

# Elevating the Field

Using NAEYC Early Childhood Program Accreditation  
to Support and Reach Higher Quality  
in Early Childhood Programs

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**T**he importance of high-quality early childhood education is clear: Research links it to “better cognitive function and language development,” higher rates of attendance at a four-year college, and higher rates of employment (Ramey et al. 1999, 2; NICHD 2006, 1). Unfortunately, current financing of early childhood education, as well as some of the basic state program standards, do not provide a strong foundation for levels of higher program quality. In fact, in observing settings for children three and under, the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development Early Childhood Research Network finds that the majority of the programs were only of fair quality and that only nine percent of programs were of excellent quality (Vandell & Pierce 2003). Another study rates the majority of care for older preschoolers of only medium quality (Vandell & Pierce 2003).

The need for high-quality early childhood programs that provide positive learning experiences is further underscored by the reality of families with young children under six:

- In 2001, approximately twelve million children between birth and age six, who were not yet in kindergarten, were receiving care and education services by someone other than their parents. This number represents roughly 61 percent of the children in this age group (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics 2005).
- In 2004, 62 percent of married mothers with children under age six were in the labor force, and 53 percent

of married mothers with infants under age one were in the labor force (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2005).

- The workforce participation rate for single mothers with children under six is even higher; 77 percent of these mothers work outside the home (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2005).

As a way to help systematically improve center- and school-based early childhood education settings, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) established a voluntary, national early childhood education program accreditation system in 1985. Since its inception, NAEYC Accreditation has been a powerful tool for improving the quality of early childhood programs by establishing a national standard of excellence and providing tools to help programs make quality improvements and achieve the standard.

NAEYC Accreditation can work hand in hand with the two major strategies states use to improve program quality: quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) and prekindergarten. While QRIS focus on programs for children from birth through school age and prekindergarten programs tend to focus on the school readiness of four-year-olds, NAEYC Accreditation offers both initiatives an important mechanism for improving and assuring program quality. The benefits of NAEYC Accreditation go beyond those programs that are directly involved in these state quality initiatives. The quality improvement process and definition of quality can guide program

improvements even for those programs that are not ready to commit to seeking NAEYC Accreditation.

The majority of states require child care programs to be NAEYC-accredited in order to receive higher subsidy reimbursement rates. Quality rating and improvement systems, both statewide and pilot, typically link higher tiers or levels of quality to NAEYC Accreditation and provide supports for participating programs to achieve and maintain accreditation. Seven states link prekindergarten funding to NAEYC Accreditation. Some states also provide enhancement grants or have developed public/private partnerships to facilitate quality improvements, with the specific focus on helping programs become NAEYC-accredited. Three states provide tax relief to families that send their children to high-quality early childhood programs.

The purpose of this report is to provide policy makers, key decision makers, and other interested parties an overview of the NAEYC accreditation process and to highlight ways in which states use NAEYC Accreditation as a lever for improving early childhood program quality. The report also provides recommendations for moving policy forward to support continuous program quality improvement and NAEYC Accreditation.

*(Note: NAEYC accredits programs in centers and schools serving children from birth through kindergarten. This paper examines regulations and initiatives as they relate to these early care and education programs.)*

## **NAEYC Early Childhood Program Accreditation: The mark of quality**

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NAEYC Accreditation provides an evidence-based standard of early childhood program quality. Throughout the twenty-year history of NAEYC Accreditation, research has highlighted the key role that NAEYC Early Childhood Program Accreditation plays in providing high-quality early care and education services. In a study of California child care centers, researchers found that centers that attained NAEYC Accreditation “received a higher overall center quality score than other centers” (Whitebook, Sakai, & Howes 1997, 10). The two analyses of child care centers in the National Child Care Staffing Study and

its four-year follow-up study “found that accredited centers had better-trained staff, . . . had lower staff turnover, and provided more developmentally appropriate activities and higher quality caregiving for children than did nonaccredited centers” (Jorde Bloom 1996, 15).

A 2005 study of programs in Minnesota found that children who attended NAEYC-accredited early childhood programs performed better than children in other programs on readiness indicators, regardless of parent educational attainment. Nearly twice as many children from NAEYC-accredited programs “were rated as ‘proficient’ or school ready” (Minnesota Department of Human Services 2005, 5). In addition, a 2007 study found that NAEYC-accredited programs among a group of California child care centers had higher levels of program quality and teacher sensitivity (Gerber, Whitebook, & Weinstein 2007, 342).

Similarly, an evaluation of Pennsylvania’s quality rating and improvement system, Keystone STARS, looked at the scores of individual classrooms whose quality was assessed using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale—Revised (ECERS–R). The evaluation found that participating NAEYC-accredited early childhood programs “had scores that met or exceeded STAR 4 centers,” which were at the highest level of the state’s QRIS (Barnard et al. 2006, 8). As a result, researchers recommended that NAEYC-accredited centers be allowed to enter the system with a STAR 4 rating (Barnard et al. 2006).

Since these studies were completed, NAEYC Accreditation has launched a reinvented system in which new program standards have been adopted and accreditation criteria revised, with the goal of strengthening the system’s reliability and accountability as the mark of quality. The new system was officially launched in September 2006 and includes new steps and requirements that clarify the accreditation process and help programs prepare for each step. The reinvented NAEYC early childhood program accreditation system now includes

- new program assessment tools and procedures field-tested by independent researchers to develop reliable measures of program quality;
- intensive training and monitoring of the individuals who make on-site assessment visits to ensure that assessments are conducted effectively, consistently, and reliably;

- a five-year term of accreditation with random unannounced visits and strengthened annual reports; and
- new policies and procedures for verifying that NAEYC-accredited programs sustain the level of quality associated with the standards and criteria.

For additional information on the new NAEYC early childhood program accreditation system, see Appendices A and B. For a detailed listing of accreditation standards and criteria, as well as news and updates on the NAEYC early childhood program accreditation system, visit [www.naeyc.org/academy](http://www.naeyc.org/academy).

### **State initiatives using NAEYC Early Childhood Program Accreditation as a lever for improving quality**

While NAEYC Accreditation sets the ceiling for early childhood program quality, state child care licensing regulations lay the basic foundation for program quality. Almost every state, as well as the District of Columbia, has child care licensing regulations that establish a minimum level of quality to protect the children in state-licensed early care and education settings. These regulations can govern the full spectrum of programs, including center-based programs and family child care homes. Compliance is monitored by each state.

State child care licensing regulations typically address requirements for health and safety (of children and staff), nutrition, physical environment, teacher qualifications, teacher-child ratios, and group size—many of the same areas addressed by NAEYC Accreditation Performance Criteria. However, since licensing regulations set a baseline for quality and NAEYC accreditation criteria represent professional consensus on program excellence, there can be a significant difference between the two. In fact, states have found that additional strategies and policies are needed along with licensing to support high-quality services for all families who want or need them. Many states have worked to address disparities within their early care and education systems and to ratchet up quality beyond licensing regulations by linking various incentives to the attainment of NAEYC Accreditation. To this end, NAEYC Accreditation has been integral to two major statewide quality improve-

ment initiatives: quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) and prekindergarten.

Although QRIS are an umbrella for various early childhood initiatives and programs in a state (including, in some cases, prekindergarten programs), it is important to look at both QRIS and prekindergarten as cross-state trends that not only bring increased state funds for improving program standards but also stress continuous quality improvement by linking funding to NAEYC Accreditation. The connection between NAEYC Accreditation, a national standard, and the higher program standards that go hand in hand with QRIS and prekindergarten at the state level effectively supports and recognizes quality early childhood programs.

### **Quality rating and improvement systems**

States develop and implement QRIS with the primary goal of increasing the overall quality of early childhood programs, as well as recognizing and rewarding programs that meet higher levels of quality. QRIS begin with licensing as a foundation and set a continuum of clear benchmarks of quality, typically tiers or levels of increasing quality. They can include a broad range of early care and education programs (such as center-based child care, family child care, school-age, prekindergarten, and/or Head Start) and funding streams. The majority of QRIS are voluntary.

The word *system* is at the core of a well-functioning QRIS—that is, it is more than merely rating early childhood programs, since rating itself does not produce a greater supply of high-quality programs. In fact, the term *quality rating and improvement system* moves the focus away from rating to an emphasis on continuous quality improvement. QRIS require related efforts such as formulating standards and strong accountability measures, providing additional resources and technical assistance to improve and sustain program quality, ensuring that professional development and higher education are tied to better compensation, increasing consumer and public awareness of quality, and linking to higher child care subsidy reimbursement rates.

States have implemented QRIS at a growing pace over the past eight years; as of January 2009, 18 states (including the District of Columbia) now have a statewide QRIS and 27 are in some phase of QRIS

development. In addition, several counties and cities are implementing QRIS pilots, some with plans to eventually expand statewide. Eleven states link their QRIS to a tiered reimbursement program, which provides a higher reimbursement rate for early childhood programs that accept child care subsidies and demonstrate a level of quality beyond licensing requirements.

Sixteen states link their QRIS to NAEYC Accreditation. Some states offer programs incentives specifically for achieving NAEYC Accreditation:

- **Kentucky's** QRIS, STARS for KIDS NOW, offers grants to child care centers to help defray NAEYC accreditation fees.
- Since programs must actively seek accreditation through a specific entity (which includes NAEYC) to participate in **Maryland's** QRIS, funding is available to help registered or licensed programs pay the accreditation application fee.
- In **Ohio**, star rated programs receive annual quality achievement awards. A portion of this award can be spent on costs related to accreditation. Awards are contingent on funding, licensing compliance, and the maintenance of star rating requirements.
- **New Mexico** pays for initial accreditation costs through Aim High, the QRIS quality improvement support program. Ongoing accreditation costs are paid for with significantly higher child care subsidy payments based on the program's QRIS level.
- **Vermont's** QRIS offers a variety of financial benefits to accredited programs, including a one-time financial incentive payment and a \$1,000 bonus for accreditation, credentials, and renewals.
- Going for the Gold, the **District of Columbia's** QRIS, utilizes a stratified payment policy that provides a higher per-child reimbursement rate for centers that have received accreditation. The District of Columbia has a "Professional Development and Continuous Quality Improvement" (PDCQI) project that provides training and technical assistance to centers and family child care homes seeking national accreditation. The project, which is administered by a grantee, reimburses centers/homes for a percentage of their accreditation fees and provides financial assistance for equipment and materials where needed.
- **Pennsylvania's** Keystone STARS offers a higher child care subsidy reimbursement rate and technical

assistance for accredited programs. NAEYC-accredited programs are required to be assessed using an environment rating scale in years two and four of the accreditation cycle, to complete an annual continuous quality improvement plan (or submit the NAEYC annual report), and to document meeting the annual staff professional development hours-of-training requirement.

- The **Indiana** Accreditation Project is aligned with the state's QRIS and provides financial support for each phase of the accreditation process, as well as provider support materials. Trained professionals assist programs in achieving accreditation.

Research at the state level demonstrates how linking a QRIS to NAEYC Accreditation elevates the quality of participating programs. A 2003 evaluation of Reaching for the Stars, Oklahoma's QRIS, documented the links between accreditation and specific determinants of quality. The study included a group of centers at the highest level of the QRIS, 89 percent of which were NAEYC-accredited (Norris, Dunn, & Eckert 2003). Compared to the other centers participating in the study, accredited centers

- had higher Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) and Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale—Revised (ECERS–R) scores,
- reported the lowest staff turnover rates,
- had more directors with a bachelor's or higher degree with a specialization in early childhood/child development, and
- were more likely to employ teachers with a baccalaureate or higher degree.

The benefits of linking QRIS to NAEYC Accreditation are clear: Using a national standard of high program quality in conjunction with state quality standards ensures that more early childhood programs meet uniform measures of quality that are research- and evidence-based, regardless of the state in which the programs are located.

Appendix C lists the states with quality rating and improvement systems. Appendix D shows the states with tiered reimbursement programs. Appendix E outlines NAEYC's position on QRIS. For more information on quality rating and improvement systems, visit [www.naeyc.org/policy/state](http://www.naeyc.org/policy/state).

## State-funded prekindergarten programs

State prekindergarten programs have experienced major growth in both state investment and enrollment over the past decade. Forty-five states (including the District of Columbia) now use state funds to support prekindergarten services. Here, state-funded prekindergarten refers to specific funding allocated by the state to programs serving four-year-olds (and sometimes three-year-olds) that are focused on school readiness. They use early learning guidelines and have program standards that are higher than the state's child care licensing regulations.

What exactly is meant by higher program standards can be illustrated by using two examples: teacher-child ratios and maximum group size. NAEYC Accreditation Performance Criteria state that a classroom for four-year-olds must have a 1:10 teacher-child ratio and a maximum class size of 20. Of the 45 states investing in prekindergarten programs, 34 require a teacher-child ratio of 1:10 or lower, and 32 states set a maximum group size of 20 or less (NAEYC 2006).

The link between NAEYC Accreditation program criteria and the higher standards that come with prekindergarten funding is strengthened by funding to support higher quality. Some states embed NAEYC Accreditation within their prekindergarten program standards. Seven state prekindergarten initiatives link NAEYC Accreditation to prekindergarten funding (see Appendix F):

- For School Readiness Programs in **Connecticut** to receive funding, they must meet specific criteria, including current accreditation by NAEYC or completion of the accreditation process within three years of being awarded funds.
- **Arkansas'** state-funded prekindergarten program, Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) for School Success, requires that participating programs earn an Arkansas State Quality Approval. If a program is NAEYC accredited, it automatically holds Quality Approval.
- Recognizing that NAEYC Accreditation is "associated with positive education outcomes for children, and is one of the benchmarks of quality," **Massachusetts'** Community Partnerships for Children program required that participating center- and school-based programs be NAEYC-accredited (Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care 2005, 1). The state's current UPK Pilot Program links funding to a

variety of selected requirements, which can include NAEYC Accreditation.

## Tax credits

There is another way that some states link incentives to NAEYC Accreditation. Rather than providing incentives to programs, **Arkansas** and **Maine** offer a tax credit to families who send their children to an NAEYC-accredited program. In Arkansas, this credit essentially doubles the state child care tax credit.

**Louisiana** has a set of school readiness tax credits that are linked to the state's QRIS. Dependent on the star rating of a program—as well as the number of children enrolled in the program who receive assistance through the Child Care Assistance Program—child care teachers and directors can receive two types of refundable tax credits. In addition, employers can receive a refundable tax credit for eligible child care expenses—also dependent on the star rating of the child care program. Families may be eligible for an additional tax credit which builds upon the existing state child care tax credit and is linked to the star rating of the child care program in which the family has children enrolled

Outside of such state policies, accreditation facilitation projects that encourage and support efforts to become NAEYC-accredited are a key support for programs to improve their quality, attain NAEYC Accreditation, and take advantage of certain incentives. (For more information on accreditation facilitation projects, see Appendix G.)

## Recommendations and conclusion

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Since NAEYC Accreditation encompasses all areas of early childhood program quality, it can be a powerful lever for effecting positive change at the state level. As this report highlights, states recognize the quality gap and are working diligently to close it, but much work remains to be done.

For NAEYC Accreditation to be truly effective, other elements of the early care and education system also must function at an optimal level. In addition to adequate licensing requirements, critical elements include the capacity of higher education institutions to provide high-quality teacher and staff

preparation; the provision of meaningful ongoing professional development; the governance structures at state and local levels; affordable access for all families who choose out-of-home programs; and the financing of all parts of the system.

To ensure the success of the accreditation reinvention effort, NAEYC is committed to addressing broader systems' issues that potentially limit the effectiveness of NAEYC Accreditation. This requires enlisting allies. Advocates cannot do this work on their own; they need the support of policy makers and decision makers to ensure success. These key individuals are also important to the work of NAEYC's state and local Affiliates in supporting accreditation and encouraging continuous program quality improvement.

We recommend that policy makers and other decision makers

- Ensure adequate financing to support aspects of quality, such as higher program standards and teacher preparation, recruitment, ongoing professional development, and compensation.
- Create and support policies that promote national program accreditation while supporting and building on a strong regulatory system.
- Develop and support policies to provide financial incentives to programs that achieve national program accreditation and to ensure appropriation of adequate funds for the ongoing costs of maintaining high-quality services, which include equitable salaries for staff.
- Increase the availability of accreditation facilitation projects by securing adequate public and private funding to help all interested programs make the quality improvements necessary to meet high accreditation standards and to pay for accreditation materials and processing fees.
- Provide resources and technical assistance to help all programs meet and maintain the next higher level of QRIS criteria, with a goal of reaching the highest level linked to standards set by NAEYC Accreditation and other recognized national accreditation systems for family child care and school-age care.

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Prior to her work in the early care and education field, Davida worked at a community health center in a Boston neighborhood managing its health education and outreach activities. She was also Project Coordinator of the Welfare in Transition Project at the Radcliffe Public Policy Institute, working under Principal Investigator Lisa Dodson to document the affect that welfare reform had on women, their families, and their communities in Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Ms. McDonald has a Masters degree in Public Health with a focus on maternal and child health. She is also a Children's Defense Fund Emerging Leader (Class of 2001).

## APPENDIX A

# The New NAEYC Early Childhood Program Accreditation System

Ensuring the quality of children's daily experiences in early childhood programs and promoting positive child outcomes have always been at the heart of the NAEYC early childhood program accreditation system. The new NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Performance Criteria now refine this focus.

The ten new early childhood program standards and the criteria that elaborate them set the norm for what it means to be a high-quality program and what it takes for NAEYC-accredited programs to contribute to children's optimum development and learning. The standards and criteria are evidence based and supported by research in the field.

Collectively, the ten standards represent essential, interlocking elements of high-quality programs for all children from birth through kindergarten. These program standards cover the areas of relationships, curriculum, teaching, assessment of child progress, health, teachers, families, community relationships, physical environment, and leadership and management. The accompanying accreditation criteria have been field-tested by the Center for Improving Child Care Quality at the University of California, Los Angeles, and their internal reliability, as well as the validity of assessment instruments relative to other widely used measures of quality, has been assured.

Additional NAEYC Accreditation criteria, Emerging Practices Criteria, also have been field-tested. These are criteria identified as important aspects of program performance but are not yet widely practiced because the early childhood field and individual programs need time to develop the capacity to meet them. Until 2008, NAEYC may assess programs on Emerging Practices Criteria, but failure to meet these criteria will not be considered in the accreditation decision. However, programs that meet these criteria will receive credit for doing so.

Now, NAEYC-accredited programs must

- promote positive relationships for all children and adults to encourage each child's sense of individual worth and contribution to the community.

- implement a curriculum that promotes achievement in all areas of child development: aesthetic, cognitive, emotional, language, physical, and social.
- use developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and effective teaching approaches.
- provide ongoing assessments of a child's learning and development and communicate the child's progress to the family.
- promote the nutrition and health of children and protect children and staff from illness and injury.
- employ and support a teaching staff with the educational qualifications, knowledge, and professional commitment necessary to promote children's learning and development and support families' diverse needs and interests.
- establish and maintain collaborative relationships with each child's family.
- establish relationships with, and use the resources of, the children's communities to support achievement of program goals.
- have a safe and healthful indoor and outdoor physical environment.
- implement policies, procedures, and systems in support of strong personnel, fiscal, and program management so that all children, families, and staff have high-quality experiences.

There are also key updates to the NAEYC accreditation system:

- **New policies and procedures for verifying that a program is still complying with the accreditation criteria.** These new procedures enable the NAEYC Academy for Early Childhood Program Accreditation to verify questions of compliance without having to conduct on-site visits. This will save individual programs a significant amount of time and money and reassure families and others that NAEYC-accredited programs continue to provide high-quality learning environments for young children.
- **Annual reporting.** Since January 1, 2005, all accredited programs are required to file an annual report

each year, beginning on the accreditation anniversary date. Over the course of the new five-year term of accreditation, every program will file four annual reports. Failure to submit an annual report will be grounds for revocation, and a report indicating significant changes in the program will be grounds for a verification visit.

- **Unannounced visits.** Since January 1, 2005, programs have been randomly selected for unannounced visits. The unannounced visits are an opportunity for assessors to determine if the programs are continuing to comply with accreditation criteria. If a program is not in compliance, its accreditation will be revoked. Annual reporting and unannounced verifica-

tion visits will help the Academy ensure that all programs comply with the accreditation criteria and will reassure families, employers, and others that they can rely on NAEYC's accreditation system.

- **New accreditation fee structure.** Increased fees are needed to strengthen the reliability and integrity of the system and to ensure that all programs receive prompt and efficient service. Since the accreditation system was launched in 1985, program fees have never fully covered NAEYC's costs for operating the system, with the annual loss increasing in recent years. The new fees will be spread out over the entire accreditation process, so that programs can more easily build the costs into their annual budgets.

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## APPENDIX B

### NAEYC-Accredited Early Care and Education Programs, by State\*

State	Number of Accredited Programs	Number of Children Served
Alabama	94	7,271
Alaska	16	1,547
Arizona	224	15,217
Arkansas	11	962
California	694	64,389
Colorado	82	7,531
Connecticut	408	29,815
Delaware	21	2,438
District of Columbia	84	5,851
Florida	504	43,535
Georgia	269	31,228
Hawaii	79	6,014
Idaho	20	1,590
Illinois	400	40,846
Indiana	145	12,839
Iowa	103	6,335
Kansas	62	5,564
Kentucky	119	9,511
Louisiana	33	3,003
Maine	68	3,324
Maryland	110	10,151
Massachusetts	1,074	81,016
Michigan	201	18,272
Minnesota	156	14,395
Mississippi	30	2,841
Missouri	121	11,960
Montana	17	1,293

\*As of December 2008

*(continued)*

State	Number of Accredited Programs	Number of Children Served
Nebraska	71	4,893
Nevada	30	3,912
New Hampshire	53	4,201
New Jersey	241	24,566
New Mexico	67	5,147
New York	308	27,340
North Carolina	132	11,974
North Dakota	9	932
Ohio	267	24,133
Oklahoma	83	6,655
Oregon	31	3,322
Pennsylvania	332	28,704
Rhode Island	46	3,406
South Carolina	116	11,246
South Dakota	3	491
Tennessee	132	11,407
Texas	327	38,323
Utah	17	2,182
Vermont	91	3,930
Virginia	122	11,987
Washington	101	8,838
West Virginia	24	2,245
Wisconsin	131	12,120
Wyoming	38	2,402

Source: National Association for the Education of Young Children—  
[www.naeyc.org/accreditation/center\\_summary.asp](http://www.naeyc.org/accreditation/center_summary.asp).

## APPENDIX C

### States with Quality Rating and Improvement Systems\*

State	QRIS Name	Date Started	Child Care Centers and/or Family Child Care?	Accreditation Systems Approved**	Web site
Colorado	Qualistar	2000	Both	NAEYC, NAFCC, ASCI	<a href="http://www.qualistar.org">www.qualistar.org</a>
District of Columbia	Going for the Gold	2000	Both	NAEYC, COA, NAFCC	
Indiana	Paths to Quality	2008		NAEYC, NAFCC, COA, NECPA, ASCI	<a href="http://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/2747.htm">www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/2747.htm</a>
Iowa	Iowa Child Care Quality Rating System	2006	Both	NAEYC, NAFCC, COA	<a href="http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/iqrs">www.dhs.state.ia.us/iqrs</a>
Kentucky	STARS for KIDS NOW Child Care Rating System	2001	Both	NAEYC, NAFCC, NECPA, SACS, NACEPP, COA, ASCI	<a href="http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dcc/starsforkidsnow.html">http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dcc/starsforkidsnow.html</a>
Louisiana	Quality Start	2007	Centers		<a href="http://www.qrslouisiana.com">www.qrslouisiana.com</a>
Maine	Quality for ME	2008	Both	NAEYC, AMS, NAFCC, COA	<a href="http://www.state.me.us/dhhs/ocfs/ec/occhs/qualityforme.htm">www.state.me.us/dhhs/ocfs/ec/occhs/qualityforme.htm</a>
Maryland	Maryland Child Care Tiered Reimbursement Program	2001	Both	NAEYC, NECPA, NAFCC, COA, Maryland State Department of Education	<a href="http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde/divisions/child_care/credentials/tiered">www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde/divisions/child_care/credentials/tiered</a>
Montana	Star Quality Rating System	2002	Both	NAEYC, NAFCC, COA	<a href="http://www.montanachildcare.com/check.htm">www.montanachildcare.com/check.htm</a>
New Hampshire	Licensed Plus	2006	Both	NAEYC, NAFCC	<a href="http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/CDB/licensedplus.htm">www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/CDB/licensedplus.htm</a>
New Mexico	Look for the Stars	1999	Both	NAEYC, NECPA, ASCI, NAC, ICAA, NAFCC, COA	<a href="http://www.newmexicokids.org/caregivers">www.newmexicokids.org/caregivers</a>
North Carolina	North Carolina Star-Rated License	1999	Both		<a href="http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/general/mb_revisedratedlicense.asp">http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/general/mb_revisedratedlicense.asp</a>
Ohio	Step Up to Quality	2004	Both	NAEYC, NAC, NECPA, NAFCC, COA	<a href="http://jfs.ohio.gov/cdc/stepUpQuality.stm">http://jfs.ohio.gov/cdc/stepUpQuality.stm</a>

*(continued)*

State	QRIS Name	Date Started	Child Care Centers and/or Family Child Care?	Accreditation Systems Approved**	Web site
Oklahoma	Reaching for the Stars	1998	Both	NAEYC, NECPA, COA, NAFCC, ASCI	<a href="http://www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/cc/stars">www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/cc/stars</a>
Pennsylvania	Keystone STARS	2002	Centers and large family child care homes	NAEYC, COA, NAFCC, NECPA	<a href="http://www.pakeys.org/stars">www.pakeys.org/stars</a>
Rhode Island	BrightStars	2009	Centers	NAEYC	<a href="http://www.brightstars.org">www.brightstars.org</a>
Tennessee	Star-Quality Child Care Program	2001	Both	NAEYC, NAC, NAFCC, COA	<a href="http://www.tnstarquality.org/html/star-quality.htm">www.tnstarquality.org/html/star-quality.htm</a>
Vermont	STARS (Step Ahead Recognition System) for Child Care Programs	2003	Both	NAEYC, NECPA, NAFCC, COA	<a href="http://www.starsstepehead.org">www.starsstepehead.org</a>

\*As of January 2009, states with statewide QRIS

\*\*Key to Accreditation Systems:

ACSI = Association for Christian Schools International

AMS = American Montessori Society

COA = Council of Accreditation for Services to Families and Children

ICAA = International Christian Accreditation Association

NAC = National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs

NACECPP = National Accreditation Council for Early Childhood Professional Personnel and Programs

NAEYC = Academy for Early Childhood Program Accreditation, National Association for the Education of Young Children

NAFCC = National Association for Family Child Care

NECPA = National Early Childhood Program Accreditation

SACS = Southern Association of Colleges and Universities

Sources: National Association for the Education of Young Children—  
[www.naeyc.org/ece/critical/chart1.asp](http://www.naeyc.org/ece/critical/chart1.asp); National Child Care Information Center—  
<http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/library/index.cfm?do=oll.viewitem&itemid=29591>

## APPENDIX D

### States with Tiered Reimbursement Programs\*

State	Child Care Centers and/ or Family Child Care?	Accreditation Systems** Approved for Higher Reimbursement
Arizona	Both	NAEYC, NECPA, COA, ASCI, NACECPP, NAC, AMS, NAFCC
Arkansas	Both	NAEYC, NAFCC, Arkansas Early Childhood Accreditation /Quality Approval Status
Connecticut	Both	NAEYC, COA, NAFCC
District of Columbia	Both	NAEYC, COA, NAFCC
Florida	Both	NAEYC, NECPA, ACSI, COA, NACECPP, NAC, NAFCC, and others
Hawaii	Both	NAEYC, NECPA, NAFCC
Indiana	Both	NAEYC, NAFCC, COA, NECPA, ASCI
Kentucky	Both	NAEYC, NAFCC, NECPA, SACS, NACEPP, COA
Louisiana	Center (Class A only)	NAEYC
Maine	Both	NAEYC, NAFCC, COA
Maryland	Both	NAEYC, NECPA, NAFCC, COA, Maryland State Department of Education
Massachusetts	Both	
Mississippi	Centers	NAEYC
Missouri	Both	NAEYC, COA, NAFCC, CARF, NECPA, Missouri Center for Accreditation System
Montana	Both	NAEYC, NAFCC, COA
Nebraska	Both	NAEYC, NAFCC, COA
Nevada	Both	NAEYC, NAFCC
New Hampshire	Both	NAEYC, NAFCC, COA
New Jersey	Both	NAEYC, NECPA, COA, NAFCC
New Mexico	Both	NAEYC, NECPA, AMS, ASCI, NAFCC, COA
North Carolina	Both	
Ohio	Both	NAEYC, NECPA, NAC, NAFCC, COA
Oklahoma	Both	NAEYC, NECPA, COA, NAFCC, ASCI
South Carolina	Both	NAEYC, NAFCC
Tennessee	Both	
Utah	Both	NAEYC, NECPA, NAFCC, COA
Vermont	Both	NAEYC, NECPA, NAFCC, COA, NAC
West Virginia	Both	NAEYC, NAFCC, COA
Wisconsin	Both	NAEYC, NAFCC, Madison Accreditation

\*As of December 2008

\*\*Key to Accreditation Systems:

ACSI = Association for Christian Schools International

AMS = American Montessori Society

CARF = The Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission

COA = Council of Accreditation for Services to Families and Children

FACCM = Florida Association for Child Care Management

NAC = National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs

NACECPP = National Accreditation Council for Early Childhood Professional Personnel and Programs

NAEYC = Academy for Early Childhood Program Accreditation, National Association for the Education of Young Children

NAFCC = National Association for Family Child Care

NECPA = National Early Childhood Program Accreditation

SACS = Southern Association of Colleges and Universities

*Sources:* National Association for the Education of Young Children.

[www.naeyc.org/ece/critical/chart1.asp](http://www.naeyc.org/ece/critical/chart1.asp); National Child Care Information Center

<http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/library/index.cfm?do=oll.viewitem&itemid=29591>

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## APPENDIX E

### Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

Quality rating and improvement systems (which include rated licensing and voluntary and mandatory rating and improvement 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 creating 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 at least three tiers or levels in order to provide a continuum setting clear benchmarks of quality that build upon each other—starting with state licensing requirements and 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.

Multileveled quality rating and improvement systems must be supported by a system-wide 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 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,
- support to programs by having an adequate number of well-trained evaluators and access to technical assistance and mentoring to help programs reach the next level of the quality rating, and
- continuous program quality improvement.

*Source:* The National Association for the Education of Young Children Public Policy Program, as adopted by the NAEYC Governing Board, November 6, 2007.

## APPENDIX F

### State Prekindergarten Programs Requiring Center-Based Early Care and Education Program Accreditation\*

State	Applicable Programs	Comments
Arizona	Pre-K	Programs that currently receive pre-K funds through the Early Childhood Block Grant must be accredited or in the process of becoming accredited. If a program did not receive funds during the previous year, it must have documentation showing that the accreditation process has started and it must become accredited within 18 months. Includes NAEYC Accreditation.
Arkansas	Arkansas Better Chance (ABC)	Programs must be accredited by the Arkansas Childhood Accreditation/Quality Approval System or by NAEYC.
Connecticut	School Readiness Program	Programs must be accredited by NAEYC and complete that process within three years of being awarded funds, or be approved by Head Start, or meet the criteria in the Connecticut Standards for Preschool and Readiness Programs.
Iowa	Iowa Shared Visions	Programs must be accredited by NAEYC.
Maryland	Programs receiving Judy Hoyer Center grants and enhancement grants	Programs must have obtained or pursue accreditation by a national accrediting body (including NAEYC) or the state within 18 months.
Massachusetts	UPK Pilot Program	Center- and school-based programs receiving UPK Pilot funds must meet selected quality criteria, which can include NAEYC Accreditation.
Missouri	Missouri Preschool Project	Programs must document annual progress toward Missouri or NAEYC Accreditation, with completion of accreditation by the third year.

\*As of February 2007

Source: National Association for the Education of Young Children—  
[www.naeyc.org/ece/critical/chart3.asp](http://www.naeyc.org/ece/critical/chart3.asp).

## APPENDIX G

### Accreditation Facilitation Projects

Recognizing the value of NAEYC early childhood program accreditation, many communities and states, along with private funders, have established accreditation facilitation projects to encourage and support the efforts of early childhood programs to become NAEYC-accredited. These projects often provide financial support and technical assistance to programs working to raise their quality of services.

Accreditation facilitation projects can take on many forms, depending on the community and the needs of participating programs. A common theme is that they take a hands-on approach to guiding programs and staff through the accreditation process. Some accreditation facilitation projects subsidize certain accreditation fees. Some also provide financial incentives to

programs that have earned accreditation (Gormley & Lucas 2000).

A 1997 California study of NAEYC-accredited and non-NAEYC-accredited child care centers found that programs receiving the types of supports offered by accreditation facilitation projects “achieve accreditation at more than twice the rate of centers receiving moderate support or seeking accreditation independently, and at nearly ten times the rates of centers in a limited support group” (Whitebook, Sakai, & Howes 1997, 58).

For more information on accreditation facilitation projects, visit [www.naeyc.org/academy/AccreditationFacilitationProjectsPage.asp](http://www.naeyc.org/academy/AccreditationFacilitationProjectsPage.asp).

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