social services agency, or by a statewide office of early learning. An ECIDS integrates data from a large number of

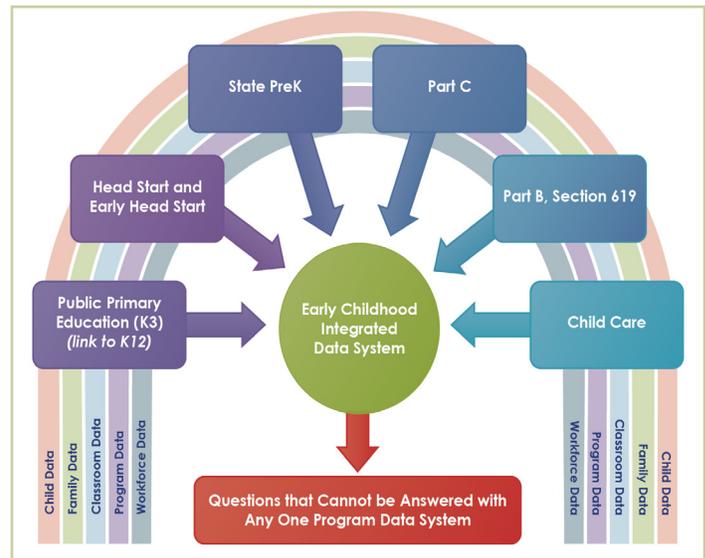


Figure 2. Data types and sources included in an ECIDS

agencies and programs involved in early childhood care and education, but it is not intended to replace the data systems used by individual contributing agencies.

Benefits and Challenges to Coordinating QRIS and ECIDS Efforts

Although they serve different roles in evaluating early care and education services, a state's QRIS and ECIDS might draw data from similar sources and provide information to similar audiences. Table 1 (next page) highlights some of the key similarities and differences between the two types of data systems.

Any of a number of agencies or partnerships of agencies might be responsible for managing a QRIS or an ECIDS, and despite the similar players involved in each, it is possible for QRIS and ECIDS work to be carried out in parallel by different teams with little or no communication or collaboration. Coordination between QRIS and ECIDS work offers many possible benefits for both systems as well as greater insight into the role and impact of early childhood activities for the state.

By communicating with each other about the needs and goals of their systems, QRIS and ECIDS teams as well as their stakeholders gain greater clarity into the roles each system fills in the state's early childhood activities. The teams also have the opportunity to identify common data elements and sources and work together to strengthen collection, management, and governance practices to ensure a higher level of data quality for both systems.

Moreover, by sharing data across the QRIS and the ECIDS, states gain greater capacity to answer critical questions about early care and education. In general, the growth in early childhood, education, and workforce data collections

	QRIS	ECIDS
Purpose	To improve and communicate information about the quality of early care and education programs	To answer program and policy questions that cannot be answered using any individual agency's data system
Led by ...	Education, human/ social services agencies or offices of early learning in partnership with universities, resource and referral agencies and other community partners	Cross-agency partnerships of education, health, human or social services agencies, and offices of early learning
Audiences	Families, early learning workforce, legislators, researchers	Families, early learning workforce, legislators, researchers
Types of Data Collected	Disaggregated or aggregated data from licensing authorities, workforce registries, and observations related to quality standards	Disaggregated data at the child, family, classroom, program, and workforce levels from early childhood programs and service providers that can be aggregated as needed
Types of Information Produced	Standards-based quality ratings of individual programs	Information about broader early childhood care and education efforts and outcomes
Sample Questions to Be Answered with Data	Do at least 50 percent of staff in this program hold a bachelor's degree?	What percentage of publicly funded programs have teachers who hold bachelor's degrees?

Table 1. Comparison of QRIS and ECIDS characteristics

in recent decades has allowed states to begin asking more complex and specific questions about the impact of early childhood programs on student success. For example, in addition to asking whether half-day programs, full-day programs, or home-based care better prepare children for kindergarten, states can now examine how factors such as teacher education, family income, health indicators, and a program's quality rating play into that preparation. When the program-specific data and evaluation information housed in a QRIS are linked with the comprehensive, statewide early childhood data in an ECIDS, early childhood leaders are in an even stronger position to answer these questions. Depending on the data included in each system, questions that might be jointly addressed with QRIS and ECIDS data could include the following:

- What percentage of children receiving child care subsidies receive care at programs that are rated in the top levels of the QRIS?
- Do children on subsidy who attend a QRIS-rated program have better outcomes than children on subsidy who do not attend a QRIS-rated program? If so, what rating levels are associated with enhanced outcomes?
- Compared to programs that are not enrolled in the QRIS, do QRIS-rated programs differ on key characteristics such as geography, program type, funding, or director qualifications?

- What factors are associated with increased QRIS ratings over time?
- What amount of technical assistance provided to QRIS programs helps them increase their ratings?
- What specific features of technical assistance are linked to positive outcomes (e.g., dosage, intensity)?
- Are there particular technical assistance approaches or methods that are more successful with home-based versus center-based programs?

First Steps Toward Coordination

Most states are in the early stages of implementing a QRIS and an ECIDS and of considering opportunities for collaboration between the two systems. The form that QRIS and ECIDS collaboration takes will be determined by the needs and goals of both systems and of the broader early childhood community in each state. Even so, all plans for collaboration need to begin by developing a common understanding of what data are collected by each system, why they are collected, how they are used, and where there might be duplication. From there, the QRIS and ECIDS teams can start to determine where that duplication is necessary and where the data collection processes might be streamlined by sharing data. Tools such as the Common Education Data Standards (CEDs) and the INQUIRE

Data Toolkit for QRISs can help teams compare data elements from different systems using common definitions and terminology.

For QRIS administrators, it will be important to examine what data elements included in the ECIDS can be used to help calculate quality ratings. These elements might include data about program licensing and staff qualifications. The QRIS team will also need to decide what data related to program quality ratings might be appropriate to include in the ECIDS. The ECIDS administrators can help determine what level of QRIS data—whether the aggregate star rating or the disaggregated observation and evaluation data for each quality standard—will be most useful in the ECIDS. Additionally, if QRIS data are included in the ECIDS, the ECIDS team will need to ensure that appropriate QRIS staff members are included in ECIDS data governance groups and processes.

Both a QRIS and an ECIDS provide vital information to families, early childhood professionals, researchers, and policymakers about the characteristics and impact of early care and education programs. By coordinating efforts

Questions to Consider for QRIS and ECIDS Coordination

- Who is working on the QRIS and the ECIDS in your state?
- What are the purposes of the QRIS and the ECIDS in your state? What data are reported in each system, and at what level of detail or aggregation?
- What are the key data sources for the QRIS and the ECIDS?
- Where do the key data sources for the QRIS and the ECIDS originate?
- What data are being captured in both systems?

rather than operating both systems in isolation, states have a stronger opportunity not only to meet the stated needs and goals of both systems, but also to deepen their understanding of the role early childhood services play in the success and wellbeing of young children.

Useful Tools for Developing and Mapping Early Childhood Data Systems

Common Education Data Standards (CEDS)

<https://ceds.ed.gov>

CEDS is a national collaborative effort to develop voluntary, common data standards for a key set of education data elements to streamline the exchange, comparison, and understanding of data across P-20W (early childhood through workforce) institutions and sectors.

INQUIRE Data Toolkit

<http://inquiredatatoolkit.org/>

The Quality Initiatives Research and Evaluation Consortium (INQUIRE), funded by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families, is a community of researchers working to identify issues and exchange resources related to the research and evaluation of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRISs) and other quality initiatives. The INQUIRE Data Toolkit was designed to provide tools to support effective data collection and the use of data to answer important policy and reporting questions through the use of common data elements.

SLDS Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) Toolkit

<https://slds.grads360.org/#program/ecids-toolkit>

The SLDS ECIDS Toolkit was designed for use by any state regardless of where it is in the process of developing an ECIDS. It is organized into seven components—Purpose and Vision, Planning and Management, Stakeholder Engagement, Data Governance, System Design, Data Use, and Sustainability—each of which contains a set of key indicators that describe the ideal characteristics of an ECIDS within that component.

Additional Resources

Child Trends

<http://www.childtrends.org/>

Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance

<https://elc.grads360.org/>

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Resources

INQUIRE Data Toolkit

<http://inquiredatatoolkit.org/>

Best Practices in Data Governance and Management for Early Care and Education: Supporting Effective Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/iruka_brief_508_compliant1_optimized.pdf

Best Practices in Ensuring Data Quality in Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/data_quality_brief_508_compliant.pdf

Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) Resources

SLDS Early Childhood Integrated Data System Toolkit

<https://slds.grads360.org/#program/ecids-toolkit>

SLDS Issue Brief: Answering Key Questions with an Early Childhood Data System

http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/IssueBrief_Answering_key_questions_with_an_early_childhood_data_system.pdf

SLDS Issue Brief: Early Childhood Data Governance In Action! An Introduction

http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/EC_DataGovernance.pdf

SLDS Issue Brief: Early Childhood Data Governance In Action! Initial Steps to Establish Data Governance

http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/EC_DataGovernance_Initial.pdf

SLDS Issue Brief: Identifying SLDS Users and Their Information Needs

<https://slds.grads360.org/#communities/pdc/documents/2753>

SLDS Issue Brief: What is an ECIDS?

<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/WhatisanECIDS.pdf>