

Wisconsin Council on Children and Families
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Early Learning Matters - January 28, 2010
SPECIAL EDITION:
**Governor Proposes Child Care Quality Rating and
Improvement System**

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Governor Doyle proposed a \$10 million Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for child care on January 22, 2010 in Milwaukee. The proposal calls for the following components:

- A 5-star rating system that measures levels of quality in staff qualifications, learning environment, business practices, and health and safety
- Information to help parents make informed decisions when choosing child care
- Training, technical assistance and grants to help child care providers improve to meet higher standards
- Fiscal incentives for child care programs to meet higher standards, with better-quality programs receiving more funding.

The proposal is a boost for a wide range of supporters of QRIS. While details are not available yet, the proposal appears to be much more robust than prior proposals made by the Governor. Earlier quality rating budget proposals were rejected by the Legislature in 2005 and 2007, and the Legislature in 2009 failed to fund QRIS, but the final budget directed the administration to come back with a detailed proposal. The Governor's announcement was in response to that statutory directive.

The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families and the 14-member Early Learning Coalition have strongly supported the need for an effective QRIS system. WCCF recently sent a letter in support of QRIS to the Joint Finance Committee, citing several reasons why a QRIS is needed:

Quality matters. The quality of care kids receive has a significant and proven impact on their development and school-readiness.

A solid QRIS would protect our investment. An investment in QRIS would assure that state dollars are being used wisely. Our funding will yield much better returns-in terms of both cost and child outcomes-if we work to improve and monitor the quality of care.

It would improve accountability. A QRIS will build much-needed accountability and oversight into Wisconsin Shares while also improving quality through technical assistance, professional development and incentives for improving programming.

It would provide incentives for higher quality. By promoting best practices, a QRIS will help ensure that our scarce child care dollars will reward quality programs and help substandard programs improve.

It would help parents make good choices. Parents need and deserve the best information possible about the settings in which they place their children. They need to know that when they go to work their kids are in good hands.

QRIS works. We know that at 21 states already have statewide QRISs for child care, and evaluations are encouraging. For example, Missouri found that children from higher rated programs had better outcomes, while low-rated programs actually had negative effects on child development. Evaluations in North Carolina and Oklahoma concluded that QRIS led to significantly higher quality in child care programs.

With the state facing continuing fiscal problems, the QRIS proposal is likely to undergo careful scrutiny by the Joint Finance Committee. Representatives Corey Mason, Pedro Colon, and Peter Barca have already endorsed the Governor's proposal, but many key legislators are waiting to see a detailed proposal before taking a position.

To see the Governor's press release, go to:

<http://www.jsonline.com/watchdog/watchdogreports/82468677.html>

To see WCCF's reaction, go to: http://wccf.org/pdf/gris_statement_kt_012210.pdf

To see Milwaukee Journal coverage, go to:

<http://www.jsonline.com/watchdog/watchdogreports/82468677.html>