



*From the NAEYC Public Policy Program, as amended and adopted by the NAEYC Governing Board April 2008*

Quality rating and improvement systems (which include tiered reimbursement, rated licensing and voluntary and mandatory rating systems of programs based on indicators of program quality) should be used for (1) greater consumer awareness of quality programs, (2) increasing resources to help programs improve and sustain higher quality,(3) and lead to system-wide improvements in the quality of all programs, including all settings and auspices and ages of children served.

Quality rating and improvement systems should provide a number of tiers or levels in order to provide a continuum that sets clear benchmarks of quality that build upon each other, leading to the top tier that includes program accreditation by a national early childhood program accreditation system, including NAEYC accreditation for center-based and school-based programs, and other recognized national accreditation systems for family child care and school-age care.

Multi-levelled quality ratings systems must be supported by a systemwide strategy for:

- Improving professional development and higher education opportunities for program staff and directors linked to a career pathway in the field of early childhood education.
- Enhancing compensation that reflects additional education and retention in the field.
- Increasing reimbursement rates/payments to reflect the cost of quality programs and other mechanisms to ensure that high quality programs are affordable for all families.
- Expanding family involvement and understanding of quality early childhood education in ways that are inclusive and respectful of the diversity of families and children with special needs.
- Fairly evaluating programs for meeting evidence-based conditions for quality and
- Promoting programs' continuous improvement to encourage achievement of higher tiers.

Quality rating and improvement systems should be embedded in the regulatory system to enable greater systemic improvements.

Quality rating and improvement systems should build upon and should be used to raise child care licensing standards and should address

- Physical environment, including class size and ratios as well as health and safety.

- Staff qualifications and professional development.
- Interactions between teachers, children and families.
- Developmentally and culturally appropriate curriculum and classroom practices.
- Regular program evaluation and public reporting.
- Adequate number of well-trained evaluators and access to technical assistance and mentoring to help programs reach the next level of the quality rating.
- Continuous program quality improvement.