

Maine Child Care Advisory Council

Report to the 127th Maine State Legislature

January 15, 2015

The Child Care Advisory Council (hereinafter Council) is pleased to present its 2014 annual report of the activities. The Council has three legislatively-mandated duties:

- Advise Maine's Legislature and the Department of Health and Human Services (the Department) regarding child care services in the state;

- Encourage the development of coordinated policies among state agencies that promote quality, consistency, and efficiency in child care services;

- Facilitate community input on child care issues through communication with state government, the Legislature, service providers, and the public.

The Council's work focuses primarily on child care subsidy, effective licensing regulations, and professional development supports for the child care workforce. These components of Maine's early childhood system are funded by the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF),

one of the largest sources of funding supporting young children and their families in Maine. Federal dollars comprise 80% of the over \$20 million in annual funding, with the State providing the required 20% match in funds.

The Council continues to represent the key stakeholders of the early childhood system in Maine, acting as a resource for the Department and the Legislature. We hope this brief report of our activities will be helpful to you as you consider the needs of Maine's families in the coming year.

2015 Focus Areas

The Council will:

- continue to monitor revisions to Quality for ME, and provide feedback to the Department regarding the experiences for child care programs, families and children.
- continue to provide recommendations to align policies and procedures regarding child care subsidies and licensing with research on child development. Attention will be given to how policies and coordination of systems affect families accessing subsidies as well as providers caring for children from low-income households.
- monitor market trends related to access to quality care for children and families.



Child Care – Trends to Watch

(Data from Child Care Subsidy Report, October 2013 through September 2014, DHHS)



7,000
individuals
searched for
child care services



98.8% of families
deemed eligible for CCDF
child care subsidies,
received services.

Child Care Choices

Child Care Choices is a website designed to assist families in finding suitable child care providers, including a tool that helps parents identify high quality early care and education programs.

Website traffic increased significantly over the past year.

Families

However, the lengthy, two part eligibility process does not support families with immediate needs (secured work or higher education).

Once deemed eligible for child care subsidies, families are moved into service relatively quickly. Currently, there is not a wait list for CCDF child care subsidies.

Service Indicators

1667 families were served monthly (on average) through CCDF funds.

75% of CCDF services were for preschool and school aged children.

25% of CCDF services were for infants and toddlers.

77% of families with a CCDF child care subsidy required full or three quarter time care. The percent rose to 83% for families with a child with a diagnosed disability.



Child Care – Trends to Watch



**1,881
Licensed
Providers**

Child Care Providers

**64% Family Child Care
35% Center Child Care**

As of November 2014, there were 1,881 licensed child care providers, which is a decline from November 2013. Licensed providers are not required to participate in Quality for ME, Maine's quality rating and improvement system.

Maine's Professional Development Network

MAINE ROADS TO QUALITY
Early Care and Education Professional Development Network

Maine Roads to Quality, which is housed at the University of Southern Maine's Muskie School of Public Service, is Maine's Professional Development Network (PDN). Its purpose is to improve access to resources and professional development opportunities for early care and education providers. Through Maine Roads to Quality, during FY2014:

- 21,725 training contact hours were completed by 937 practitioners
- 1,256 practitioners received one-time phone or email technical assistance
- 88 programs received ongoing, on-site technical assistance
- The Maine Roads to Quality Registry grew to 6,999 active members
- 3,487 individuals conducted 15,279 searches on the Maine Statewide Online Training Calendar

**50% of Licensed Providers
are enrolled
in Quality for ME**

Child Care Providers

As of November 2014, 50% of licensed providers were enrolled in Quality for ME.

Of the 50% enrolled in Quality for ME (9/14), only 55% served children with a CCDF child care subsidy.

However, funding to support quality continues to diminish as the CCDF quality set aside funds (reduced from 18% to low single digits) are redirected to improve compliance with licensing's health and safety standards.

The Council is in full support of improved monitoring systems in licensing, but is also acutely aware of the necessity to increase the number of quality care settings. Promoting increased child care quality is essential for the healthy development of Maine's children. Mediocre or poor quality care can have a detrimental affect on child development. While Maine's current licensing regulations ensure basic health and safety for children, the regulations do not fully encompass all professionally established and evidence-based quality standards for child care programs.

Quality for ME – Maine’s Quality Rating and Improvement System

Since 2008, Maine has had a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) for child care programs, called Quality for ME. QRIS is a voluntary system with three goals:

- Recognize programs that provide quality care;
- Encourage programs to increase their level of quality; and
- Give parents identifiable standards of quality.



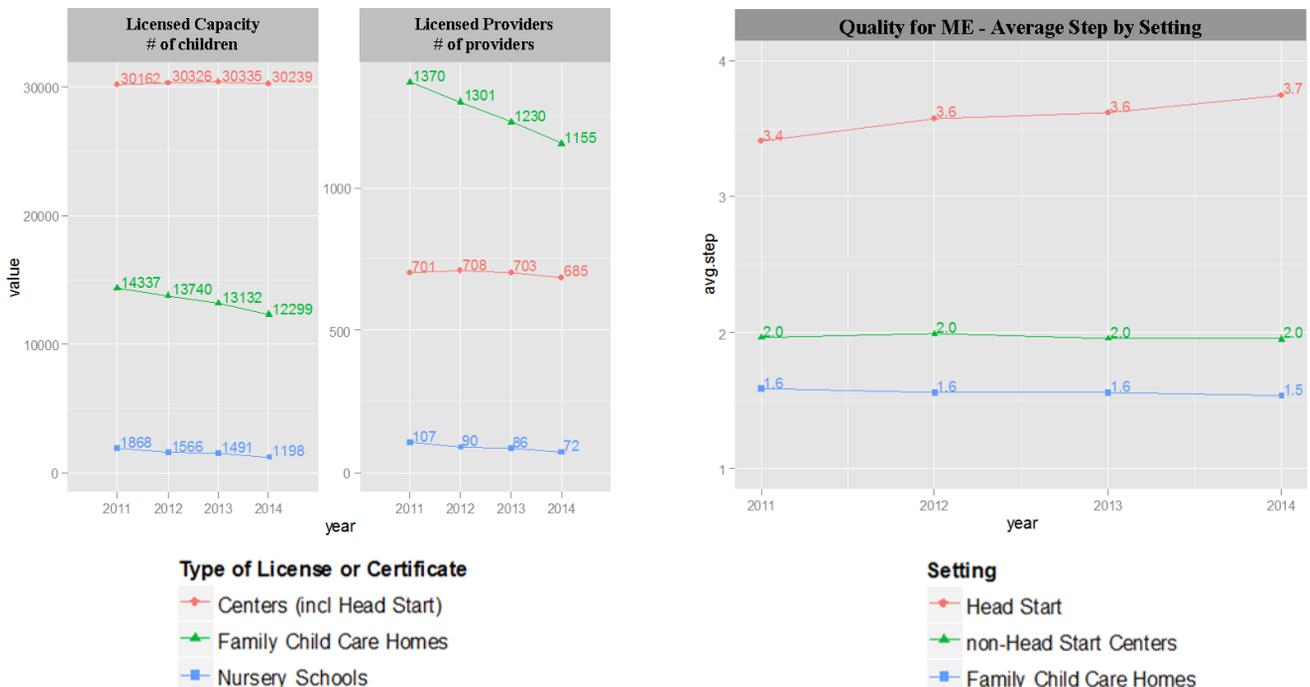
Quality for ME consists of four steps and addresses eight standard areas, including:

- Licensing compliance
- Learning environment and developmentally appropriate practice
- Program evaluation
- Staffing and professional development
- Administrative policies and procedures
- Parent and family engagement
- Family resources
- Authentic assessment

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION
Early Childhood Division
 MAINE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Step One requires meeting basic licensing regulations. Each step thereafter builds upon those standards, with Step 4 requiring accreditation from a nationally recognized organization.

The QRIS is currently under review and revision. The Council will work closely with the Department and PDN as the quality standards embedded in Quality for ME are aligned with current national research and responding to feedback from the child care field in Maine.



Child Care Advisory Council : 2015 Areas of Focus

The broad categories of the Council's 2015 areas of focus are outlined on page 1 of this report. However, within each category, market changes are occurring that need further review to completely understand the issues driving the changes. The Council will work with the Department and PDN and gather field input to better understand the market issues so that it can make informed recommendations to the Department. The areas for examination are:

- The reasons why fewer numbers of providers are entering the licensing system and associated patterns in legal, unregulated and family, friend and neighbor care.
- The reasons why fewer providers are enrolled in Maine's Quality Rating and Improvement System and the resources and supports the field needs to progress through QRIS steps.
- The impact of public preschool expansion on the supply and quality of care for infants, toddlers, and 3 year olds.