

WHY NOT A MISSOURI QRS?

*Opponents of
a Quality Rating
System have
raised concerns
about rating
early childhood
and after-school
programs.*



Are the concerns really valid?

Decide for yourself...

WHY NOT?

State government shouldn't "play parent." Parents can decide on their own what a quality program is for their children.

Parents need tools to help them choose a program. One-third of parents who contact the Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral Network (MOCCRRN) specifically ask the referral specialist to tell them which programs are "the best." Currently, Missouri has no valid guide to help parents choose, beyond licensing and accreditation status. According to research, parents often believe child care is of higher quality than it actually is. ⁽¹⁾

What Many Parents Believe	The Reality
83% of parents believe that all caregivers provide children with learning opportunities.	Only 9% of children receive "a lot of positive caregiving" and 30% receive "a fair amount of positive caregiving." ⁽²⁾ (Learning opportunities are an important part of "positive caregiving.")
72% of parents believe that all caregivers are trained in first aid and CPR.	Licensing regulations do not require any personnel to be trained in first aid and CPR.
58% of parents believe that the government inspects all child care programs.	Many facilities are exempt from licensing regulation.

Government plays an important role in protecting and informing consumers. For example, restaurants are evaluated, public schools are ranked, movies are rated, and beef is graded—all in the interest of protecting the public.



In a recent study of 225 parents, 88% of them reported they would use a QRS when looking for programs. ⁽³⁾

“QRS will make parents lives easier; it will raise awareness about what quality really is, and it will give moms like me the peace of mind that their child is in good hands...and that’s priceless.”
— Parent

Families won’t be able to afford programs with higher ratings because they will raise their rates.

Generally, it does cost more to provide higher quality service than lower quality, but not as much as some might think. Data from accredited programs allow us to compare the weekly costs of programs eligible for the highest star rating with programs that are not accredited. ⁽⁴⁾

	Homes		Centers	
	Accredited	Non-Accredited	Accredited	Non-Accredited
Infant/Toddler	\$98	\$90	\$138	\$117
Preschool	\$89	\$83	\$98	\$94



If a program receives higher reimbursement rates for subsidy-receiving children based on the QRS rating, the co-pay charged by the program will likely be reduced, resulting in more affordable rates for families.

Programs will be required to be rated even though they are satisfied with the level of quality they provide.

The MO QRS, a voluntary program, provides a star rating and offers feedback about strengths and areas for improvement. The MO QRS does not require programs to increase their star ratings.

WHY NOT...

Not all programs will be able to afford to make improvements.

Although programs will need support to meet some criteria (e.g., education), other criteria can be met without programs incurring large expenses (e.g., written annual evaluations, orientations for new families, budget). MO QRS programs will have the opportunity to access state quality improvement funds. Additionally, MO QRS outlines targeted improvements that local funders can support.

“In New Mexico, despite significant fears and concerns voiced by child care providers that the cost of the quality rating improvement system would drive them out of business, the past ten years has seen a significant increase in the number of licensed child care programs statewide.”— Dan Haggard, Director, New Mexico Office of Child Development

Programs cannot afford to hire teachers with bachelor’s or master’s degrees. As a result, they will score poorly on the MO QRS.

The majority of the MO QRS criteria for lead teaching staff focus on the percentage of staff with an associate’s degree. Assistant teaching staff may meet the education criteria by completing additional annual training hours. The MO QRS does not require any staff member to earn a master’s degree. In fact, an unaccredited program that has teachers with only high school diplomas could still be rated as high as 3 stars.

MO QRS does not rate all programs serving young children and youth.

T rue—MO QRS only rates programs that comply with the basic health, safety, and nutrition requirements monitored by licensing. Using this state infrastructure yields significant cost savings since these aspects do not have to be assessed by MO QRS. Currently, if an exempt program would like to receive a rating, the program must first become licensed. To be responsive to all providers, the MO QRS State Committee is revisiting this requirement with input from license-exempt and licensed providers.



QRS will hurt smaller programs.

Small programs can score just as well as large programs. The MO QRS models were modified during the pilot to make sure that the requirements are appropriate for programs of all sizes.

There is not enough funding for children's programs in Missouri. How can I support MO QRS when the child care subsidy eligibility and reimbursement rates are so low?

It is true that the child care subsidy program is under-funded. However, providers basically receive the same subsidy rate regardless of whether they provide good quality care (qualified teachers and rich learning environments) or poor quality care (lack of teacher interaction, reliance on television to entertain children, and harsh discipline). Rather than raise reimbursement rates across the board, regardless of the quality, MO QRS provides a method to target limited state resources and reward programs that truly support families and promote quality care and learning.

Once state law, the MO QRS models will be impossible to change.

The MO QRS was created with significant input from many stakeholders. The MO QRS State Committee spent three years designing and refining the models, and data from pilot programs shaped the development of the system's components and requirements.

The Committee will review the models every five years. This process will include regional meetings and a web portal for input from parents and providers prior to the revision of the models.

Works Cited

1. National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. (2006). *Parents' perceptions of child care in the United States: NACCRRA's national parent poll*. Arlington, VA: Author.
2. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2006). *The NICHD study of early child care and youth development: Findings for children up to age 4 ½ years*. Washington, DC: Author.
3. McCuan, C., & Mayfield, W. (2007, December). *Parents' perceptions of QRS*. Presentation conducted at the QRS State Committee Meeting. Columbia, MO: Center for Family Policy & Research.
4. Missouri Child Care Resource & Referral Network. (2008, October). *Accredited vs. non-accredited rates by program type*. St. Louis, MO: Author.

After examining the pros and cons of the MO QRS, the organizations listed below urge the Missouri General Assembly to:

- **establish a QRS** to serve as an accountability tool,
- **create a Quality Improvement Fund** to support programs' efforts to increase their ratings, and
- **develop a plan to pay higher reimbursement rates** based on the quality rating (tiered subsidy).

Association for the Education of Young Children of Missouri
Boone County Coordinating Board for Early Childhood Education
Center for Family Policy & Research
Central Missouri Association for the Education of Young Children
Central Missouri Community Action
Child Day Care Association of St. Louis
Children's Trust Fund
Citizens for Missouri's Children
Department of Early Learning at the Mid-America Regional Council
First Chance for Children
Mid-America AEYC
Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral
Network (MOCCRRN)
Missouri Head Start Association
Missouri Head Start-State Collaboration Office
Missouri School Age Community Coalition
ParentLink
Partnership for Children
T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI Scholarship
United Way of Greater Kansas City
University of Missouri-Kansas City Institute for
Human Development



For more information about the MO QRS, please contact the OPEN Initiative at the Center for Family Policy & Research at (877) 782-0185 or visit www.OPENInitiative.org.

January 2009