Colorado Shines
Validation Study 2015–2017
Final Report

Sarah Daily, Margaret Soli, Van-Kim Lin, Victoria Perkins,
Erin Bultinck, Jennifer Cleveland, and Kelly Maxwell

Child TRENDS

Table of Contents

Colorado Shines Validation Study 2015-2017

Introduction

As a Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant recipient, Colorado's Office of Early Childhood (OEC) has been working to promote smarter management, better quality, a deeper understanding of children, a stronger workforce, and increased family/community engagement within a unified and comprehensive early childhood system. A key component of this work includes the development of a "second generation" Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)—a method used to assess, enhance, and communicate the level of quality in early education and care for licensed providers in Colorado. Colorado was one of the first states to create a QRIS and has continuously worked to evaluate, refine, and improve the system. Bolstered by the RTT-ELC grant, Colorado launched its new QRIS, Colorado Shines, in 2015 and immediately engaged in a validation study from 2015–2017 (led by Child Trends) to ensure that the rating structure works for children, families, programs, and providers. The purpose of this study is to (1) support Colorado's efforts to implement a QRIS that measures quality in a meaningful way; (2) utilize clear, valid, and efficient procedures for verifying program quality; and (3) provide initial insights into how the Colorado Shines quality framework can support children's development and readiness for school success.

This study includes two components. The first involves an implementation evaluation that examines outreach strategies and efforts to promote participation in Colorado Shines, as well as participant perceptions of the Colorado Shines quality framework and quality improvement support strategies (Sections I through III below). These evaluation topics draw upon survey and interview data collected from Colorado Shines key stakeholders, providers, coaches, Quality Improvement (QI) Navigators, and Early Childhood Councils. This first study component aims to provide immediate feedback to OEC about the early stages of Colorado Shines implementation and highlight successes and opportunities for continued quality improvement.

The second component of the study (Section IV) examines the validity of the Colorado Shines rating structure by examining the research base for the quality indicators; examining the soundness of the rating process; and using observational data collected from over 300 early childhood classrooms to assess the validity of the ratings produced by Colorado Shines. The design of the Colorado Shines validation study is informed by the *Validation of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems for Early Care and Education and School-Aged Care* brief sponsored by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.[1] The second study component examines the extent to which the Colorado Shines rating structure is fair, accurate, and producing meaningful ratings for programs and families. This report is organized according to the following topics and related research questions:

> **I: Outreach and Participation in Colorado Shines**
> a. What is the level of participation in Colorado Shines?
> b. How is Colorado Shines supporting outreach to increase participation? What recruitment strategies have been more and less successful?
> c. What motivates participation in Colorado Shines?
> d. What are the perceived barriers to participating in Colorado Shines?

II: What are Participants' Perceptions of Colorado Shines?
   a. What are providers' overall perceptions?
   b. What challenges, if any, did providers encounter with the rating process?
   c. What are providers' recommendations?

III: Quality Improvement: Supports and Perceptions of Changes in Practice
   a. How are Colorado Shines' quality improvement supports implemented?
   b. How are coaches and QI navigators trained and supported to engage in quality improvement activities with Colorado Shines participants?
   c. What are the perceptions of the effectiveness of Colorado Shines' quality improvement supports?
   d. What are providers' perceptions of changes in practice that have resulted from Colorado Shines?

IV: Colorado Shines Structure and Validity
   a. To what extent are the indicators and key constructs included in the Colorado Shines Framework supported by empirical literature on quality practices that are linked to child outcomes?
   b. To what extent is the Colorado Shines rating process a valid and reliable approach to assessing program quality?
   c. To what extent does the observed quality of programs vary between Level 3 through Level 5 fully rated centers and family child care homes, Level 2 centers/homes, and Level 3 through Level 5 alternative pathways programs?

Colorado Shines Study Design

This study included several activities to evaluate the early implementation of Colorado Shines and assess the validity of the QRIS rating structure and process. The following research activities were designed to address the study objectives:

Evaluation study

Provider surveys. These surveys were designed to understand perceptions, strengths, and any potential challenges with Colorado Shines, from the perspective of program participants at all levels of the system. This includes Level 1 providers who have not engaged in the quality improvement aspects of Colorado Shines and all child care centers and family child care homes who participate in Colorado Shines at Levels 2 through 5.

Colorado Early Childhood Council surveys. The 34 Colorado Early Childhood Councils across the state play a critical role in supporting the implementation of Colorado Shines. Councils employ coaches who provide quality improvement supports to participating programs, as well as QI Navigators who lead outreach efforts to engage providers in participating in Colorado Shines at Levels 2 through 5 and oversee the allocation of quality improvement resources. Surveys were designed to understand Councils' perceptions of Colorado Shines outreach efforts and quality improvement activities.

Quality Improvement (QI) Navigator surveys. These surveys were designed to understand QI Navigators' perceptions of Colorado Shines outreach efforts and quality improvement activities.

Colorado Shines coaching surveys. These surveys focused on coaches' perceptions of Colorado Shines and the ease or difficulty with which programs engage in the rating process.

Key stakeholder feedback. This activity included interviews with key partners across the state (e.g., Qualistar staff, OEC staff, Colorado Department of Education staff, staff at Clayton Early Learning, Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance) who are engaged with Colorado Shines implementation, to gather the perceptions of what may or may not be working well to recruit, support, and engage programs participating in the QRIS.

Validation study

Evidence review of Colorado Shines quality constructs. Child Trends completed a review of the existing research evidence and professional standards to examine the extent to which Colorado Shines includes quality constructs that promote positive outcomes for children.

Analysis of measurement strategies. The Child Trends team examined the validity and reliability of the measurement tools and processes used to assess program quality—for example, the verification and rating process, training and reliability of onsite observers, and an assessment of the performance of each indicator within Colorado Shines.

Validation analysis. This activity involved observations in over 300 Colorado Shines classrooms to examine the extent to which the criteria included in Colorado Shines accurately determine meaningful distinctions in program quality.

Organization of this report

This report is structured in chapters that address each of the four primary research topics identified above. Each chapter provides an overview of the purpose of the chapter, a brief description of the methods used for data collection, a summary of key findings, and a summary and considerations for next steps. After the background chapter, which provides an overview of the Colorado Shines rating structure, the first chapter reports on the strategies that have been used to recruit Colorado Shines participation and the extent of any perceived successes or challenges with these approaches. The second chapter shares perceptions of Colorado Shines from the perspective of center directors and family child care home providers. The third chapter reports on the perceptions of the quality improvement supports from the perspective of center directors, family child care providers, coaches, QI navigators, and Early Childhood Councils. The fourth chapter explores several aspects of the Colorado Shines rating structure and process, and reports on the observed differences in quality among a sample of approximately 300 Colorado Shines classrooms. The end of the report includes a discussion of limitations and provides an overall summary of key findings and recommendations for next steps. A detailed discussion of methods can be found in the Appendix.

Background

Colorado was one of the first states to establish a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for early care and education (ECE) programs. Colorado's Qualistar Rating was introduced in 2000 to help parents find high-quality ECE programs and provide a framework for quality improvement. The Qualistar Rating was a voluntary system designed to be driven by families' demand for high-quality programs. Over time, the state of Colorado wanted to assure higher participation in the QRIS and set a clear pathway for quality improvement.[2] To achieve these goals, Colorado made plans to design a new tiered QRIS and integrate it with child care licensing, so that licensed programs in the state would enter the QRIS at a Level 1. As Colorado was planning its next generation QRIS, the state was awarded a $45 million Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant in 2012. The grant award has bolstered Colorado's transition to its next generation QRIS, Colorado Shines.

Colorado Shines was launched in February 2015 with the overall goal of supporting providers in reaching the highest levels of quality. The logic model Colorado developed for the RTT-ELC application identified four goals for the Colorado Shines within the first two years: 1) increase providers' understanding of quality; 2) increase the availability of high-quality programs, particularly in low-income, high-needs areas; 3) develop a system infrastructure that supports delivery of QRIS; and 4) ensure that the QRIS rating levels reflect meaningful difference in quality as determined by a validation study.[3]

Colorado Shines Administration and Partners

The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) within the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) manages the RTT-ELC grant and oversees the implementation of Colorado Shines. In addition to the core OEC leadership team, the office has three Quality Rating Improvement Coordinators that provide technical assistance and support across all components of the system. The OEC also has several partners involved in the implementation of Colorado Shines, including other state agencies and external partners.

In addition, the OEC provides funds to 34 Early Childhood Councils (Councils) that make up the local early childhood system in Colorado. Because of the established relationship between the Councils and ECE programs in their communities, the OEC contracts with Councils across the state to carry out several Colorado Shines activities. Local Councils manage and coordinate Colorado Shines recruitment, quality improvement services (including coaching), and communications with programs. These activities are carried out by two roles within the Councils—Quality Improvement (QI) Navigators and coaches. QI Navigators lead recruitment efforts and provide technical assistance to ECE programs, particularly in navigating the Colorado Shines system and using quality improvement funds and incentives. Coaches provide one-on-one support to ECE programs to guide them in a quality improvement process.

The Child Care Licensing and Administration Unit is part of the Division of Early Care and Learning at the OEC Licensing Specialists have the role of making Level 1 and 2 designations and supporting programs through the early steps of the rating process. This includes supporting programs and providers who are seeking to complete the Colorado Shines Level 2 requirement to register themselves and their staff with the Colorado Professional Development Information System (PDIS). The PDIS is a web-based professional development system that serves as a workforce registry, links users to the early childhood competency self-assessment, and provides online trainings to support individual professional development.

External groups also support the implementation of Colorado Shines. Qualistar Colorado, a non-profit organization, is the ratings administrator for Colorado Shines. Quality Rating Specialists conduct observation visits with the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) tools in ECE programs seeking Level 3-5 ratings. A team of Data Assessment Specialists review the ratings documentation submitted by ECE programs into the Colorado Shines data system and assigns preliminary ratings. Preliminary ratings are sent to the OEC for final review and designation.

In addition to the primary entities described above, the implementation of Colorado Shines involves several additional partners, including but not limited to the following:

- **The Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance (ECCLA)** supports overall work of the Councils and their implementation of Colorado Shines. ECCLA hosts monthly meetings and regular trainings on different system components for QI Navigators and coaches. ECCLA also provides training and technical support on the ecConnect data

system, which allows Councils to manage Colorado Shines quality improvement activities.

- **Clayton Early Learning Center (ELC)** provides a variety of supports for Colorado Shines implementation. Clayton ELC has anchors who conduct the reliability visits for the ERS tools with Rating Specialists. They also provide training and support for Colorado Shines coaches.

- **SE2 Communications** is a vendor that supported early marketing and communications activities among programs and parents for Colorado Shines. SE2 Communications developed materials and ad campaigns to message Colorado Shines around the state and promote the importance of high-quality early childhood education. SE2 Communications also conducted baseline market surveys for the OEC prior to the launch of Colorado Shines.

- **The Colorado Coaching Consortium** provides training and support to coaches that are working toward their coaching credentials. Since Colorado Shines requires coaches to have a coaching credential, the consortium plays an important role in facilitating this process.

The implementation of Colorado Shines is also advised by a few different groups:

- **The Colorado Shines Steering Committee** includes representatives from the implementation partners described above. This committee formulates Colorado Shines policies and procedures. It also discusses implementation progress and challenges, provides input, and engages in day-to-day problem solving.

- **The Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC)** is an initiative created by the governor's office to advance the alignment, coordination, and efficiency of programs and services for children from birth to age eight and their families in Colorado. The full commission and certain sub-committees are provided with regular updates on the progress of Colorado Shines implementation. Committee members provide high-level input on Colorado Shines in the context of the state's vision for early childhood.

- **The Early Childhood Professional Development Advisory Group** includes representatives from the early childhood community and higher education. This group provides input on how the professional development system components (e.g., professional credentials, PDIS) will best serve the state's workforce.

Colorado Shines Data Systems

Data systems play an integral role in implementation of Colorado Shines, both directly and indirectly. Colorado Shines QRIS collects program-level data. Data is entered into the Colorado Shines QRIS Technology System directly and through integration with other authoritative data sources through a secure transfer of information. This system is used frequently by staff at CDHS (Licensing Specialists and QRIS Coordinators), Councils, and Rating Specialists. Other authoritative data sources include:

Trails Database: A statewide automated case management system, administered by the CDHS to track businesses providing child care (licensed and qualified exempt). Data collected include license number, license type, address, and program contact information. This system is integrated with Colorado Shines and provides information for all Level 1 facilities in the state. Trails is accessed mainly by Licensing Specialists.

ecConnect: Enables the councils to manage the assignment, usage, and reporting of QI funding and incentives. It also tracks a variety of other council activities, such as professional development, coaching, and communication with ECE programs. ecConnect is accessed by ECE program staff and council staff to view, manage, and request QI dollars and coaching resources. Information on QI funding and incentives and council activities is shared with the Colorado Shines system.

Professional Development Information System (PDIS): The Colorado Shines PDIS is a web-based system supporting professional development for the early childhood workforce in Colorado. It connects early childhood professionals with training and education, including QRIS Level 2 E-Learning Courses. It also gathers information that informs the credential levels, qualifications, and training of registered professionals, which is used to verify criteria in the Workforce Qualifications and Professional Development category. Data from the PDIS is pulled regularly into the Colorado Shines system.

Colorado Shines Rating Tool

The Colorado state licensing system is embedded into the Colorado Shines QRIS. As a result, licensed early care and education programs are participants in the system and automatically receive a Level 1 rating. After Level 1, it is voluntary for ECE programs to pursue Level 2–5 ratings. The Colorado Shines rating tool uses a "hybrid" structure that incorporates elements of "building block" and "points" structures used in other QRIS across the country. Levels 1 and 2 are in Colorado Shines blocks; programs must be licensed to be rated at a Level 1 and programs must meet a set of five criteria to be rated at a Level 2. Programs must achieve Level 2 requirements before applying for a higher rating. Colorado Shines Levels 3–5 are determined by points; programs must earn points for meeting additional criteria across five categories of quality standards. The number of points earned determines whether a program achieves a Level 3, 4, or 5. The Colorado Shine criteria are grouped into the five standard categories listed below, in addition to an "Optional Points" category. For the most part, the criteria in these categories are nearly identical for family child care homes and center-based programs:

1. Workforce Qualifications and Professional Development
2. Family Partnerships
3. Leadership, Management, and Administration
4. Child Health
5. Learning Environment
6. Optional Points

Level 2 criteria. To be rated at a Level 2, programs must meet five criteria. Programs must (1) submit an application for Level 2 recognition; (2) register all staff in the PDIS; (3) achieve 75 percent of staff completing Level 2 E-Learning courses (10 hours each); (4) complete a program assessment; and (5) put in place a quality improvement plan that includes at least one goal. A program receives a Level 2 rating once these five criteria are met and verified by the Licensing Specialist.

Workforce Qualifications and Professional Development. At Levels 3–5, programs may earn points for director/provider, teacher, assistant teacher, and aide qualifications. These criteria are organized by the percent of staff who have earned Colorado Early Childhood Professional Credential levels. Programs may also earn points for ongoing professional

development plans and conducting a self-assessment using Colorado's Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators. Programs may also earn points in this category for receiving credentialed coaching or consulting.

Family Partnerships. In the Family Partnerships category, programs may earn points for demonstrating that they support the home languages of enrolled families. They may also earn points for exhibiting sensitivity to diversity through the provision of materials, resources, and social opportunities for all families. The Family Partnerships category also includes criteria related to supporting children's transitions, engaging families, and referring and connecting families to community service agencies.

Leadership, Management, and Administration. Programs may earn points in this category for having a continuous quality improvement plan and policies and procedures in place for personnel (e.g., written code of conduct, monthly staff meetings, paid planning time). Programs may also earn points for offering staff benefits and engaging in business administration tasks.

Child Health. In the Child Health category, programs may earn points for documenting that each child has received medical and developmental screenings, has medical insurance and a medical home, and has received appropriate referrals. Other criteria to receive points include certified playground inspections, leading structured physical activities daily, offering nutrition information and education programs, and having a garden.

Learning Environment. For Levels 3–5, programs may earn points for using a curriculum aligned with Colorado's Early Learning and Development Guidelines and having staff trained to use the curriculum. Programs may also earn points for having lower group sizes and improved adult-child ratios. Points may be awarded for promoting the continuity of care or earning scores on the Pre-K CLASS assessment. Lastly, programs may earn points in the Learning Environment category for using developmentally appropriate child assessments, having staff trained on the assessment tool(s), and using assessment results to individualize teaching.

Environment Rating Scales Scores. In addition to earning points toward a Level 3, 4, or 5 rating, programs must receive a *minimum average score* on the Environment Ratings Scales. That is, in a child care center, 50 percent of the classrooms for each age group served (i.e., infant, toddler, and preschool) are randomly selected for an observation using the appropriate ERS tool (i.e., ITERS-R for infant and toddler classrooms, or ECERS-R for preschool classrooms). The individual classroom scores are combined to determine an overall average program score. To be a Level 3, programs must score at least an overall average score of 3.75 with no classroom scoring below a 3.0. To be a Level 4, programs must score at least 4.75 with no classroom scoring below a 4.0. To be a Level 5, programs must score at least a 5.75 with no classroom scoring below a 5.0. Family child care homes receive one observation using the FCCERS-R and are required to meet the same overall average scores as child care centers (i.e., 3.75 for Level 3; 4.75 for Level 4; and 5.75 for Level 5).

Optional points. Programs may earn optional points for having a bilingual caregiver/teacher, staffing the program with additional professionals, having a staff member serve in a community leadership role, or conducting an Infant/Toddler CLASS assessment in their classrooms or home.

Colorado Shines Rating Process

Enrollment in Colorado Shines occurs on a rolling basis throughout the year. Programs interested in participating at a higher rating level may enroll for a *full Colorado Shines rating* or an *alternative pathway rating*. Programs must apply for a full Colorado Shines rating unless they

are affiliated with a school district, accredited by an approved accrediting body, or if they are a Head Start/Early Head Start program in good standing. Programs accredited by an approved national accrediting organization[a] enter Colorado Shines at a Level 3 or 4, as designated through an application process. Grantee and delegate Head Start/Early Head Start programs in good standing with the Office of Head Start are automatically rated at a Level 4. As Colorado transitioned from the Qualistar Rating to the Colorado Shines system, allowances were made for programs in good standing with their Qualistar Rating. These programs have been allowed to retain their Qualistar rating (2, 3, or 4) through the expiration date of their current rating, at which point they must comply with the requirements of the Colorado Shines level they wish to attain.

Licensing Specialists assign Level 1 and 2 ratings designations. Level 1 ratings happen automatically for licensed ECE programs. Level 2 ratings are assigned through desk audits of applications and documents submitted through the Colorado Shines data system. In the future, Level 2 documentation will be verified via an onsite assessment. Licensing Specialists are being trained to reliably administer a Level 2 Quality Indicator Program Assessment during annual licensing visits with ECE programs seeking a Level 2 Rating.

The Colorado Shines Ratings Administrator manages the rating process for higher tier ratings at Levels 3, 4, and 5. Rating Specialists conduct onsite assessments with the ERS observation tools. In addition, a team of Data Specialists reviews applications and rating documentation (submitted into the Colorado Shines data system), awards points, calculates ratings, and reports ratings to the OEC. Ratings for Levels 2–5 in Colorado Shines are valid for 3 years and programs are given a 30-day window for consultation and appeals.

---

[a] Approved national accrediting organizations include: the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA); the Association of Christian Schools International Accreditation (ACSI); American Montessori Society Accreditation (AMS); National Association of Family Child Care Accreditation (NAFCC); AdvancED Accreditation, the Family Child Care Quality Certificate (FCCQC), which is awarded by Qualistar, and selected school districts.

Part I: Outreach and Participation in Colorado Shines

Purpose of this Section: To provide an overview of Colorado Shines recruitment efforts and participation rates, including providers' perceptions of motivating factors and barriers to participation.

Evaluation Questions Addressed:
a. What is the level of participation in Colorado Shines?
b. How is Colorado Shines supporting outreach to increase participation? What recruitment strategies have been more and less successful?
c. What motivates participation in Colorado Shines?
d. What are barriers to participating in Colorado Shines?

Data Sources Used:
- Colorado Shines administrative data
- Council Survey
- QI Navigator Survey
- Level 1 Provider Survey
- Rated (Level 2-5) Provider Survey
- Key Stakeholder Interview

Summary of Key Findings:
- ***Participation has increased steadily over time.*** The number of programs receiving Colorado Shines Level 2 through 5 ratings has increased steadily since June 2015, reaching a high of 1,323 centers and 727 FCC providers in May 2017. As of May 2017, about half (48%) of licensed programs were participating in Colorado Shines at a Level 2 or higher.
- ***Relationships are critical for recruitment.*** QI Navigators reported that building relationships with providers and using existing knowledge about their program and needs makes recruitment efforts more effective. In-person visits with providers were noted as the most effective mode for recruitment. Less effective strategies included those that were not individualized for providers (e.g., mass emails, distributing flyers).
- ***Buy in is the main recruitment challenge.*** The biggest recruitment challenge has been getting buy-in from providers and correcting negative preconceptions of the QRIS, especially with family child care home providers (i.e., general distrust, hesitancy for their home to be observed). Recruitment has also been more challenging when providers lack access to technology or technology skills.
- ***Providers want access to Colorado Shines professional development.*** Providers are motivated to participate in Colorado Shines at higher levels because of the professional development opportunities it offers and access to additional funds. Conversely, providers are not motivated to participate in Colorado Shines because they perceive the rating application and process to be difficult and they are concerned the rating they would receive would not accurately reflect their program's quality.
- ***Family awareness of Colorado Shines is still a question.*** Providers were divided over the potential for Colorado Shines to help them attract families. About half reported it was a primary motivating factor to join Colorado Shines, half reported they did not believe their participation in Colorado Shines might help them better attract families to their program.

What is the level of participation in Colorado Shines?

In Colorado, licensed programs are rated at a Level 1 in Colorado Shines. Programs voluntarily participate at a Level 2 or higher. Increasing participation rates at Levels 2-5 has been an important goal for the OEC.

Using data provided by the Colorado Shines data system, this section of the report provides an overview of the growth in program participation over time. The data included Colorado Shines ratings for each month starting in June 2015 until May 2017 (which marks the beginning and end of the Child Trends data collection period). To understand the dynamics of participation, the study explored the number of programs at each rating level by program type[b] and rating method (i.e., if the program was rated through an alternative pathway process). Additionally, the density of participation, which is the percentage of programs rated at a Level 2 or higher out of licensed programs in Colorado, was also examined.

Total Participation Growth Over Time

Over time, the number of center-based programs and family child care (FCC) providers receiving a Level 2 through Level 5 rating through Colorado Shines has risen from 827 in June of 2015 to 2,050 in May of 2017. It is important to note that the count Level 2 through Level 5 rated programs includes programs and providers that received a rating through an alternative pathway (AP). Table 2 shows the growth in AP ratings separately, indicating that AP ratings have risen from 408 in June of 2015 to 628 in May of 2017.

Table 1. Number of Level 2-5 programs participating in Colorado Shines over time

Total Number of Level 2 through Level 5 Programs			
Date	Centers	FCCs	Total
June 2015	673	154	827
Dec 2015	807	268	1,075
Jan 2016	835	294	1,129
Dec 2016	1,136	563	1,699
Jan 2017	1,165	583	1,748
May 2017	1,323	727	2,050

Source: Colorado Office of Early Childhood, Colorado Shines QRIS (2015-2017).

Table 2. Alternative pathways ratings over time

	Level 2-5 Alternative Pathway Ratings		
Date	Centers	FCCs	Total
June 2015	285	123	408
Dec 2015	286	167	453
Jan 2016	287	168	455
Dec 2016	285	211	496
Jan 2017	291	213	504
May 2017	395	243	638

---

[b] Two center types and five FCC types were reported in the original dataset. For the purposes of this analysis, the two center types (Day care center, Preschool) were collapsed under "Center" and the five FCC types (Day care home, Day Care Home 3, Experienced Child Care Provider, Infant/toddler home, Large day care home) were collapsed under "FCC".

Participation by Rating Level, Program Type, and overall Density of Participation

Table 3 shows the number of programs participating in Colorado Shines by rating level and program type. As of May 2017, there were 1,323 center-based programs and 727 family child care homes participating in Level 2 through Level 5. Out of licensed center-based programs, over half (65%) received at least a Level 2 rating, and out of all eligible FCC providers, one third (33%) received at least a Level 2 rating. As of May 2017, about half (48%) of licensed programs are participating in Colorado Shines at a Level 2 or higher.

Table 4 shows the number of programs that received an alternative pathway rating in Colorado Shines by level and program type. Note that Table 4 represents a subset of programs identified in Table 3.

Table 3. *Number and percent of programs participating in Colorado Shines by level and program type, May 2017*

	Child Care Centers	Family Child Care Homes	Licensed Programs
Level 1	714	1,484	2,198
Level 2	632	627	1,259
Level 3	133	63	196
Level 4	521	25	546
Level 5	37	12	49
Total number of programs participating in Colorado Shines at Levels 2 through 5	1,323	727	2,050
Total number of licensed programs in Colorado	2,037	2,211	4,248
Percent of programs participating in Colorado Shines at Levels 2 through 5	65%	33%	48%

Source: Colorado Office of Early Childhood, Colorado Shines QRIS (2015-2017).

Table 4. *Number of programs that received an alternative pathway rating in Colorado Shines by level and program type, May 2017*

	Child Care Centers	Family Child Care Homes	All Alternative Pathway Programs
Level 1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Level 2	0	191	191
Level 3	19	52	71
Level 4	376	0	376
Level 5	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total number of programs that received an alternative pathway rating	395	243	638

Source: Colorado Office of Early Childhood, Colorado Shines QRIS (2015-2017).

Participation in Colorado Shines has more than doubled in approximately a two-year time span, with growth steadily increasing over time. Alternative pathway ratings have also increased since the beginning of Colorado Shines implementation. Centers participating at a Level 2 have increased the most over time, indicating that recruitment efforts have been successful at

bringing programs into the initial steps of participating in the QRIS. Overall about half of licensed programs are participating in Colorado Shines at Levels 2 through 5. More center-based programs (65%) are participating at Levels 2-5 in Colorado Shines compared to family child care providers (33%).

How is Colorado Shines supporting outreach to increase participation?

To increase participation at Level 2 through Level 5, Colorado Shines is supporting statewide recruitment efforts. The local Early Childhood Councils lead recruitment efforts in communities across the state. Most Councils have employed Quality Improvement (QI) Navigators to help with recruitment. Every month, Councils are expected to make progress on recruitment goals set by the OEC that are individualized for their community. These goals may include increasing the number of programs moving from a Level 1 to Level 2 by a certain percentage, or increasing the number of programs engaged at the higher rating levels in Colorado Shines.

Councils are tasked with outreach for Colorado Shines because of their local presence and existing relationships with the early care and education programs in their communities. Councils and their QI Navigators may use multiple modes for engaging with programs, such as meeting in person, making phone calls, and sending emails. The OEC has provided Councils with several resources for recruitment, such as printed materials and the Colorado Shines website. The OEC also provides bi-monthly Technical Assistance days to Councils and their staff to discuss topics related to Colorado Shines, their progress with recruitment, and more.

Through data collection for the evaluation, several different audiences were asked about Colorado Shines outreach and recruitment efforts. For example, those who work in communities across the state to recruit providers (i.e., Council members and QI Navigators) were asked about their approach to recruitment and which strategies have been more or less successful. Key stakeholders at the state-level who are involved in different aspects of Colorado Shines were also interviewed about their perceptions of effective recruitment and potential barriers. Similar questions were also asked to providers who are rated at a Level 2-5 to understand their motivations and any barriers they encountered to participate at a higher level in Colorado Shines. Finally, providers rated at a Level 1 were asked about what motivates and/or deters them from participating at a higher level. The following data sources were used throughout the this section:

- Survey with Council members
- Survey with QI Navigators
- Interview with Key Stakeholders
- Survey with Level 1 providers
- Surveys with providers rated at Level 2-5

Councils' General Perceptions of Outreach Efforts

Councils were asked a series of general questions about their experiences recruiting programs to participate in Colorado Shines (see Table 5). Most Councils agreed that the providers in their communities are interested in Colorado Shines (57%), that providers are interested in strategies to improve their program's quality (63%), and that they believe participating in Colorado Shines will help improve their quality (69%). Nearly all Councils agreed or strongly agreed that they have the materials they need to talk with providers about Colorado Shines (53% agreed and 43% strongly agreed). Finally, most Councils said that they have done

everything they can to recruit providers in their community to join Colorado Shines (33% agreed and 60% strongly agreed).

Table 5. Councils' perceptions of their outreach efforts (n=30)

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with these statements about your Council's outreach for Colorado Shines.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most providers in our community have expressed interest in Colorado Shines.	0%	30%	57%	13%
Most providers in our community have expressed interest in strategies to improve their program's quality.	0%	13%	63%	23%
Most providers in our community believe participating in Colorado Shines will help improve the quality of their program.	0%	28%	69%	3%
Most providers in our community want to get rated so that they can market their business to parents.	10%	73%	13%	3%
We have the materials we need to talk with providers about Colorado Shines.	0%	3%	53%	43%
We have done everything we can to recruit providers in our community to join Colorado Shines.	0%	7%	33%	60%

Source: Council Survey, May 2017, Child Trends.

What recruitment strategies have been more and less successful?

Study surveys included questions for Councils, QI Navigators, and Key Stakeholders about recruitment and outreach efforts that have successfully increased participation in Colorado Shines and about those that have been less successful.

Councils' Perceptions of Recruitment Strategies

Councils were asked about the strategies for recruiting programs that have been most effective (see Table 6). Nearly all Councils said that relationship building is "extremely effective" (90%), followed by repeat engagement (75%), and in-person visits (63%). Councils reported that some strategies have only been "a little effective", such as emailing (40%), distributing flyers (47%), and creating marketing materials (53%). About a third of the Councils (30%) said that they have found other strategies effective that were not listed in the survey, including offering incentives, and using provider-to-provider referrals.

Table 6. Council perceptions of effective recruitment strategies (n=30)

What strategies have been the most effective for recruiting providers to participate in Colorado Shines?	Not Effective	A Little Effective	Effective	Extremely Effective	Not Applicable / Have Not Used
Calling	10%	27%	50%	13%	0%
Emailing	10%	40%	43%	7%	0%
In person visits	0%	0%	37%	63%	0%
Tabling events (i.e., providing information at events)	17%	31%	7%	14%	31%
Distributing flyers	10%	47%	23%	3%	17%
Speaking at events	0%	33%	40%	20%	7%
Creating marketing materials	3%	53%	20%	13%	10%
Relationship building (with providers)	0%	0%	7%	90%	3%
Repeat engagement (with providers)	0%	0%	21%	75%	4%

Source: Council Survey, May 2017, Child Trends.

Councils were asked what had been *most successful* about their recruitment efforts for Colorado Shines (n=29). Several Councils (45%) explained that their existing relationships with providers and collaboration with local partners has helped their recruitment efforts be more successful. About a fifth (21%) of Councils cited the benefits of meeting in-person with providers. The same number of Councils (21%) described other successes, such as offering additional professional development and mentoring with providers, having their coaches help with recruitment, implementing an outreach plan, and having adequate time to work with providers.

Councils were also asked what had been *most challenging* about their Council's recruitment efforts for Colorado Shines (n=29). Most Councils (62%) explained that getting buy-in from providers had been their greatest challenge, whether it be overcoming providers' general disinterest in getting rated or addressing their specific concerns about Colorado Shines (e.g., how it differs from the Qualistar rating, the time commitment required). Some of these Councils (n=7) further explained that it was particularly difficult to get buy-in from family child care providers. For example, one Council member explained "Homes are difficult to engage and suspicious of the process. Also, previous homes that were rated under Qualistar had some bad experiences and in a small community this information is widely shared and continues to be shared." Other Councils (14%) explained that some providers are simply not motivated to get rated because there is no competition for their services. About a fifth (21%) of Councils explained that when providers lack access or skills for technology it can be a major challenge, since Colorado Shines is a web-based system. A few Councils (14%) described challenges related to Colorado Shines being a new system and that frustrations arose when aspects of the system were being developed and changed while programs were engaged in the rating process.

QI Navigator Perceptions of Recruitment Strategies

QI Navigators were asked similar questions about the successes they have experienced with recruitment. QI Navigators picked the three most effective strategies they have used for

recruiting new programs (see Table 7). Like Councils, most QI Navigators said that visiting in person (62%) and relationship building (62%) are the most effective strategies they have used. More QI Navigators said that calling providers (24%) was an effective strategy versus emailing (14%). Very few QI Navigators reported that setting up a table with information at community events (like fairs), distributing flyers, speaking at events, or creating marketing materials were effective strategies. Some QI Navigators (19%) described other strategies they have used to recruit programs, including offering overview trainings on Colorado Shines and the PDIS, presenting at pre-licensing classes, sending out mass mailings and following up with personal phone calls, and encouraging word of mouth among providers.

Table 7. QI Navigator perceptions of effective recruitment strategies (n=21)

What are the most effective strategies you have identified for recruiting new programs into Colorado Shines? (Select up to three)	Percentage
Visiting in person	62%
Relationship building	62%
Repeat engagement (i.e., regularly following up with providers)	33%
Calling	24%
Emailing	14%
Setting up a table at community events	5%
Distributing marketing materials (i.e. flyers, brochures)	5%
Speaking at events	5%
Creating marketing materials	0%
Other	19%

Source: QI Navigator Survey, March 2017, Child Trends.

QI Navigators were also asked to explain how they tailored their recruitment efforts for different types of programs (e.g., Head Start, center-based programs, family child care homes). Of the 14 QI Navigators who answered this question, most of them described the importance of relationship building and knowing the program well (57%); which were the same top responses provided when asked about the most effective recruitment strategies in general. About a fourth (21%) said they prioritize certain programs for recruitment, such as Level 1 programs or programs they think might already be interested in participating.

QI Navigators also shared their perception of barriers or challenges they have encountered in their recruitment efforts (n=17). Several (35%) explained that negative preconceptions about the rating process had been a barrier for recruitment. For example, one QI Navigator explained, "Some people (mostly homes) are negative about Colorado Shines before I am able to explain all of the advantages." Similar to Councils, some QI Navigators (13%) described specific challenges with recruiting family child care providers, for example that some providers do not want their home observed, hold distrust in a government-sponsored program, or are wary about technology.

Key Stakeholder Perceptions of Recruitment Strategies

Key stakeholders were asked about their perceptions of the most effective recruitment strategies. Over a third (35%) explained the importance of educating providers about the benefits of Colorado Shines (i.e., sharing information about financial incentives; coaching, particularly for programs that serve children with high needs). A similar number (30%) of stakeholders described the importance of communicating with individual providers and building

personal relationships (i.e., recruitment through phone calls, coaching visits, technical assistance, communication with licensing specialists, and encouraging providers to contact another provider who has experience with the rating process).

What motivates participation in Colorado Shines?

In a survey, Level 1 providers were asked what would motivate them to participate at a higher level in Colorado Shines. Providers who were rated at a Level 2-5 were also asked about what had motivated them to join Colorado Shines. Councils and key stakeholders also shared their perceptions of provider motivations.

Provider Reports on Motivating Factors

Level 1 providers who participated in the survey were asked what would affect their decision to participate in Colorado Shines at a higher level (see Table 8). There are two types of Level 1 providers. Registered providers have gone to the Colorado Shines website and registered their contact information indicating their interest in learning more about Colorado Shines, the first step for participating. Unregistered providers have not yet registered with Colorado Shines and may not be aware of the goals and purpose of a QRIS. For this reason, registered and unregistered Level I providers were surveyed separately.

Registered (39%) and unregistered Level 1 providers (30%) said they would be motivated to participate at a higher level if they felt it was important for their professional development/professionalism. Both provider types reported they would be more likely to participate at a higher level if they felt that Colorado Shines would help them better attract families to their program (31% registered providers; 26% unregistered). Registered providers were more likely to answer that they wanted access to quality incentives (36%) than unregistered providers (18%). Less than a third of the Level 1 providers said that "to be a part of a cutting-edge early childhood initiative/program" would affect their decision (29% registered providers; 20% unregistered).

Table 8. Level 1 providers' reasons to consider participating at a higher level

Which of the following would most affect your decision TO participate in Colorado Shines at a higher level? Please select TWO answers.	Percentage of registered L1 Providers (n=420)	Percentage of unregistered L1 Providers (n=129)	Percentage of all L1 Providers (n=549)
It is important for my professional development/professionalism	39%	30%	37%
To access quality incentives	36%	18%	32%
To better attract families to my program	31%	26%	30%
To be a part of a cutting-edge early childhood initiative/program	29%	20%	27%
If someone else in my organization required my program to participate	14%	18%	15%
To access supports from a coach.	9%	5%	8%
I'd join for another reason not listed	6%	0%	5%

To access technical supports	5%	7%	5%
To access supports from a QI Navigator	3%	2%	3%
Other	6%	10%	7%

Providers who received a Level 2 rating or higher answered a similar survey question. The survey asked providers to choose the top three reasons they decided to get a higher Colorado Shines rating (see Table 9). Child care centers and family child care homes responded to this question similarly. The top two reasons were to access quality improvement funds and that they felt it was important for their professional development/professionalism. For centers, access to coaching was tied with professional development as the second reason for participating at higher levels. The third and fourth reasons were to access coaching and to better attract families to their program. Few rated providers said that they were motivated because their peers and colleagues were participating in Colorado Shines.

Table 9. Level 2-5 providers' reasons to participate at a higher level

Top three reasons programs joined Colorado Shines	Child care centers (n=334)	Family child care homes (n=190)
Access to quality improvement funds	66%	65%
It is important for my professional development/professionalism	39%	53%
Access to coaching	39%	33%
To better attract families to my program	32%	32%
To access higher CCAP reimbursement rates	30%	25%
To be part of cutting-edge early childhood initiative	27%	24%
Someone else in my organization required my program to participate	16%	4%
I joined Colorado Shines for another reason not list (please specify)	16%	14%
My peers and colleagues are participating in Colorado Shines	12%	18%

Council Perceptions of Providers' Motivations

Councils were asked to explain what makes providers more willing to participate in Colorado Shines at higher levels (see Table 10). Most Councils (67%) said that the provider's interest in participating in a quality initiative/improve program quality was related to their willingness to participate. Nearly half (47%) noted that providers who have staff that are highly trained and/or educated increases their willingness, as well as accepting the state subsidized child care payments through the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP; 37%). A third (33%) of Councils described another reason that was not listed in the survey. These other responses included a program being previously rated, a provider being motivated by funding (e.g., QI incentives, tiered reimbursement rates), when competition exists among providers, and when providers are eligible for an alternative pathway rating.

Table 10. Council perceptions of what makes providers more willing to participate (n=30)

In your Council's experience, what makes providers more willing to participate in Colorado Shines?	Percentage
Provider's interest in quality initiatives/improve quality	67%
Staff are highly trained and/or educated	47%
Program accepts CCCAP	37%
Other (please describe)	33%
Staff have many years of experience providing child care	23%
Program is accredited	23%
Program is geographically isolated from other programs	7%
Program follows a philosophy (e.g. Montessori, Reggio Emilia)	7%
None of the above	3%
Program has a long waiting list	0%
Program is religiously affiliated	0%

Source: Council Survey, May 2017, Child Trends.

Key Stakeholder Perceptions of Provider Motivations

Key stakeholders (n=20) were asked about providers' motivations to participate in Colorado Shines at Levels 2 through 5. Nearly half (45%) noted that some providers are intrinsically motivated to participate at higher levels and want to provide high-quality services for the children and families they serve. The same proportion of stakeholders (45%) reported the providers might be motivated to apply for a higher rating because there is no cost to participate in Colorado Shines (i.e., ratings visits are "free"). About a third (30%) of the key stakeholders thought that access to coaching and technical assistance opportunities would motivate providers to participate at a higher level.

What are barriers to participating in Colorado Shines?

Since Level 1 providers are not engaged in the quality improvement aspects of Colorado Shines, Level 1 providers were asked to explain if they are interested in pursuing a higher rating in Colorado Shines and if not, to explain why. Councils were also asked about their perceptions of why some providers may be reluctant to participate in Colorado Shines at higher levels, and Key Stakeholders also shared their beliefs about potential barriers to participation.

Level 1 Provider Perceptions of Barriers

Level 1 providers cited several reasons they were reluctant to seek a Level 2 or higher rating in Colorado Shines (see Table 11). The most frequent response was among providers who felt they did not need Colorado Shines to attract families to their programs (38% registered and 49% unregistered). Second, they perceived that the application and rating process is difficult (31% registered and 23% unregistered), and/or that they do not trust that the rating they receive will accurately reflect their program quality (25% registered and 18% unregistered). Other less frequently selected reasons included not needing to improve the quality of their program, not wanting their environment observed, and not believing that programs should be rated at all.

Table 11. Level 1 providers' reasons for not participating at a higher level

Which of the following would most affect your decision to NOT participate in Colorado Shines at a higher rating level? Please select TWO answers.	Registered L1 providers (n=369)	Unregistered L1 providers (n=130)	All L1 providers (n=499)
I don't need it to attract families to my program	38%	49%	41%
The application/rating process is difficult	31%	23%	29%
I don't trust that a higher rating will accurately reflect my program.	25%	18%	23%
It is not worth the investment of time.	21%	12%	19%
It is too expensive to participate at a higher rating level.	21%	15%	19%
There is not enough financial incentive to join	12%	15%	13%
I am waiting to hear from other programs/providers first	11%	5%	9%
Colorado Shines does not provide enough support	7%	4%	6%
I don't believe ECE programs should be rated	6%	10%	7%
I do not want my environment to be observed.	4%	6%	5%
I don't need to improve the quality of my program	3%	5%	4%
Other	6%	4%	5%

Source: Level 1 Provider Survey, November 2015, Child Trends.

Council Perceptions of Barriers

Given the direct contact Councils have in communicating with providers about Colorado Shines, Councils were asked to report on the reasons providers give about their reluctance to participate at higher levels in Colorado Shines (see Table 12). Several Councils (40%) noted that providers who are geographically isolated from other programs expressed reluctance to participate. Around a third of Councils also shared that when programs have long waiting lists (37%) and/or when the staff have many years of experience providing child care (33%) they are often less willing to join Colorado Shines. Some Councils (27%) provided other responses. These responses included when providers believe that they are already high quality, when they are not technologically savvy, and when they are located in rural areas where there is a child care shortage (i.e., there is no competition). Councils also described that providers struggling with the "basics" are less willing to participate, for example keeping their business open and dealing with staff turnover. In addition, Councils noted that some providers fear being rated low and others are uncertain about how their program mission or philosophy aligns with the Colorado Shines rating criteria.

Table 12. Council perceptions of what makes providers less willing to participate (n=30)

In your Council's experience, what makes providers less willing to participate in Colorado Shines?	Percentage
Program is geographically isolated from other programs	40%
Program has a long waiting list	37%
Staff have many years of experience providing child care	33%
Other (please describe)	27%
Program follows a philosophy (e.g. Montessori, Reggio Emilia)	23%
Program is religiously affiliated	23%
Program is accredited	20%
Provider's desire to improve quality	13%
None of the above	13%
Staff are highly trained and/or educated	7%
Program accepts CCCAP	0%

Source: Council Survey, May 2017, Child Trends.

Key Stakeholder Perceptions of Barriers

Key stakeholders (n=20) were asked during interviews to share their perceptions of providers' concerns about Colorado Shines. Several key stakeholders (35%) explained that providers are simply not accustomed to the new system. About a third of key stakeholders (30%) said that some providers are concerned about the sustainability of Colorado Shines after the RTT-ELC grant ends and therefore may not see the value in participating. Another third (30%) talked about the technology requirements to participate in Colorado Shines and that this may be a barrier for providers who are not experienced with technology.

Part I Summary & Recommendations

Participation. The number of programs receiving Colorado Shines ratings has increased steadily since June 2015, reaching a high of 1,323 centers and 727 FCC providers in May 2017. As of May 2017, about half (48%) of licensed programs are participating in Colorado Shines at a Level 2 or higher. More center-based programs (65%) are participating at Levels 2-5 in Colorado Shines compared to family child care providers (33%).

Recruitment. There was consensus among coaches and QI Navigators that building relationships and using existing knowledge about providers were the most effective outreach strategies for recruiting participation in levels 2-5 of Colorado Shines. In-person visits with providers were noted as the most effective mode for outreach. In several instances, word of mouth or provider-to-provider referrals were also mentioned as effective strategies. Less effective outreach strategies included those that were not individualized for providers (e.g., mass emails, distributing flyers). Councils explained that their collaborations with local partners and work to build relationships with providers have been critical to the success of their outreach efforts. The biggest challenges that Councils and QI Navigators have faced are getting buy-in from providers and breaking past negative preconceptions, especially with family child care homes. Outreach has been more challenging when providers lack access to or skills for using technology.

Motivations. Providers said they are or would be motivated to participate in Colorado Shines because of the professional development opportunities/opportunities to increase

professionalism, access to additional funds (e.g., QI Funds, higher tiered reimbursement rates), and the prospect that Colorado Shines might help them better attract families to their program. Councils and key stakeholders noted that providers are more willing to participate in Colorado Shines if they have an intrinsic motivation to be part of a high-quality initiative and improve their program's quality. Councils also noted that providers seem to be more willing to participate if they have highly trained/educated staff, accept CCCAP, and are motivated by the funding opportunities Colorado Shines provides.

Barriers to participation Level 1 center directors and family child care providers reported that they are not or would not be interested in participating in Colorado Shines at higher levels because they do not need a rating to attract families, they perceive the rating application and process to be difficult, or they worry that the rating they would receive would not accurately reflect their program's quality. Councils also reported that providers are typically less willing to participate if their program is geographically isolated from other programs, if they have a long waitlist, and if they have staff who have many years of experience providing child care. Key stakeholders perceived that providers are concerned about participating in Colorado Shines because of the technological requirements and questions about the sustainability of the system after the RTT-ELC grant.

Recommendations

Recruitment strategies should focus on relationship building and an ongoing communications campaign to continue to build participation in Colorado Shines. Building trust and rapport with providers, especially those new to Colorado Shines and QRIS, takes time and is best accomplished through in-person interactions. This kind of recruitment method can be resource-intensive, requiring many staff hours and possibly travel, so it should be limited to programs who are registered with Colorado Shines and have expressed their readiness to participate to Councils. The OEC should continue to support Councils by investing in effective outreach strategies and de-emphasizing or discontinuing the less effective outreach strategies, such as mass communication. Promoting awareness and general information sharing can instead shift to statewide Colorado Shines marketing and communications campaign for both parents and providers.

Continue to invest in the incentives to participate that are most meaningful for providers: quality improvement resources, professional development, and marketing to families. Colorado should continue to promote the professional development opportunities afforded by participating in Colorado Shines (e.g., coaching, the credentialing process, and the PDIS) since this was identified as an important motivator for providers; in addition to quality improvements resources (i.e., funds for materials and coaching), and strategies to promote awareness of Colorado Shines with families. While access to professional development was frequently noted as a reason to participate by Level 1 providers, it was identified by only a third of these providers. Meaning, Colorado might also think about continuing conversations and conducting surveys with Level 1 providers to learn more about what professional development opportunities, and potentially what different types of professional development opportunities than what are currently offered, might meet their interest and engage them in participating in Colorado Shines at higher levels. Regarding increasing parent awareness of Colorado Shines with the intention of also increasing demand for rated programs, the OEC might continue to invest in an ongoing marketing and communications campaign. Other states have invested in PSAs on public television, radio, and through online advertising. Increasing parent knowledge about the importance of high quality child care and promoting Colorado Shines as a tool to help them chose quality may be an important driver of program participation after RTT-ELC.

Part II. Providers' Perceptions, Experiences, and Recommendations

Purpose of this Section: To summarize providers' perceptions of Colorado Shines, their experiences with the rating process and recommendations for future implementation. Evaluation Questions Addressed:

    a. What are providers' overall perceptions of Colorado Shines?
    b. What are providers' perceptions of specific aspects of Colorado Shines?
    c. What challenges, if any, did providers encounter with the rating process?
    d. What are providers' recommendations for Colorado Shines?

Data Sources Used:
- Rated (Level 2-5) Provider Survey (n=513)
- Voluntary follow up discussions with providers (n=13)

Summary of Key Findings:
- ***Providers generally feel positive about Colorado Shines, but many providers provided feedback on challenges they experienced.*** When asked to rank their overall impressions of Colorado Shines, most respondents felt extremely positive, positive, or somewhat positive about Colorado Shines. Providers were generally positive in their agreement about the goals, value, and intentions of Colorado Shines, their sense that they would recommend Colorado Shines to other providers, and in their positive experiences with coaching, professional development/trainings, and the supports provided.

- ***Challenges were generally related to the time needed to participate, frustration with the process, confusion, and technology issues.*** While the overall perceptions of Colorado Shines were generally positive, those who responded to questions to gather more information shared concerns that focused primarily on four key themes: (1) a concern about the amount of time needed to participate; (2) concerns that aspects of the rating process were unfair, inflexible, or frustrating; (3) concerns about aspects of Colorado Shines that are confusing or for which they received inconsistent communication; (4) and challenges with technology or uploading documentation. A small group of family child care providers also shared a unique concern that they felt Colorado Shines was designed more for centers not homes.

What are providers' overall perceptions of Colorado Shines?

All *fully-rated* Level 2 through Level 5 child care centers (n=1,258) and family child care homes (n=73) participating in Colorado Shines as of February 2017, (n=1,331 total) received an online survey in February 2017 to better understand their perceptions and experiences with several aspects of Colorado Shines. Just over 500 providers completed the survey for a 39% response rate (n=513). This section of the report focuses specifically on a subset of survey questions designed to gather feedback from providers and recommendations for the future implementation of Colorado Shines. In addition, at the end of the survey all participants were asked if they would be willing to participate in a brief phone call to further discuss their

experiences and feedback about Colorado Shines. Of the 513 survey respondents, 163 provided their contact information and indicated an interest in participating in a follow-up discussion. All 163 providers were contacted by email and given one or two dates to participate in a small follow-up focus group. Overall, 13 providers responded to the invitation and participated in these follow-up discussions (center directors n=8; family child care providers n=5). When relevant, comments from these discussions are included below. A more detailed description of the survey and focus group methods are included in the Appendix.

Survey respondents were asked to rate their overall impression of Colorado Shines. Most center directors (82%) and family child care providers (85%) felt extremely positive, positive, or somewhat positive about Colorado Shines, as indicated in Table 13 below.

Table 13. What is your overall impression of Colorado Shines?

	Extremely Positive	Positive	Somewhat Positive	Somewhat Negative	Negative	No Opinion	Total
Centers	10%	39%	33%	13%	4%	2%	333
Family Child Care	21%	36%	28%	8%	6%	1%	177

Source: Rated Provider Survey, April, 2017, Child Trends.

Directly following this question, survey participants were asked to explain their overall impression of Colorado Shines. Of the 333 center respondents who answered the ranking question above, 164 (49%) provided comments. Similarly, of the 177 family child care respondents who answered this first ranking question, 80 (45%) provided comments. A thematic analysis of these comments is provided below, by provider type.

Child Care Centers
The 164 child care center directors provided 246 comments about their overall impression of Colorado Shines, most of the comments only described providers' challenges (n=158 or 64%), fewer were only positive in nature (n=49 or 19%), while others were coded as "mixed" because they included both a challenge and a positive statement (n=39 or 15%); see Table 14. Note that different parts of longer or more complex comments were coded multiple ways. For example, the comment, "It is time consuming paperwork that doesn't change the quality in our center. It is not valued by parents." Was coded two ways: once for "time consuming;" once for "parents don't know about Colorado Shines yet." Therefore, the data included in Table 14 quantifies the types of comments made by providers, not the number of providers who made such comments.

Table 14. What is your overall impression of Colorado Shines, please explain (Child Care Centers)

Positive Feedback (19%)	**n=49**
Positive experience/benefits of getting rated or working with a coach	21
Establishes an important unifying quality framework for child care	18
Appreciate access to training	6
Supports an important goal to increase quality of ECE	4
Mixed Feedback (15%)	**n=39**
There are things I appreciate and things I find frustrating	39

Challenging Feedback (64%)	n=158
Unfair, inflexible, frustrating	49
Overwhelming, time consuming, too much paperwork	37
Confusing/inconsistent communication	21
Doesn't align with my educational philosophy/structure	20
Challenges with the website/PDIS/uploading documentation	13
Parents don't know about Colorado Shines yet	3
Source: Rated Provider Survey, April, 2017, Child Trends.	

Positive Feedback. The most common positive remarks noted a good experience or benefit from participating in the rating process or working with a coach (n=21). For example, "*getting the coaching was extremely helpful for our staff. It helped them to build our classrooms to promote better learning*." Or, "*Colorado Shines is one of the tools I can use to understand and communicate about my program. This information has helped me influence partners whose cooperation I need to be successful*." Comments (n=18) related to Colorado Shines as an important unifying framework for quality early care and education included, "*[Colorado Shines] attempts to looks at what is good for all children*" and "*the process of being evaluated is rigorous. However, I do believe it should be. We felt well supported during the process*." A smaller subset of comments (n=6) also noted the value of the trainings provided, such as, "*the training that PDIS provides are wonderful, my favorite aspect of [Colorado Shines]*." And, "*I think the PDIS is excellent. We need to increase the knowledge and the formal college courses of our staff*."

Mixed Feedback. Comments that included mixed feedback (n=39) often noted both an aspect of Colorado Shines that the respondent appreciated, and something that was difficult or frustrating. For example, "*we have learned a lot going through this process, but the documentation is overbearing*." Or, "*[Colorado Shines] requires a lot to time, that takes away from the children, we value the commitment to quality but takes a lot of time*." Other comments focused on the positive aspects or intentions behind Colorado Shines, but some frustration with the requirements. For example, "*the overall heart of Colorado Shines is good. However, it is restrictive and closed minded in some ways in the way it defines quality care and education*." In a follow-up discussion one center provider offered the following mixed feedback comment:

> "I value what Colorado Shines is trying to do and agree with the quality goals and everyone has been very nice, but this process was a lot of work and was not at all worth it. It took a lot of time and frankly time away from children, which is our real priority. Then getting caught on one minor technicality on the ERS was completely disheartening, I cried for weeks and am even getting emotional talking about it now. It was de-motivating and de-engaging for me, when I know we are a high-quality program. I don't know that we'll get re-rated when our rating expires…[Colorado Shines] needs someone who can hold the hearts of all of us who put our heart and souls into this work."

Some of the mixed feedback comments (n=15) reflected a theme about providers weighing the costs and benefits of pursuing a Colorado Shines rating. For example:

> "I believe we overall improved the quality of our program, but the cost was high…when we initially were told about [Colorado Shines] I don't know how many times I heard, 'we don't want to change your program,' but the experience has changed our program. We are more similar to the program down the street.

We had to modify things we were doing to earn certain points. We spent money, time, and energy on things we would not have previously…again, in some ways we have seen improvement, but I would like us all to look at the costs."

Feedback on Challenges. Most comments highlighted challenges providers encountered with Colorado Shines (n=158). The most common theme among these responses related to a perception that the rating process was unfair, inflexible, or frustrating (n=49). For example, comments about fairness included statements such as, "*the scores are not accurate according to the rater. Each rater has different opinions and techniques on how to rate*," and "*the system seems to be biased based on the person providing the scoring.*" Or, "*the nit picking that the observers do is unbelievable! Just like licensing, there is no way for it to be totally not subjective.*" Comments related to inflexibility include an example such as, "*[Colorado Shines] does not allow for flexibility for a program to operate under a different standard of quality. The program requirements are too tight and programs should have flexibility to operate in best practices that may look different than from what Colorado Shines defines.*" Examples of comments that reflected center directors' general frustration include, "*the process was deflating as we work hard to run a top-notch program and going through the rating made me as an admin feel like I wasn't doing my job.*" and "*in my opinion, it's too much hassle for what it's worth.*"

Comments about the time involved to understand, complete, and upload the paperwork in order to receive a rating were also frequently made by center directors (n=37), for example, "*too complicated and requiring too much that takes away from the children.*" Comments about provider confusion or mixed messages they received about the rating process (n=21) were generally simple statements such as, "*the process was confusing,*" "*it was not clear what was expected of our program*," or "*a lot of people were unsure about answers when it came to questions.*"

Providers' comments (n=20) also noted their belief that Colorado Shines did not align with their educational philosophy or the structure of their program. For example, "*the requirements do NOT reflect small rural programming*," or "*Colorado Shines does not know or understand how a Montessori philosophy plays out in the classroom*," and "*[Colorado Shines] does not align with our Christian education and curriculum.*"

Family Child Care Providers

The 80 family child care providers provided 104 comments about their overall impression of Colorado Shines, most of which reflected providers' concerns (n=69 or 66%), fewer were positive (n=22 or 21%), or mixed (n=13 or 13%). See Table 15.

Table 15. What is your overall impression of Colorado Shines, please explain (Family Child Care)

Positive Feedback (21%)	n=22
Appreciate access to training	9
Helpful quality framework for family child care	6
Positive experience/benefits of getting rated	5
Easy to understand and not difficult	2
Mixed Feedback (13%)	n=13
There are things I appreciate and things I find frustrating	13
Feedback on Challenges (66%)	n=69

Overwhelming, time consuming, too much paperwork	15
Unfair, inflexible, frustrating	13
Confusing/inconsistent communication	12
Developed for centers, not for child care homes	12
Doesn't align with my educational philosophy	6
Challenges with the website/uploading documentation	6

Source: Rated Provider Survey, April, 2017, Child Trends.

Positive Feedback. The most common positive comments made by family child care providers noted an appreciation for the training provided by Colorado Shines (n=9). For example, "*I appreciate the availability of training online and feel Colorado Shines encourages growth professionally;*" or "*[Colorado Shines] provides so much training and so much great information!*" and "*I love being able to do my trainings online at my own pace.*" Other positive comments noted the importance of Colorado Shines as a helpful quality framework (n=6), for example, "*it is unifying all childcare programs*" and "*I like having a benchmark for quality to see how I am doing.*" Some comments (n=5) also noted providers' positive experiences with the rating process: "*I love the coaching services and everyone is very responsive*" and "*my program has benefited and changed things that the children and families are happier. I have started networking with other providers and joined a committee for our early childhood council.*" One of the five family child care providers who participated in a follow-up discussion noted the following benefit of participating in Colorado Shines:

> "It feels good to let your parents know, I mean they know, but they're so caught up in life, that you have your child at one of the <u>best</u> in the state. I mean that feels good to tell your parents that! Given the clientele that I serve, oh my God, it has got to be a mind-easing moment for them, because this is probably the most secure thing in their world, for them to know that they've got their babies at the best, and they can go and do whatever it is they gotta do because they know their babies are okay. So that right there is worth it, and makes me feel good about doing this."

Mixed Feedback. Comments that reflected mixed impressions (n=8) included comments such as, "lots to [do] but I feel it's for the better" and "it is absolutely what is best for children, I just wish I had more time, energy, confidence and resources to commit to it." Other mixed reactions focused on the lack of parent awareness of Colorado Shines. For example, "I honestly don't see how having a Colorado Shines rating aids my program. Although I am proud to have a 3 rating, in my opinion many families aren't even aware of Colorado Shines, providers' ratings, or what each rating involves/means." Or, "while I agree with and understand the importance of quality child care, I am hesitant to apply for a higher rating. Almost all my referrals come from parents' word of mouth not a rating website, as even though I am currently at a Level 2 rating on Colorado Shines, I know the time and commitment that I put into my program and parents know the quality of care that they are going to receive for their child."

Feedback on Challenges. Challenges most frequently noted by family child care providers include the amount of time it takes to participate (n=15). For example, "*the documentation process was extremely tedious and I felt that it took me away from my job of teaching the children, it was way too much paperwork!*" Other frequently mentioned comments included that the process was unfair/frustrating (n=13); confusing (n=12); or reflected a feeling that the rating criteria are designed for child care centers (n=12). For example, "*Colorado Shines sends the message that they want family child care homes to be more like centers.*"

Summary

When asked to rank their overall impressions of Colorado Shines, most respondents felt extremely positive, positive, or somewhat positive about Colorado Shines. However, when asked to explain their ranking, survey respondents shared several concerns, such as the amount of time needed to participate, and that aspects of the rating process were unfair, inflexible, frustrating, or confusing. Some specific types of programs (i.e., rural, Montessori, family child care homes) indicated that Colorado Shines did not align with their program philosophy or structure. Positive comments included themes about the benefits of going through the rating process or working with a coach; an appreciation for the training provided; or an appreciation for the Colorado Shines as a unifying quality framework for child care programs.

What are providers' perceptions of specific aspects of Colorado Shines?

In addition to the open-ended question about *overall* perceptions of Colorado Shines, providers were asked to rank the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of 19 specific statements about Colorado Shines. Both child care center directors and family child care providers generally responded positively to about half of these statements. For example, 77% of center directors and 72% of family child care providers indicated that they strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement, "*I would recommend that other programs join Colorado Shines.*" Similarly, 76% of center directors and 81% of family child care providers indicated that they strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement, "*Colorado Shines is improving access to quality education and care.*" The 19 statements are organized below in two separate tables. The first table includes the 11 statements to which providers generally responded with positive agreement (Table 16a).

Table 16a. Providers' level of agreement with selected statements about Colorado Shines

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A	Total
My experience with Colorado Shines has been what I expected.						
Centers	28%	51%	13%	6%	3%	327
Family Child Care	35%	46%	10%	5%	3%	175
I would recommend that other programs join Colorado Shines.						
Centers	37%	40%	15%	7%	1%	326
Family Child Care	47%	25%	17%	6%	5%	176
I had sufficient time to work with my coach.						
Centers	28%	34%	15%	11%	13%	326
Family Child Care	44%	26%	12%	8%	10%	175
I know who to call if I have questions about Colorado Shines.						
Centers	54%	27%	10%	8%	1%	325
Family Child Care	69%	17%	7%	6%	1%	174
Colorado Shines provides valuable professional development opportunities and support for early care and education professionals.						
Centers	46%	37%	11%	5%	2%	328

Family Child Care	55%	31%	9%	3%	2%	175
Colorado Shines is improving access to quality education and care.						
Centers	40%	36%	13%	7%	5%	329
Family Child Care	45%	36%	12%	6%	1%	177
Colorado Shines could make me/my program lose its licensing.						
Centers	0%	7%	15%	73%	5%	326
Family Child Care	2%	3%	18%	71%	6%	173
I tell families in my program about Colorado Shines.						
Centers	36%	34%	14%	11%	5%	329
Family Child Care	45%	33%	7%	10%	5%	175
Colorado Shines will improve outcomes for all Colorado children.						
Centers	27%	46%	16%	8%	3%	324
Family Child Care	34%	38%	15%	9%	4%	171
I think quality rating systems are a good way to understand the quality of early care and education programs.						
Centers	35%	44%	13%	6%	2%	330
Family Child Care	32%	39%	18%	9%	2%	176
I believe my program is of higher quality because we joined Colorado Shines.						
Centers	27%	37%	18%	14%	3%	327
Family Child Care	45%	28%	15%	10%	3%	175

Source: Rated Provider Survey, April, 2017, Child Trends.

Both center directors and family child care providers indicated a wider range of opinions on the remaining eight statements provided in the survey. For example, both center directors and family child care providers were fairly divided in their agreement with statements such as, "*Colorado Shines is not relevant to me/my program because we already deliver quality care;"* and *"the rating my program received accurately reflects my program's quality."*

For some statements, center directors and family child care providers had differing patterns of responses. For example, most center directors (70%) somewhat or strongly disagreed with the statement, "*Colorado Shines will make me change my program's education philosophy and ways of teaching our kids."* In comparison, family child care providers were more divided in their agreement with this statement, with about 40% indicating they strongly or somewhat agreed with this statement, and 55% indicating they somewhat or strongly disagreed with this statement. A full list of statements to which both center directors and family child care providers responded with mixed opinions is provided in Table 16b.

Table 16b. Providers' level of agreement with selected statements about Colorado Shines

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A	Total
The rating my program received accurately reflects my program's quality.						
Centers	26%	28%	20%	16%	10%	328
Family Child Care	34%	23%	21%	14%	9%	174
I believe Colorado Shines is unnecessary because there are already good quality programs in Colorado.						
Centers	9%	20%	36%	31%	4%	332
Family Child Care	10%	22%	30%	34%	3%	175
Colorado Shines is flexible for the programs involved.						
Centers	14%	44%	25%	13%	4%	330
Family Child Care	24%	42%	20%	11%	3%	174
Colorado Shines is just another requirement that programs will have to meet.						
Centers	26%	42%	22%	9%	1%	326
Family Child Care	25%	42%	19%	12%	1%	175
Colorado Shines is not relevant to me/my program because we already deliver quality care.						
Centers	16%	34%	30%	18%	2%	327
Family Child Care	16%	32%	25%	22%	5%	174
Colorado Shines will make me change my program's education philosophy and ways of teaching our kids.						
Centers	6%	20%	23%	47%	4%	327
Family Child Care	5%	35%	16%	39%	5%	173
Colorado Shines is just another "trend" that won't be around in a few years.						
Centers	7%	32%	29%	27%	6%	328
Family Child Care	8%	23%	28%	33%	8%	174
Colorado Shines has been beneficial to the families my program serves.						
Centers	21%	31%	24%	15%	8%	324
Family Child Care	33%	30%	21%	13%	4%	175

Source: Rated Provider Survey, April, 2017, Child Trends.

Summary

When asked to rank their agreement with several statements about Colorado Shines, both center directors and family child care providers were generally positive in their agreement with statements about the goals, value, and intentions of Colorado Shines; their sense that they would recommend Colorado Shines to other providers; and in their positive perceptions of the coaching, professional development, and supports provided. However, agreement both between

and within centers and family child care providers was more divided on statements related to the accuracy of the rating, flexibility, necessity, relevancy of the rating, or the benefit of Colorado Shines to families.

What challenges, if any, did providers encounter with the rating process?

All survey respondents were asked a "yes/no" question about whether they encountered any specific challenges with the rating process. Just over half of center directors (51%) and just under half of family child care providers (42%) reported that they encountered a challenge during the rating process (see Table 17). All respondents who indicated they encountered a challenge were then asked to provide more information about the challenge they encountered. Challenges noted by center directors and family child care providers were similar in nature and in the general frequency with which they were reported by each provider type (see Table 18).

Table 17. Did you encounter any challenges during the rating process?

	Yes	No	Total
Centers	51%	49%	318
Family Child Care	42%	58%	168

Source: Rated Provider Survey, April, 2017, Child Trends.

Table 18. *Providers' reported challenges with the rating process*

	Family Child Care Providers	Child Care Centers
Did you encounter any challenges during the rating process?	**n=64**	**n=153**
Overwhelming, time consuming, too much paperwork	21	67
Unfair, inflexible, frustrating	19	47
Confusing or aspects that need to be clarified	15	26
Challenges with technology, uploading documentation	9	19
Other	2	14

Source: Rated Provider Survey, April, 2017, Child Trends.

The most commonly reported challenge by both provider types was a sense that the Colorado Shines rating process was overwhelming, time-consuming, and/or too much paperwork (family child care n=21 and centers n=67). For example, *The amount of information being asked to upload is outrageous. It took me out of the classroom for 3 weeks and away from my family for 5 days…"* and *"the documentation portion was ridiculous and burdensome. I spent over eighty hours trying to meet the expectations of the documentation team and still they did not accept all of my documentation. I spent a solid week during the summer when my school was closed trying to tidy up loose ends. There has to be a better way…"*

Both provider types also frequently reported on feelings about Colorado Shines as being unfair, inflexible, or frustrating (family child care n=19 and centers n=47). For example, *"we don't feel like our final rating accurately reflect our true program"* and *"we have to invest a lot of money, in order to go for a higher level, teachers are required to do a lot more work and spend more of*

their personal time on meetings, trainings, etc. but we are not able to pay more to them…". Or, *"it favors larger programs who have more people to do the paperwork."*

Miscommunication or confusion about what was needed to meet the criteria (family child care n=15 and centers n=26) was the third most frequent challenge noted by providers. For example, *"it was difficult to figure out what exactly would qualify as proof for many of the areas. I had two different documents showing what was required that had different information on each"* and *"it was hard to receive an answer on certain things. I would have to call multiple people, be transferred, etc. to find the information I was looking for."* In a follow-up discussion, one family child care provider offered the following statement:

> *"The criteria and the evidence guide don't always align, or more so the evidence guide about what we are supposed to submit does not always align with the feedback we received about why we did not meet a specific indicator. For example, when I wrote about my transition policy, I talked about the way I support my preschool children to transition to kindergarten. I didn't get credit, and the feedback was that I didn't include information about home to school transitions, but that wasn't listed anywhere in the evidence guide."*

The fourth common theme among challenges noted was related to technology issues (family child care n=9 and centers n=19). For example, *"getting my staff online with PDIS, they have a really hard time with it!"* and *"making things online, is difficult when you have staff/families who are not tech-friendly."*

A smaller number of family child care providers (n=2) and center directors (n=14) made "other" comments that did not directly align with one of the four categories above. For example, two family child care providers described a specific challenge they encountered related to the FCCERS-R observation. Other comments made by center directors noted the need to cultivate staff buy-in to participate in the process (n=2) or general comments about challenges such as, *"we encountered challenges but we overcame them with the support of our coach*."

Summary

Just over 200 providers expressed concerns about challenges they encountered during the rating process (see Table 17). The reported challenges were consistent in type and general frequency across family child care and center-based providers. These comments emphasized: (1) a request to consider the time it takes to participate; (2) the importance of maintaining the morale and motivation of participants; (3) the need for some clarification about the evidence required and other aspects of the rating process; and (4) the ongoing need to improve the technology and offer tech support to providers.

What are providers' recommendations for improving the Colorado Shines rating process?

The last question of the survey asked if providers had specific suggestions for how Colorado Shines could improve the rating process. Of the 483 providers who responded to this question, 142 center directors (45%) and 60 family child care providers (37%) followed up with a specific suggestion.

Family Child Care Providers' Suggestions

Of the 60 family child care providers who offered suggestions for ways to improve Colorado Shines, the most frequent suggestion focused on tailoring the criteria and rating process for family child care providers (n=20 or 30%). These comments reflected these providers'

perception that Colorado Shines was better suited for centers, and that some of the criteria were unrealistic for family child care. For example, "*Colorado Shines is more focused around centers. [Colorado Shines is] more for a teacher who has more time or a director who could fill out paperwork*" and "*many of the requirements are not tailored to a family childcare setting.*" Or, "*support the providers more and make it not so much about paperwork and trying to turn family child care homes into little centers. Parents choose family child care for a reason-they don't WANT centers! It needs to be more about relationships.*"

Additional suggestions offered by family child care focused on making the process less complicated and reducing the amount of paperwork (n=10 or 17%) and addressing issues related to technology and challenges with uploading documentation (n=6 or 10%). One comment noted, "*technology piece is a huge obstacle ...and home providers do not have parents sign in to come to parties, field trips, etc. It is just not how we do things. There is only one of us! We do not need to be tied down to paperwork...our job is to care for the children.*" Seven providers made comments about clarifying the requirements (n=4) or providing coaches to support the rating process (n=3). The remaining suggestions were coded as "other" (n=17) and included statements such as, increase the speed in which we get results (n=2); and ensure more consistency with raters and coaches (n=2).

Center Directors' Suggestions

Center directors (n=142) offered several suggestions for Colorado Shines to consider in the future (see Table X). The most frequent theme of these comments was related to the need to clarify specific requirements (n=31 or 22%). For example, "*expectations need to be clear. It seems that rules change throughout the process*"; "*more explanation of documentation required: [provide] visual examples;*" and "*some of the documentation guidelines could be more specific. If you know what you want...say it.*"

Center directors also frequently requested that Colorado Shines take into consideration the unique aspects of many program structures and philosophies that may be in conflict with Colorado Shines (n=26 or 18%). For example, "*all philosophies and curricula should be understood and taken into account. One size does not fit all or is able to rate quality;*" "*refine what is required by school programs;*" and "*think about Rural Colorado not just Denver.*"

A group of comments included requests that Colorado Shines consider how to simplify the process in the future, and reduce the amount of time and paperwork needed to participate (n=22 or 15%). These comments tended to focus more on the burden of uploading the documentation rather than the documentation itself. For example, "*not have to upload everything electronically. A hard copy program portfolio that could be reviewed on site.* Other comments in this category stated that the process just needed to be "*simplified*" or "*more user-friendly.*"

Suggestions related to providing more support during the rating process (n=16 or 11%) included statements such as, "it would be nice to have face-to-face time during the process;" or "more coaches coming to centers to explain the rating system to all staff." Other comments in this category were related to the overall supportiveness of the rating process, such as, "more raters, a more timely response from submission for rating and actual rating to take place" or "[provide] coaching after rating, continued funding, a practice observation so we know how it looks…"

Fifteen center directors (11%) made comments about the onsite observations of program quality and/or the use of the Environment Rating Scales (ERS). For example, "*choose a new environment rating system, or let people choose from several. Developmental Environment*

Rating Scale, (DERS)[c] would be much better;" "more focus on the interactions in the classroom;" and "would like to see more consistencies with the ERS raters."

Comments to consider the morale of the providers engaging in the rating process (n=11 or 8%) included statements such as, "be more consistent and really think about the criteria being rated to make positive ratings instead of looking for everything wrong." Or, "teachers may have more 'buy in' if it related more directly to them and how they run their class and interact with the children in their care."

A small group of center directors noted challenges with the PDIS (n=6 or 4%), noting that it was not user-friendly or that they encountered challenges uploading materials. The group of "other" comments (n=16) ranged from notes that parents need to be more aware of Colorado Shines (n=1); comments that participation is expensive (n=2); or comments that reflected an understanding that Colorado Shines is a new system and is "working out the kinks" (n=3).

Summary

About 200 survey respondents offered suggestions for how to improve Colorado Shines. Family child care providers primarily suggested tailoring Colorado Shines for the unique structure of family child care provides; reduce the time/paperwork involved in the rating process, and offer support with the technology requirements or address challenges related to the online platforms. Center directors' suggestions focused on a request to clarify the evidence needed to meet specific requirements; requests to consider the unique structures and philosophies of programs across the state; suggestions to simplify the rating process and reduce the amount of paperwork; and to provide more support during the rating process from a coach or mentor.

Survey Respondents' Closing Comments

At the end of the survey providers were asked to offer any last comments about Colorado Shines. Just over 90 providers responded to this question (n=94 or 18%). Of these comments, 57 included positive statements, 20 included negative comments, 12 were mixed, and 5 included a recommendation. A sample of these comments are listed below.

Examples of Positive Closing Comments (n=57)

- I LOVE this program! I love being able to improve the care and education of our children. I sincerely thank you for this opportunity!

- I have appreciated the help and quick responses to my needs or questions. Having personal visits to my school to help assist me and my Para was FANTASTIC!!!!

- It was a great learning experience and I am glad that we chose to continue in the program past a Level 2. The coaching was so very valuable!

- Overall, awesome process and resource!

- Thanks for your hard work on this---it is a HUGE undertaking for the entire state. The children and families of Colorado will benefit from your dedication to quality schooling for all. Thank you.

- I believe this process will develop more quality centers throughout Colorado

---

[c] For more information see: https://www.ders-app.org/

- I have been surprisingly impressed with Shines. I am excited to see that there is consistent information being share to providers!

- There is much to like about the Colorado Shines system, especially the on-line professional development.

- Your support for programs and children is amazing and thank for all you do!

Examples of Negative Closing Comments (n=20)

- I hope that it is more "settled" now. I went to lots of meetings before it came out so that I would know about it....but it seems like it just kept changing. It made my teachers really unhappy when I would tell them about another change. It was confusing for me when I would say one thing and then 3 months later, it changed. It made me look unprofessional and incompetent.

- Accreditation is a much better measure of quality when looking at diverse programs. Educational diversity is crucial because children and families have differing needs, so any system implemented should allow for that diversity, reduce the already overwhelming administrative burden on schools, and be based in collaboration and trust that all stakeholders, including schools, are working together in the interests of the children.

- Colorado Shines leads us to believe that this will make your program the best out there. It is difficult to use and I could not get answers to many questions.

Examples of Mixed Closing Comments (n=12)

- I appreciate the effort to raise the quality across Colorado, but this process is very stressful, extremely time consuming, and now the funds that have supported our navigator have ended. I would like to see the state licensing inspectors be able to use our PDIS profiles and other Shines info for their inspections. There is a lot of redundancy across various inspections.

- I believe in the intention of the process. I believe in the movement it can make in programs that need this type of micromanaged system. However, it needs to be flexible for those programs that already have high quality practices in place that have operated under different semantics but similar process. It needs to use updated tools that rely more on the actual interactions with children and families. I am left heartbroken and depleted.

- I strongly believe in quality ratings. However, I feel sometimes it can be a scary process for new homes and centers.

- I think over all it is a good rating, but just like most things it's a lot of work.

Examples of Closing Recommendations (n=5)

- Allow DERS as an option for environment rating scale!

- [Colorado Shines is] great just wish there was more follow up with coaching after.

Part II Summary and Recommendations

The purpose of this aspect of the Colorado Shines evaluation was to summarize providers' perceptions of Colorado Shines, their experiences with the rating process and recommendations

for future implementation. This feedback is offered to Colorado Shines to inform its ongoing continuous quality improvement efforts.

Overall Perceptions. When asked to rank their overall impressions of Colorado Shines, most respondents felt extremely positive, positive, or somewhat positive about Colorado Shines. Positive impressions were generally related to themes about the benefits of going through the rating process or working with a coach; an appreciation for the training provided; or an appreciation for the Colorado Shines as a unifying quality framework for child care programs.

Challenges. When asked to explain their ranking, survey respondents shared several concerns or challenges they encountered, which centered around four common themes: (1) the time, burden, and paperwork required to participate; (2) a sense that the process could feel unfair, inflexible, or frustrating; (3) a request to clarify the requirements or evidence needed for the rating; and (4) a request to address challenges that providers encountered related to technology or the burden of uploading documentation. Family child care providers also expressed a sense that they felt Colorado Shines was not tailored to the unique culture of their programs. Similarly, a sub-group of center directors commented similarly indicating, that they felt Colorado Shines did not take into account unique program philosophies or structures (i.e., Montessori and rural programs).

Providers' Suggestions. When asked for suggestions of how to improve, family child care providers primarily suggested tailoring Colorado Shines for the unique structure of their care settings; reducing the time/paperwork involved in the rating process, and offering support with the technology requirements or address challenges related to the online platforms. Center suggestions focused on a request to clarify the evidence needed to meet specific requirements; requests to consider the unique structures and philosophies of programs across the state; suggestions to simplify the rating process and reduce the amount of paperwork; and to provide more support during the rating process from a coach or mentor.

Recommendations

Continue to support strategies to reduce the time needed from providers to complete a rating application, reduce confusion related to the application process; and frustration related to technology issues. Develop a process to streamline the documentation requirements when there is an opportunity to revise the evidence guide. For example, commission a group of stakeholders that could review the evidence guide in conjunction with notes kept by the quality rating specialists to identify where clarification may be needed around evidence requirements, and where the documentations may be able to be streamlined or pared down. Participants might include: the quality rating specialists, a coach, an Early Childhood Council member, a QI navigator, and a few representatives from the provider community. This recommendation also supports the state's ongoing efforts to provide support and tutorials around the use of the Colorado Shines web-based platform and PDIS to continually address technology glitches that are inherent with any online system, and to continue offering supports to users who are less tech savvy.

Engage providers who feel Colorado Shines may not align with their program structure of philosophy in order to better understand their perspective and consider these perspectives when there is an opportunity to make revisions to Colorado Shines. Talk with family child care providers to address perceptions that Colorado Shines is designed for centers, not family child care homes. Similarly, Montessori programs and programs in rural or isolated areas expressed challenges related to aligning their program philosophies and structure with the Colorado Shines rating criteria. If there are opportunities to revise aspects of Colorado

Shines, engaging these providers in the process will help to ensure the rating structure is working for their programs.

Part III: Quality Improvement Supports and Perceptions of Changes in Practice

Purpose of this Section: To describe the implementation and perceptions of quality improvement supports offered through Colorado Shines and whether these supports result in perceived changes in provider practices.

Evaluation Questions Addressed
a. How are Colorado Shines' quality improvement supports implemented?
b. How are coaches and QI navigators trained and supported to engage in quality improvement activities with Colorado Shines participants?
c. What are the perceptions of the effectiveness of Colorado Shines' quality improvement supports?
d. What are providers' perceptions of changes in practice that have resulted from Colorado Shines?

Data Sources Used:
- Council Survey
- Coaching Survey
- QI Navigator Survey
- Rated (Level 2-5) Provider Survey

Summary of Key Findings:
- ***Coaching and QI roles focused on classroom environment and application support.*** Coaches reported spending much of their time observing and providing feedback to providers and helping them with their classroom/program environment. QI Navigators reported spending their time with providers helping them navigate the Colorado Shines website and application, the QRIS and PDIS, and orienting them to Colorado Shines.
- ***Observations, feedback, and relationship building were noted as the most effective QI strategies by coaches.*** The most effective coaching strategies (mentioned by several different respondents) are observing and providing feedback, helping providers with their environment, and building relationships with providers. An issue hindering the effectiveness of coaching is not having sufficient hours to work with providers and not being able to provide consistent support over time.
- ***In person visits are effective for recruitment.*** QI Navigators said the most effective strategy they use to provide technical assistance is in-person visits with providers. They said the biggest challenges they face are related to technology—providers lacking experience and/or access to technology and issues they have encountered with the data systems.
- ***Demand for coaching is high.*** Almost half of the Councils did not think that they have enough coaches to provide services for Colorado Shines in their community. Further, most Councils described the limited capacity of coaches due to lack of funding, hours, and training as a challenge.
- ***Colorado Shines Providers reported making programmatic changes.*** Providers are making several changes as a direct result of participating in Colorado Shines. Roughly a third of providers reported making programmatic changes because of Colorado Shines, such as adopting a child assessment tool and/or curriculum.

How are Colorado Shines quality improvement supports implemented?

Through surveys, coaches and QI Navigators were asked to describe their work with programs, including their modes of communication and approaches. Providers were also asked to report on their experiences working with a coach or QI Navigator. In October 2016, 172 Colorado Shines received surveys, of which 73 were completed (41% response rate). In February 2017 70 QI Navigators received surveys, of which 39 completed (55% response rate). This section summarizes data collected from these two surveys.

Coaches' Report on Caseload, Activities, and Approaches to Working with Providers

Coaching caseloads and the frequency of coaching visits with providers varies across the state. Coaches reported an average of 12 programs in their caseload, ranging from 1 to 39 (with outliers of 60 and 85). Most coaches have 2-3 program types on their caseload (i.e., family child care, child care centers, and/or school-based preschool programs). Over half the coaches that responded to the survey reported visiting providers who are going through the rating process once or twice a week (51%). For providers not going through the rating process, coaches reported providing fewer visits, mostly once or twice a month (66%). During a typical visit with a Colorado Shines provider, coaches most often spend time with teachers (60%) and directors (42%).

Coaches were asked a series of questions about the activities they engage in most frequently during visits with Colorado Shines providers. Several coaches reported that they most often observe providers and give feedback (34%) and help providers with their program environment (using a tool such as the ERS or CLASS).

Colorado Shines coaches reported varied use of a specified coaching model. Sixty percent of coaches reported that they use the Practice Based Coaching model (which is the model Colorado Shine promotes); however a few coaches (19%) said that they do not use this model and several others (21%) did not know if they use this model. Of those that use the Practice Based Coaching model, over half (54%) said that they still have questions about it. About half of the coaches (55%) said the model is working well for the providers they serve, but a similar number (46%) said it is only working "adequately". Over half of the coaches (54%) said they need additional support or training on practice based coaching. When asked what additional training and support they need, 13 coaches provided comments. Some coaches said they need refresher trainings (39%) and others said they would benefit from meetings to review the model and ask questions (23%).

QI Navigators' Report on the Technical Assistance they Provide

QI Navigators were asked about the frequency with which they use different modes for providing technical assistances. Over half (52%) said they "often" meet with providers face-to face and several (44%) said they talk with providers over the phone. About a third of QI Navigators (33%) said they used technology-based ways (e.g., online chats, screen sharing) to communicate with providers.

All QI Navigators said they help providers navigate the Colorado Shines website and application, provide training to help sites navigate QRIS and PDIS, and orient providers to Colorado Shines. Further, most respondents stated that they are responsible for helping providers with their Quality Improvement (QI) funds (96%), providing outreach to providers to educate them about Colorado Shines (89%), and sharing resources or directing providers to community resources (82%). About half (46%) of respondents mentioned that one of their main roles as a QI

Navigator is to provide support with data systems. Some (21%) respondents said that one of their main focuses as a QI Navigator is supporting programs in attaining the Level 2 rating.

Rated Providers Perceptions of the Support they Receive from Coaches and QI Navigators

Level 2 through Level 5 center directors and family child care providers were asked about their experiences working with a coach or QI Navigator for Colorado Shines. Most respondents (80%) said they had or were receiving support from a Colorado Shines coach. Providers reported that they typically worked with a coach for 1-2 months in the last 12 months (34%) and for 1-5 hours per month (55%). Providers shared that a typical visit with their coach lasted more than an hour (50%).

When asked about activities most worked on with their coach, the top ranked activity involved observing their program (using an observational tool, such as the ERS or CLASS) and providing feedback (42%). Providers also reported that their coach helped them (or their staff) understand Colorado Shines (39%) and assessed their programs' strengths and areas of growth (36%).

Less than half of the providers (44%) said they had received support from a Colorado Shines QI Navigator. It is important to note that this percentage may be an underrepresentation of the providers helped by QI Navigators because the QI Navigator title is not necessarily well-recognized by providers. The providers who did receive support from a QI Navigator were asked to rank the activities they worked on most with their QI Navigator. The top ranked activities include the QI Navigator answering their questions about Colorado Shines (33%), encouraging them to sign up for Colorado Shines (31%), and helping them with the Colorado Shines website and application (29%).

Summary

Coaching caseloads and the frequency of coaching visits with providers varies across the state. Coaches reported an average of 12 programs in their caseload, ranging from 1 to 39. While most coaches reported that they use the Practice Based Coaching model (which is the model Colorado Shine promotes) about half of the coaches who reported using this model also reported that they have questions about it. Coaches reported spending much of their time observing and providing feedback to providers and helping them with their classroom/program environment.

QI Navigators typically spend their time with providers helping them navigate the Colorado Shines website and application, the QRIS and PDIS, and orienting them to Colorado Shines. Over half of QI Navigators said they "often" meet with providers face-to face and by phone. About a third of QI Navigators said they used technology-based ways (e.g., online chats, screen sharing) to communicate with providers.

How are coaches and QI navigators trained and supported to engage in quality improvement activities with Colorado Shines participants?

To address this research question, coaches and QI Navigators were asked about their training, the tools available to them, and the supervision they receive for Colorado Shines. Councils were also asked about the supports they provide to their coaches.

In general, more coaches reported receiving training that helped prepare them for their role than did QI Navigators (see Table 19), however this may be somewhat expected based on the types of training listed in the survey and the different roles coaches and QI Navigators play. Most coaches (82%) and QI Navigators (79%) said that general training on Colorado Shines and training on the ecConnect data systems (71% coaches, 76% QI Navigators) helped prepare them for their role. Coaches also frequently reported that training on the ERS (92%) and CLASS (56%) helped them prepare for their job.

Table 19. Training received by coaches and QI Navigators

What training have you received that has helped prepare you for your job as a coach/QI Navigator for Colorado Shines?	Coaches (n=66)	QI Navigators (n=29)
Training on Colorado Shines	82%	79%
Training on the Practice Based Coaching model	48%	N/A
Technical assistance from the ecConnect help desk	-	59%
CLASS training	56%	31%
ERS training	92%	69%
Training on the ecConnect database system	71%	76%
Technical assistance from the Colorado Shines help desk	N/A	69%
Colorado Department of Education Relationship-Based Professional Development (RBPD) training	76%	N/A
Training on the Colorado Shines rating criteria	N/A	52%
Early Childhood Coaching Courses at UC Denver (at least 2 of the 3 courses)	20%	N/A
Training on the PDIS	N/A	45%
CDE Coaching to Support Professional Development of Early Childhood Staff in Inclusive Classrooms, Coaches Skill-Building Two Day Workshops	11%	N/A
Training on how to use the Colorado Shines data system	N/A	45%
Learning-Focused Mentoring: Consulting, Collaborating and Coaching for Professional Excellence seminar	5%	N/A
Cognitive Coaching Training	12%	N/A
Training on the Colorado Shine rating verification process (i.e., how ratings are calculated)	N/A	17%
Training on how to address errors in the Colorado Shines data system	N/A	3%
College coursework	32%	14%
Other	14%	17%

Source: Coaching Survey, November 2016, Child Trends and QI Navigator Survey, March 2017, Child Trends.

In general, coaches and QI Navigators found similar tools and resources to be helpful for their work (see Table 20). The majority rated most of the tools as very helpful or helpful. More

coaches said that the point structure guide had been very helpful (52%) whereas more QI Navigators found the Five Steps to PDIS Success (45%) and the evidence documents (55%) to be very helpful for their work. Fewer coaches and QI Navigators found the curriculum crosswalk tools helpful.

Table 20. Coaches' and QI Navigators' ranking of the helpfulness of Colorado Shines tools

	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Very Helpful	Not applicable/ Have not used
Colorado Shines Point Structure Guide					
Coaches (n = 66)	52%	32%	12%	3%	2%
QI Navigators (n = 29)	38%	41%	17%	0%	3%
Colorado Shines Program Guide					
Coaches (n = 66)	32%	41%	20%	3%	5%
QI Navigators (n = 29)	34%	31%	28%	3%	3%
Colorado Shines Five Steps to PDIS Success					
Coaches (n = 66)	32%	27%	30%	5%	6%
QI Navigators (n = 29)	45%	38%	14%	3%	0%
Colorado Shines Fact Sheet					
Coaches (n = 65)	18%	34%	26%	5%	17%
QI Navigators (n = 28)	29%	39%	25%	4%	4%
Colorado Shines Evidence Documents					
Coaches (n = 66)	45%	33%	14%	2%	6%
QI Navigators (n = 29)	55%	24%	10%	0%	10%
Colorado Shines Curriculum Crosswalk Tools					
Coaches (n = 65)	15%	37%	15%	12%	20%
QI Navigators (n = 28)	18%	25%	21%	14%	21%

Source: Coaching Survey, November 2016, Child Trends and QI Navigator Survey, March 2017, Child Trends.

Most coaches (79%) and QI Navigators (68%) reported that someone directly supervises their work for Colorado Shines. In general, coaches and QI navigators reported receiving similar supports from their supervisors. Coaches and QI Navigators said that they discuss effective strategies for working with providers with their supervisor (75% of coaches, 84% of QI Navigators), that their supervisors support them accessing community resources (63% of coaches, 89% of QI Navigators), and that they regularly discuss Colorado Shines related topics (88% of coaches, 84% of QI Navigators). Half of the coaches (54%) reported discussing topics related to child development with their supervisor.

Coaches and QI Navigators were asked to rate statements about the supervision they have received for Colorado Shines (see Table 21). Most strongly agreed or agreed with the positive statements about their supervisor, for example the majority strongly agreed with the statement "My supervisor is available to support me when I face challenges" (71% of coaches, 74% of QI Navigators).

Table 21. Coaches' and QI Navigators' rating of supervisory supports

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My supervisor has a good understanding of the work I do.				
Coaches (n = 52)	67%	31%	2%	0%
QI Navigators (n = 19)	68%	21%	11%	0%
My supervisor is available to support me when I face challenges.				
Coaches (n = 52)	71%	29%	0%	0%
QI Navigators (n = 19)	74%	26%	0%	0%
My supervisor provides me with timely feedback on the work I'm doing.				
Coaches (n = 52)	56%	35%	10%	0%
QI Navigators (n = 19)	53%	47%	0%	0%
The support I receive from my supervisor is adequate.				
Coaches (n = 52)	62%	29%	10%	0%
QI Navigators (n = 19)	63%	32%	5%	0%

Source: Coaching Survey, November 2016, Child Trends and QI Navigator Survey, March 2017, Child Trends.

When asked about coaches could be better supported in their role, 30 coaches (41%) provided comments. About a third of them (30%) talked about improving communication when there are changes and improving feedback loops so everyone has the same information, for example among the OEC, Quality Ratings Assessors, and coaches. When QI Navigators were asked this question, most (67%) asked for more guidance documents, for example, an ecConnect Guide for providers, coaching readiness assessments to use with providers, and examples of required documentation. Some (25%) asked for more training on evidence documents, observational assessment tools, mapping/uploading documents, and submitting reimbursements/making purchases through ecConnect.

Councils' Perceptions

Councils were asked about the types of support they offer to their coaches who provide services for Colorado Shines. Most Councils (86%) offer training and/or professional development opportunities for coaches. The majority (72%) also provide supervision to coaches to help them hone their coaching strategies when working with providers. Over half of Councils provide supervision to help coaches manage their caseloads (62%) and opportunities for peer learning with other coaches (62%).

Summary

Most coaches and QI Navigators reported that general training on Colorado Shines and training on the ecConnect data system were the most beneficial trainings for their role. In addition, coaches also frequently reported that training on the ERS and CLASS helped them prepare for their job. Coaches and QI Navigators generally find the resource guides (i.e., Five Steps to PDIS Success; Point Structure Guide) to be helpful as well as the supervision they receive in supporting their role for Colorado Shines. When asked about what would support their role in the future, about a third of coaches talked about improving communication when there are

changes to the system. QI Navigators generally requested more guidance documents, for example, and ecConnect Guide for providers, coaching readiness assessments to use with providers, and examples of required documentation.

What are the perceptions of the effectiveness of Colorado Shines' quality improvement supports?

To address this question, coaches and QI navigators were asked to describe the aspects of their work they believed were most effective in helping providers and to share general perceptions of their quality improvement work for Colorado Shines. Council Coordinators were also asked about what they believe coaches' most effective strategies for improving program quality, their perceptions of the quality improvement support their Council provides, and to describe the successes and challenges they have faced. This section of the report also included data collected from providers about their perceptions of the quality improvement supports they received.

Coaches' Perceptions

Coaches were provided with a list of strategies (see Table 22) and asked to first rank the top three activities they engage in most frequently with providers. The three most frequent strategies reported by coaches include: helping providers with their program environment (66%); helping providers improve their interactions with children (55%); and observing providers and giving feedback (51%). Coaches were also asked about which strategies are most effective for quality improvement. While observing providers and giving feedback (53%); and helping providers with their program environment (51%) were two of the top strategies perceived to be most effective (in addition to being frequently used); the third most effective quality improvement strategy identified by coaches was helping providers determine how to use their QI funds (47%).

Table 22. Strategies coaches use frequently and perceive to be most effective in improving program quality (n=47)

	Most Frequently Used	Perceived as Most Effective for Improving Quality
Helping providers with their program environment (using an observational tool such as the ERS or the CLASS)	66%	51%
Helping providers improve their interactions with children	55%	34%
Observing providers and giving feedback	51%	53%
Assessing providers' strengths and areas of growth	43%	23%
Developing Quality Improvement Plans	36%	28%
Helping providers improve their business or administrative practices	23%	13%
Helping providers determine how to spend Quality Improvement (QI) funds	21%	47%
Consulting about professional development or trainings	13%	4%
Helping providers improve their interactions with parents	13%	2%
Helping providers register in PDIS	11%	30%

Sharing resources or directing providers to community resources	11%	2%
Helping programs upload documentation to Colorado Shines and/or PDIS	9%	21%
Doing the program pre-assessment or initial consultation	9%	13%
Helping providers navigate the Colorado Shines website and application	6%	11%
Orientating providers to Colorado Shines	4%	38%

Source: Coaching Survey, November 2016, Child Trends and QI Navigator Survey, March 2017, Child Trends.

Coaches answered questions about their perceptions of Colorado Shines quality improvement supports and the role they play (see Table 23). Coaches agreed or strongly agreed to most of the positive statements, such as "I believe Colorado Shines has been or will be beneficial to the providers I serve", "I enjoy working with the providers on my caseload", and "I know how to build collaborative relationships with providers." In an interesting acknowledgement that change takes time, just over a quarter of coaches disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements "I work with providers for enough time to see improvements in their quality." About a quarter disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "I am recognized for the work I do to improve child care quality in Colorado".

Table 23. Coaches' perceptions of Colorado Shines quality improvement supports (n=58)

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I believe providers increase their program quality as a result of participating in Colorado Shines	30%	60%	11%	0%
I believe Colorado Shines has been or will be beneficial to the providers I serve	29%	66%	5%	0%
I enjoy working with the providers on my caseload	60%	40%	0%	0%
The providers I serve have changed their practices as a result of working with me	40%	58%	2%	0%
Time spent with the providers in my caseload was used efficiently	32%	67%	2%	0%
I know how to build collaborative relationships with providers	60%	40%	0%	0%
I know how to improve the interactions between providers and children	47%	52%	2%	0%
I provide a lot of support to assist providers in completing paperwork	26%	51%	21%	2%
I know how to observe and provide feedback that helps providers meet their Colorado Shines goals	33%	66%	2%	0%
I work with providers for enough time to see improvements in their quality	29%	43%	24%	3%
I am recognized for the work I do to improve child care quality in Colorado	17%	59%	21%	3%
I am trusted by providers as a knowledgeable source of information about child care quality	51%	49%	0%	0%

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I help providers meet their professional goals that may not be specific to Colorado Shines	35%	54%	11%	0%

Source: Coaching Survey, November 2016, Child Trends.

QI Navigators' Perceptions

Most QI Navigators (70%) reported that the most effective strategy for providing technical assistance is face-to-face meetings with providers. Like coaches, QI navigators also answered questions about their perceptions of Colorado Shines quality improvement supports and the role they play (see Table 24). The majority of QI Navigators strongly agreed that they "enjoy working with providers", that they "know how to build collaborative relationships with providers" (75%), and that their "time spent with providers is used efficiently" (68%). More QI Navigators disagreed with the statements "I am recognized for the work I do to improve child care quality in Colorado" (30%) and "I provide a lot of support to assist providers in completing paperwork" (21%).

Table 24. QI Navigators' perceptions of Colorado Shines quality improvement supports (n=28)

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I believe providers increase their program quality as a result of participating in Colorado Shines	29%	64%	7%	0%
I believe Colorado Shines has been or will be beneficial to the providers I serve	36%	61%	4%	0%
I enjoy working with providers	93%	7%	0%	0%
Time spent with the providers is used efficiently	68%	32%	0%	0%
I provide a lot of support to assist providers in completing paperwork	39%	39%	21%	0%
I am recognized for the work I do to improve child care quality in Colorado	26%	44%	30%	0%
I know how to build collaborative relationships with providers	75%	21%	4%	0%
I am trusted by providers as a knowledgeable source of information about child care quality	57%	53%	0%	0%

Source: QI Navigator Survey, March 2017, Child Trends.
QI Navigators were also asked about the barriers they encounter when providing technical assistant to providers. QI Navigator cited providers' lack of experience with technology (33%), lack of access to technology (25%), and issues with data systems (25%).

Council perceptions

Council Coordinators were asked to rank the top three activities their coaches engage in most frequently with providers for Colorado Shines. Similar to coaches' reports of frequent activities, about half of the Councils (53%) indicate coaches help providers with their program environment (i.e. using an observation tool such as the ERS or CLASS), followed by helping providers determine how to spend Quality Improvement (QI) funds (40%). About a third of Councils (33%) said their coaches often observe providers and give feedback.

Council coordinators were also asked to rank the top three activities their coaches engage in with providers that are most effective to improve their program quality. Most (57%) reported that helping providers with their program environment (the activity they also reported was happening most frequently) was the most effective coaching activity for improving quality. Just

over a third of Councils (33%) indicated that assessing providers' strengths and areas of growth is most effective, followed by observing providers and giving feedback (30%).

Councils rated a series of statements about their coaching and technical assistance efforts for Colorado Shines (see Table 25). While most Council Coordinators agreed (38%) or strongly agreed (45%) that their coaches have received sufficient training, almost half disagreed (41%) that their coaches have sufficient time to work with providers. In addition, almost half of the Councils (48%) reported that they do not have enough coaches to provide services for Colorado Shines in their community.

Table 25. Council perceptions of QI supports

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with these statements about your Council's coaching and technical assistance for Colorado Shines.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our coaches have received sufficient training to provide coaching for Colorado Shines.	45%	38%	17%	0%
Our coaches have sufficient time to work with providers.	0%	41%	41%	17%
Our coaches help providers meet their quality improvement goals.	45%	48%	7%	0%
Our coaches help providers improve their interactions with children and families.	38%	48%	10%	3%
Our coaches use a coaching model when they work with Colorado Shines providers.	45%	48%	7%	0%
We have enough coaches to provide services for Colorado Shines in our community.	14%	28%	48%	10%

Source: Council Survey, May 2017, Child Trends.

In an open-ended question, Councils were asked to describe what has been most successful about their coaching and technical assistance effort for Colorado Shines. Councils reported they have experienced success in building relationships with child care providers (31%) and building a diverse team of experienced and knowledgeable coaches (e.g. experiences in various program settings, knowledgeable across observational tools; 21%). Nearly a third of Councils (31%) mentioned other successes, like increasing programs' ratings and reaching their goals for program engagement.

Councils were also asked to describe what has been most challenging about their coaching and technical assistance efforts for Colorado Shines. Most Councils described the limited capacity of coaches due to lack of funding, hours, and training as a challenge (71%). A few Councils (25%) mentioned other challenges, like needing to travel long distances to programs, issues with the ecConnect data system, and problems working with providers who are inexperienced with technology.

Finally, Councils shared what additional supports would be helpful to continue their Colorado Shines coaching and technical assistance efforts. Over half of the Councils described that more funding and resources would be helpful (57%). A few Councils also described additional training and opportunities to continue professional development (21%). A few Councils (21%) explained

that they wanted more flexibility to implement Colorado Shines at the local level, particularly with regard to how they use QI funds.

Rated Providers' Perceptions

Providers were asked to share their perceptions about aspects of Colorado Shines quality improvement supports (see Table 26). For the most part, providers strongly or somewhat agreed with statements like "I had sufficient time to work with my coach" and "I know who to call if I have questions about Colorado Shines". Most also agreed that their program is higher quality because of participating and that Colorado Shines offers valuable professional development opportunities.

Table 26. Rated providers' perceptions of Colorado Shines quality improvement

Statement	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	NA
I had sufficient time to work with my coach.					
Child care center (n=362)	28%	35%	15%	11%	12%
Family child care (n=207)	42%	28%	12%	9%	10%
I know who to call if I have questions about Colorado Shines.					
Child care center (n=362)	52%	28%	10%	8%	1%
Family child care (n=206)	65%	20%	7%	8%	1%
I believe my program is of higher quality because we joined Colorado Shines.					
Child care center (n=362)	27%	37%	19%	14%	4%
Family child care (n=206)	42%	32%	15%	10%	2%
Colorado Shines provides valuable professional development opportunities and support for early care and education professionals.					
Child care center (n=364)	45%	37%	11%	5%	2%
Family child care (n=206)	53%	34%	8%	3%	2%

Source: Rated Provider Survey, April, 2017, Child Trends.

Providers were asked to describe any challenges they experienced while working with coaches. Almost a third of providers commented they experienced challenges with having limited access to coaches or too few coaching hours (29%). Just under a quarter (24%) commented that they thought their coach had limited knowledge of and/or experience with Colorado Shines or poor communication with their coach (17%). In addition, providers were asked what additional training or support needs related to coaching they would find valuable. The most frequent responses addressed the general need for more time with a coach (20%). A few providers also explained that more direct classroom coaching for classroom staff (19%) and more coaching hours (17%) would be helpful.

Summary

There was consensus among providers, Council members, and coaches, that the most effective coaching strategies included observing and providing feedback, helping providers with their environment, and helping providers use their QI funds effectively. Both coaches and providers agreed that one of the biggest challenges they faced was not having enough time to work together, and from the perspective of many providers, not having enough access to coaches. Councils also frequently reported that their coaches did not have enough time to work with the number of providers demanding their services, nor did they have enough coaches on staff to meet the demand. Councils mentioned a few other challenges, like needing to travel long distances to programs, issues with the ecConnect data system, and problems working with providers who are inexperienced with technology.

QI Navigators reported that the most effective strategy they use to provide technical assistance is in-person visits with providers. The biggest challenges they face are related to technology—providers lacking experience and/or access to technology and issues they have encountered with the data systems.

What are providers' perceptions of changes in practice that have resulted from Colorado Shines?

To learn about perceived changes in practices that have resulted from Colorado Shines, center directors and family child care providers who completed the rating process were asked a series of questions about their programs. These questions were about general practices related to Colorado Shines, not specifically tied to the indicators or quality categories. Providers shared whether they had made programmatic changes, changes to assessment and family engagement practices, or changes related to staff professional development and training as a direct result of participating in Colorado Shines (see Tables 27-29). A "not applicable" category was included for each of these items for providers who did not need to make any changes to their current practices to meet the Colorado Shines criteria.

When asked about programmatic changes, roughly half of the providers said that these changes had either been fully made or partially made (see Table 27). For example, most providers said that they had fully changed or partially changed "their approach to classroom/environment organization" and "their program's approach to professional development". Fewer providers said "No, I did not make this change and do not plan to" with regard to any of the programmatic changes listed in the survey. Many child care centers (22% to 46%) selected "NA" for these items indicating that they did not have to make changes to their current practices to participate in Colorado Shines.

Table 27. Programmatic changes made as a direct result of participating in Colorado Shines

	Yes. This change has been fully made.	Partial. I have started to make this change, but it is not complete.	Not yet. I have not made this change yet, but I plan to.	No. I did not make this change and do not plan to.	NA
Our approach to classroom/environment organization has changed.					
Child care center (n=350)	26%	30%	4%	17%	22%
Family child care (n=196)	30%	39%	7%	17%	7%
I changed our program's approach to professional development.					
Child care center (n=350)	26%	30%	4%	17%	22%
Family child care (n=196)	24%	33%	9%	22%	12%
I (or my staff) started making lesson plans.					
Child care center (n=347)	33%	7%	2%	12%	46%
Family child care (n=196)	33%	19%	13%	21%	14%

I (or my staff) started using a curriculum.					
Child care center (n=343)	33%	7%	2%	13%	44%
Family child care (n=196)	35%	19%	10%	17%	19%

Source: Rated Provider Survey, April, 2017, Child Trends.

When asked about changes to assessment and family engagement practices, roughly a third of providers said that these changes had been fully made. Child care centers were more likely to answer "NA" to these questions, again indicating these practices were already in place at the time of the survey. In contrast, about a quarter of family child care providers said they have started measuring children's progress with a child assessment tool (26%) and using children's assessment results to guide instruction (25%). A similar number of family child care providers said that they haven't made these changes yet but they plan to.

Table 28. Changes to assessment and family engagement practices made as a direct result of participating in Colorado Shines

	Yes. This change has been fully made.	Partial. I have started to make this change, but it is not complete.	Not yet. I have not made this change yet, but I plan to.	No. I did not make this change and do not plan to.	NA
I (or my staff) started measuring children's progress with a child assessment tool.					
Child care center (n=347)	31%	11%	7%	12%	39%
Family child care (n=194)	29%	24%	24%	16%	7%
I (or my staff) started sharing children's assessment results with parents.					
Child care center (n=348)	32%	11%	3%	9%	45%
Family child care (n=196)	34%	18%	20%	17%	11%
I (or my staff) started using children's assessment results to guide individualized or group instruction.					
Child care center (n=348)	29%	17%	5%	9%	40%
Family child care (n=196)	22%	24%	22%	20%	11%
I (or my staff) started observing and documenting children's development.					
Child care center (n=348)	31%	13%	3%	9%	44%
Family child care (n=196)	28%	25%	19%	17%	10%
I (or my staff) improved my communication with families (e.g. newsletter, website).					
Child care center (n=347)	33%	14%	2%	9%	42%

Family child care (n=195)	42%	16%	10%	15%	16%

Source: Rated Provider Survey, April, 2017, Child Trends.

Providers reported more changes in terms of their professional development and training practices. The majority said that they (or their staff) were registered in the PDIS (82% of centers, 93% of family child care) and that they (or their staff) had received Early Childhood Professional Credentials (65% of centers, 60% of family child care). Close to half of the providers said they (or their staff) took more training this year than in previous years (48% of centers, 56% of family child care). More family child care providers (41%) reported that they had joined a professional association or became a more active member as a direct result of participating in Colorado Shines.

Table 29. Professional development and training practices made as a direct result of participating in Colorado Shines

	Yes. This change has been fully made.	Partial. I have started to make this change, but it is not complete.	Not yet. I have not made this change yet, but I plan to.	No. I did not make this change and do not plan to.	NA
I (or my staff) took more hours of training than in previous years.					
Child care center (n=344)	48%	13%	2%	8%	29%
Family child care (n=195)	56%	11%	7%	14%	12%
I (or my staff) registered in the PDIS.					
Child care center (n=348)	82%	9%	1%	0%	7%
Family child care (n=194)	93%	3%	2%	1%	0%
I (or my staff) received Early Childhood Professional Credentials.					
Child care center (n=349)	65%	16%	4%	2%	13%
Family child care (n=193)	60%	8%	10%	10%	11%
I (or my staff) joined a professional association or became more active in a child care provider association.					
Child care center (n=347)	24%	15%	11%	21%	29%
Family child care (n=195)	41%	10%	10%	21%	19%

Source: Rated Provider Survey, April, 2017, Child Trends.

Summary

Providers are making several changes as a direct result of participating in Colorado Shines. Roughly a third of providers reported making programmatic changes because of Colorado

Shines requirements, such as adopting a child assessment tool and/or curriculum. More family child care programs said they are in the process of making changes to their child assessment and family engagement practices compared to centers that may already have these practices in place. Overall, more changes were seen in terms of professional development and training practices, with high rates of providers saying they (or their staff) are now registered in the PDIS, have earned a credential, or are active in a professional association.

Part III Summary & Recommendations

Implementation of Quality Improvement Supports. Coaches reported an average of 12 programs in their caseload, ranging from 1 to 39 and reported spending much of their time observing and providing feedback to providers and helping them with their classroom/program environment. QI Navigators typically spend their time with providers helping them navigate the Colorado Shines website and application, the QRIS and PDIS, and orienting them to Colorado Shines. Over half of QI Navigators said they "often" meet with providers face-to face and by phone. Most coaches and QI Navigators said that general training on Colorado Shines and training on the ecConnect data system were the most beneficial trainings for their role. In addition, coaches also frequently reported that training on the ERS and CLASS helped them prepare for their job.

Perceptions of the Successes and Challenges of Quality Improvement Supports. There was consensus among providers, Council members, and coaches, that the most effective coaching strategies included observing and providing feedback, helping providers with their environment, and helping providers use their QI funds effectively. QI Navigators reported that the most effective strategy they use to provide technical assistance is in-person visits with providers.

Councils, coaches, and providers agreed that one of the biggest challenges they faced was not having enough time to work together, and from the perspective of many providers, not having enough access to coaches. Almost a third of providers commented they experienced challenges with having limited access to coaches or too few coaching hours. Councils also frequently reported that their coaches did not have enough time to work with the number of providers demanding their services, nor did they have enough coaches on staff to meet the demand. Councils mentioned a few other challenges, like needing to travel long distances to programs, issues with the ecConnect data system, and problems working with providers who are inexperienced with technology. The biggest challenge faced by QI Navigators was also related to technology—providers lacking experience and/or access to technology and issues they have encountered with the data systems.

Perceptions of Changes in Practice. Providers reported making several changes as a direct result of participating in Colorado Shines. Roughly a third of providers reported making programmatic changes because of Colorado Shines requirements, such as adopting a child assessment tool and/or curriculum. More family child care programs said they are in the process of making changes to their child assessment and family engagement practices compared to centers that may already have these practices in place. Overall, more changes were seen in terms of professional development and training practices, with high rates of providers saying they (or their staff) are now registered in the PDIS, have earned credentials, or are active in a professional association.

Recommendations

Consider the most efficient and effective way to maximize resources to support programs. Councils, coaches, and providers agreed that one of the biggest challenges they faced was not having enough time to work together, and from the perspective of many providers, not having enough access to coaches or coaching hours. This finding may be due in part to the timing of this study and participation goals articulated in Colorado's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant. From 2015 to 2017 participation in Colorado Shines grew at a fast pace, and it simply may not have been possible to provide extensive coaching to all the providers who pursued a rating under the new system. Even if the pace of new ratings and the request for more coaching slows down in the coming years, developing a strategy to maximize coaching resources should be considered for sustainability purposes moving forward. This may involve developing coaching assessments and program self-assessments to understand programs' self-identified needs and readiness for coaching so that Councils can strategize about how and when to deploy coaches to work with programs. In addition, some coaches might consider specializing in certain areas of support (e.g., curriculum implementation, CLASS, family engagement) so that they can be utilized in a focused way across programs. QI Navigators can also continue to develop efficient ways to work with providers, while offering to meet in person to provide face-to-face supports. For example, QI Navigators can offer open houses where they can work with providers to address questions they have about Colorado Shines, clarify application requirements, and offer support to providers who are not as comfortable with technology.

Part IV: Colorado Shines Structure and Validity

Purpose of this Section: To examine the extent to which the Colorado Shines rating structure, quality standards, and measurement strategies result in accurate and meaningful ratings of program quality.

Research Questions Addressed:
a. To what extent are the key constructs included in the Colorado Shines Framework supported by empirical literature on quality practices that are linked to child outcomes?
b. To what extent is the Colorado Shines rating process clearly articulated?
c. To what extent do the inter-rater reliability procedures for conducting classroom observations and assigning program ratings align with best practice?
d. To what extent do Level 3-5 programs have higher observed program quality than Level 2 programs as measured by the ECERS-3, ITERS-R, and FCCERS-R?
e. To what extent do programs who earn their rating through an alternative pathway demonstrate levels of quality comparable to fully rated Level 3-5 programs?

Data Sources Used:
- Literature review
- Qualistar Key Informant Interview
- Document Review
- ERS observation tools
- Colorado Shines administrative data

Summary of Key Findings:
- ***The Colorado Shines quality categories are grounded in research.*** The evidence review demonstrates that there is an empirical basis for the Colorado Shines' quality categories and criteria. In some instances, the research demonstrates mixed findings or the empirical evidence is limited. These are topics (e.g., workforce qualifications, ratios, the most effective family engagement practices) in which the ECE field continues to investigate the relationships between standards of quality and children's development and learning.
- ***The rating process is clearly articulated for program verifiers and includes an inter-rater reliability process that will help to ensure consistency across staff.*** The policies and procedures that guide the Colorado Shines rating process are clearly articulated and aligned with best practice, which can help to ensure consistently across rating specialists and assessors and the accuracy the rating determinations.
- ***The Colorado Shines rating structure is accurately assessing differences in program quality.*** The results of the analysis included in this chapter provide evidence for the validity of the Colorado Shines rating structure in supporting meaningful differences in observed quality. There were significant and meaningful differences in observed quality between Level 3-5 and Level 2 programs on the ECERS-3; ITERS-R; and FCCERS-R.
- ***There is initial evidence to suggest the Alternative Pathways process is assigning accurate ratings of program quality.*** Initial findings suggest that the alternative pathway process assigns ratings as intended; however, further evaluation can provide more detailed insight into whether these programs would rate similarly if they underwent a full Colorado Shines rating process.

To what extent are the key constructs included in the Colorado Shines Framework supported by empirical literature on quality practices that are linked to child outcomes?

One of the first activities Child Trends completed for the Colorado Shines validation study was a review of the empirical evidence and expert consensus supporting the quality standards (Zellman & Fiene, 2012). This type of review can address whether the QRIS includes standards and criteria that are important components of quality and that are related to children's growth and development. The full evidence review was presented to the Office of Early Childhood in February 2016 and highlights the extent to which Colorado Shines includes key concepts of quality that are related to measures of children's development. The report is organized according to the five "Quality Standard Categories" of the Colorado Shines system. Some of the key findings highlighted in the report are included here for reference. The full report provides the complete review of the literature.

- **Workforce Qualifications and Professional Development:** Professional workforce qualifications are often seen as an important component of high-quality learning environments, though the literature reviewed for this report demonstrates that there is mixed evidence about which levels of education, years of experience, content, and training lead to higher overall program quality or outcomes for children.

- **Family Partnerships:** The research literature on family partnerships shows that families' participation in a child's early care and education experiences is critical for supporting children's academic success and social-emotional development.

- **Leadership, Management and Administration:** Program management and administration can influence overall program quality in important ways, particularly as it may influence the recruitment and retention of highly-qualified teachers/caregivers. Most of the available literature on program leadership and administration focuses on teacher compensation and benefits, though there is increasing emphasis among early care and education experts on building the evidence base for continuous quality improvement practices and other program administration elements.

- **Learning Environment:** Research shows that participation in high-quality early care and education environments is associated with better developmental outcomes for young children.

- **Child Health:** High-quality early care and education settings can serve as a central location to ensure that children and families are engaged in health-promoting practices including adequate nutrition and physical exercise, health and developmental screenings, and sufficient oral health care.

Overall, the review of Colorado Shines' Quality Standard Categories and Criteria shows that the requirements for ECE programs and providers participating in the QRIS are aligned with much of the early childhood research base and professional consensus related to these elements of quality. In some instances, the research demonstrates mixed findings or the empirical evidence is limited. These are topics (e.g., workforce qualifications, ratios, family engagement strategies) in which the ECE field continues to investigate the relationships between standards of quality and children's development and learning. As noted in the full report about the quality standards, as the evidence base is expanded and refined, Colorado Shines leaders can integrate new findings into future discussions related to continuous quality improvement initiatives and overall ECE system enhancements.

To what extent is the Colorado Shines rating process a valid and reliable approach to assessing program quality?

One of the approaches to QRIS validation examines both the 1) the policies and procedures in place to assign a quality rating; and 2) the psychometric properties of the measurement tools and procedures used to assess quality in the QRIS (Zellman & Fiene, 2012). For example, this research activity examines whether the policies and procedures for reviewing a QRIS application are clearly documented so that the process is implemented consistently over time and across program verifiers. Because program ratings are based on the information gathered for each indicator, it is important to ensure that the verification of each indicator is guided by clear scoring criteria and verification policies and procedures.

This includes examining whether the policies and procedures used to measure classroom quality (i.e., ECERS, CLASS) indicators are reliable and working as intended. Examining these features of a QRIS can inform decisions about how to improve the consistency and reliability of the ratings process. The goal of the activities and analyses described in this section of the report is to document the approach used to rate programs and conduct classroom quality observations and examine the extent to which Colorado Shines aligns with best practice. Specifically, this section addresses the following key questions:

1. To what extent is the Colorado Shines rating process clearly articulated?

2. To what extent do the inter-rater reliability procedures for conducting classroom observations and assigning program ratings align with best practice?

Information described in this section was gathered from a review of Colorado Shines documentation including the program guide, evidence guide, and forthcoming policies and procedures manual. Data collected through interviews with key members of the Colorado Shines rating and verification team, obtained through phone interviews conducted in the fall of 2016 are also included below.

To what extent is the Colorado Shines rating process clearly articulated?

There are two ways in which a program can obtain a Colorado Shines rating: a full rating review or through an alternative pathway to a rating (AP). Ratings for Levels 2-5 in Colorado Shines are completed on an ongoing basis, are valid for three years, and programs are given a 30-day window for consultation and appeals.

Full Rating Review Process for Levels 1-5

The full rating process involves a mix of activities, such as document review, self-reported information, and on-site observation.

Level 1. Licensing Specialists assign Level 1 designations, which are assigned automatically to licensed center-based, home-based, and preschool ECE programs. Programs are notified of their initial Colorado Shines Level 1 rating upon registering with licensing.

Level 2. To attain a Level 2 rating, a program must meet all the requirements of this block level; which include:

- All program staff register in the Professional Development Information System (PDIS)

- 75% of staff complete Level 2 training modules (10 hours each)

- Completion of Level 2 Quality Indicator Program Assessment

- Completion of Level 2 Quality Improvement Plan

- Submit application for Level 2 recognition

Level 2 verification is conducted by Colorado Shines Licensing Specialists through a desk audit of information that providers submit via the Colorado Shines website. On-site verification of Level 2 requirements is also planned to occur during annual licensing visits.

Levels 3-5. To achieve a Level 3 – 5 rating, programs must meet the Level 2 requirements and submit documentation to the Colorado Shines website, which provides evidence that they met the requirements for indicators within five standard categories. Each rating level has different requirements for the minimum points earned per category. These five categories include Workforce and Professional Development, Family Partnerships, Leadership, Management and Administration, Learning Environment, and Child Health. At each Level 3-5 rating, programs must also earn minimum scores on the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) observation tools.

A team of Data Assessment Specialists manages the rating process for Levels 3, 4, and 5. Programs can request to be rated through the Colorado Shines Website. The Colorado Shines Ratings Adminsitrator contacts the program 60 days prior to the rating window with information about the rating process. Then, 30 days prior to the rating window the Lead Quality Rating Specialist provides further guidance about the process and addresses any questions the program may have about the evidence guide, ERS observation expectations, family and staff surveys, and uploading information to the online document library.

After the orientation phone call programs have 60 days to upload evidence to the online document library. Guidance on acceptable documentation is provided in the Colorado Shines Evidence Document for Centers and the Colorado Shines Evidence Document for Family Child Care Homes. Programs are also provided with links to the online family and staff surveys. During the 60-day rating window Child Care Centers must obtain at least a 60% return rate from families. Family Child Care Homes must have at least 75% return rate. For the staff surveys, programs must obtain at least an 80% return rate.

When the rating is finalized the rating report is uploaded to the Colorado Shines website and the program receives email notification that the rating information is available. If the rating is accepted, the rating will be finalized and updated in the Colorado Shines system. Program staff can request a consultation on the rating, during which time the rating can be accepted or a request for a resubmission or an appeal can occur.

Alternative pathway programs

The alternative pathway rating process offers programs accredited by a Colorado Shines-approved accrediting organization[d] the option to receive an automatic Level 3 or Level 4 rating. Grantee and Delegate Head Start/Early Head Start programs in good standing with the Office of Head Start are automatically rated at a Level 4. Head Start programs must also submit the program's information report (PIR). Programs that choose the alternative pathway process must be registered with Colorado Shines, complete at least one QI Plan goal with improvement actions, and have staff register with the PDIS. The alternative pathway verification process is conducted by a committee that reviews each application.

---

[d] Approved national accrediting organizations include: the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA); the Association of Christian Schools International Accreditation (ACSI); American Montessori Society Accreditation (AMS); National Association of Family Child Care Accreditation (NAFCC); and the Family Child Care Quality Certificate (FCCQC), which is awarded by Qualistar.

To what extent do the inter-rater reliability procedures for conducting classroom observations?

As noted above, a team of trained specialists are involved in the program review process to assign a Colorado Shines rating. Data Assessment Specialists conduct a review of the documentation programs provide for each quality indicator. Quality Rating Specialists conduct an onsite observation using the ERS assessment tools.

Reliability of the Rating Application Review Process

When the program's rating window closes, a pair of Assessment Data Specialists verify the points a program earns for a rating by reviewing: documentation submitted into the Colorado Shines data system and the staff and parent surveys. Using the evidence guide, one Assessment Data Specialist reviews one half of the indicator information submitted by a program, the second reviews the other half. Once the review is complete the Assessment Data Specialists exchange data to verify each other's work. The pair of Assessment Data Specialists then individually draft the summary report for the half of the indicators they reviewed, and again, exchange reports to verify each other's work. Each month the Lead Assessment Data Manager randomly chooses a group of programs and double-checks the points assigned for each indicator and reviews each summary report and rating assignment that is provided back to these programs. When a program provides documentation that is insufficient to rate or the Assessment Data Specialists have questions, they make notes about the questions they have, the documentation provided, and they discuss their questions with the Lead Quality Rating Specialist. Programs are contacted in cases where clarification or additional documentation is needed. A program may be granted a 14-day window to resubmit any necessary documentation.

Reliability of the Onsite Observations

The Colorado Shines protocol for conducting ERS assessments in centers and family child care homes is consistent with best practice as suggested by the developer.[4] Quality Rating Specialists conduct onsite assessments with the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) observation tools during the rating window. In child care centers, 50% of the classrooms for each age group served (i.e. infant, toddler, and preschool) are observed using the appropriate ERS tool (ITERS-R, ECERS-R). Family child care homes receive an observation using the FCCERS-R).

The initial and ongoing inter-rater reliability procedures for the team of Quality Rating Specialists who conduct onsite observations is also consistent with the ERS developers recommended best practices.[5] To establish initial reliability on the ERS, all Colorado Shines Quality Rating Specialists complete three initial reliability observations after training is complete. The first initial reliability observation is conducted as a practice observation during which the assessor can talk to their trainer about the observation. During the second and third reliability observations, the assessor must achieve at least 85% reliability (within one point) of the consensus score. If reliability is not achieved, reliability visits continue until the assessor achieves 85% reliability on two consecutive observations.

Ongoing inter-rater reliability. After assessors achieve initial reliability "ERS anchors" re-check the reliability of each ERS assessor every 11th observation on each scale. When an assessor has both used an ERS tool for one year and has maintained an overall reliability average of 90% or higher on his or her last 5 reliability checks, inter-rater reliability is assessed every 13th observation. If an assessor fails the re-reliability check two times in a row, the a process of training and reliability checks restart until 85% reliability is achieved on two consecutive observations. In addition to assessors, Colorado Shines ERS anchors are required to maintain a 90% or higher reliability average on the ERS tools. All assessors also attend

quarterly training with the state ERS anchor in order to provide ongoing support for reliability on the ERS tools.

Summary

The Colorado Shines rating process is clearly articulated in the program guide, and in an internal policies and procedures manual is used to inform the OEC staff and partners when responding to external stakeholders regarding Colorado Shines. In addition, the orientation phone call providers receive, the evidence guide, and the online document library are designed to support providers in understanding the application requirements and process. Clear documentation of the rating review process, as articulated in the policies and procedures manual is a recommended best practice because clear policies and procedures can help to ensure that the process of determining a program rating is carried out accurately and consistently across program verifiers (i.e. Data Assessment Specialists).

The initial and ongoing inter-rater reliability procedures developed for assessors is aligned with the recommended practices of the ERS developers. The ERS developers suggest that there is at least one ERS anchor in the state that is responsible for completing reliability checks with assessors.[6] In addition, the protocol and frequency of reliability visits established by Colorado Shines aligns with the ERS developer's recommendations. To ensure inter-rater reliability among reviewers of the rating applications submitted by programs, two Data Assessment Specialists verify each other's work and have their work reviewed by the Lead Quality Rating Specialist. These inter-rater reliability procedures are aligned with best practices and can help to ensure that Colorado Shines is fair and consistent in how a program rating is determined.

Validation Analysis

The third validation approach looks closely at the QRIS ratings and the extent to which the ratings reflect meaningful differences in quality. To address this validity question data were collected to compare the quality of rated programs at each level using valid measures of classroom and program quality. The study design included a sampling plan that would also allow for an examination of the alternative pathways rating process in order to determine if it is a rating method that accurately reflects expected differences in program quality.

In Colorado Shines, programs are assigned an automatic Level 1 rating if they are licensed early childhood education (ECE) programs. The system is designed so that programs must pass through the Level 2 designation before applying for a Level 3-5 rating. Level 2 demonstrates that programs have taken additional steps towards building quality by completing a self-assessment related to quality indicators and meet staff training requirements. To earn a Level 3-5, a program must apply for a full Colorado Shines rating or an alternative pathway rating. A full Colorado Shines rating requires programs to apply with documentation to earn points across five Colorado Shines domains and to complete an onsite observation using ERS observation tools. The alternative pathway rating process allows programs that are accredited by an approved accrediting body[e] or a Head Start/Early Head Start program in good standing to earn an automatic rating. Programs accredited by an approved national accrediting organization receive a Level 3 or Level 4, and grantee and delegate Head Start/Early Head Start programs in good standing with the Office of Head Start receive a Level 4. Table 30 details the number of

---

[e] Approved accrediting bodies include Association of Christian Schools; American Montessori Society; Family Child Care Quality Certificate – Qualistar; National Association for the Education of Young Children; National Association for Family Child Care; and National Early Childhood Program Accreditation.

programs participating in Colorado Shines at the time the sampling frame was developed for this study, in February 2016[f].

Table 30. Number of programs participating in Colorado Shines, by rating level and by program type

	Level 2	Levels 3 through Level 5
Child Care Centers	262	575
Family Child Care Homes	236	61

Methods

To understand the extent to which the Colorado Shines ratings can differentiate the quality between programs rated at higher levels (i.e., Levels 3-5) and programs rated at lower levels (i.e., Level 2), Child Trends completed a series of observations using the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) observation tools. The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-3) is the newest edition of the ERS used in preschool classrooms. Colorado Shines uses the ECERS-R to evaluate environment quality in child care centers. Thus, this study used the updated instrument as a secondary measure to validate findings in preschool classrooms in child care centers (ECERS-3). The Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS-R) is used in infant-toddler classrooms. Because Colorado Shines observes programs with the ITERS-R when programs are seeking a Level 3-5 rating, this study utilized ITERS-R data collected from a sample of Level 2 child care centers. The Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS-R) is used in family child care programs and is used by Colorado Shines to observe family child care programs that are seeking a Level 3-5. Because Level 2 programs are not observed with the FCCERS-R in the Colorado Shines process, data were collected data from a sample of Level 2 family child care programs.

Table 31 details the number of programs by rating level and program type that were assessed using each observational tool. For Level 3-5 child care centers, ITERS-R data were pulled from Colorado Shines to compare with collected data in Level 2 programs. Only ITERS-R data were pulled from programs where ECERS-3 data were also collected. Similarly, FCCERS-R administrative data were pulled from Level 3-5 family child care programs that volunteered to participate in the validation study.

Table 31. Number of programs with ECERS-3, ITERS-R, and FCCERS-R scores, by rating level and program type

	ECERS-3	ITERS-R	FCCERS-R
Child Care Centers			
Level 2	69	26	
Level 3-5	50	33^	
Level 3-5 Alternative Pathway[g]	69	31	
Family Child Care			

---

[f] February 2016 participation rates are presented because the sampling frame was based on ratings at the time of observations.

[g] The observed sample included programs with an accreditation from one or more of the following accrediting bodies: Association of Christian Schools; American Montessori Society; National Association for the Education of Young Children; AdvancED Accreditation; and/or National Early Childhood Program Accreditation, with the majority of the accredited child care centers with an NAEYC accreditation.

| Level 2 | | | 15 |
| Level 3-5 | | | 23^ |

^Administrative data provided by the Office of Early Childhood, 2017.

For the purposes of the study, Level 3-5 programs were designated as "higher quality" because these programs underwent an additional application and review process to receive a Colorado Shines rating based on five categories of child care quality. At the time the study was conducted, Colorado Shines was in its initial implementation of this rating process. Consequently, fewer programs were rated at the highest levels of Colorado Shines. The number of programs within each rating level (i.e., Level 3, 4, or 5) was not large enough to have enough statistical power to compare individual rating levels (e.g., Level 4 vs. 5).

Level 2 programs consist of two types of ECE programs. First, some Level 2 programs completed the necessary requirements to move from a Level 1 to a Level 2, but have yet to go through a full Colorado Shines on site rating. Another set of Level 2 programs applied for the Level 3-5 rating but did not meet the requirements to earn a Level 3 or higher (termed "Level 2 rated" for the study). Thus, there may be variation in the program quality of Level 2 programs. For the study, Child Trends sought to observe an equal number of both Level 2 and Level 2 rated programs to account for potential differences in quality at this rating level. Level 1 programs were not included in the study because licensed center-based, home-based and preschool programs automatically receive a Level 1 rating, which means there is an unknown degree of variation in quality among Level 1 providers. For more information on Level 1 programs, see the *Colorado Shines Quality Rating Improvement System: Level 1 Provider Survey Report.*

T-tests were conducted to compare means between the two groups (i.e., Level 2 vs. Level 3-5), and effect sizes are reported when differences were significant. Key tables and graphs are presented throughout the report.

What are the program characteristics of the observed sample?

Child care center directors and family child care providers were asked to complete a survey as a part of the validation study to learn more about the programs participating in the validation study. Program characteristics were examined for both child care centers and family child care providers. Additionally, Child Trends examined differences between rating levels.

Table 32 shows that the majority of the child care centers in the study were in the Denver metropolitan area. These programs enrolled an average of 54-88 children under the age of five years with the majority of children three years or older. Some proportion of child care centers served children who received county child care assistance, are dual language learners, or who live in less than or equal to 100% of poverty. While a percentage of child care centers served children with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), alternative pathway programs served a larger percentage than Level 2-5 centers. A majority of children served in child care centers were identified as White, but about a fifth of the children were also identified as Hispanic.

Child care centers in the study had an average of 7-9 teachers and 4-8 aides with higher-rated programs having more teachers and aides. Level 3-5 centers had directors with more years of experience in early childhood education (ECE) and had a higher proportion of centers with directors with a Colorado Early Childhood Professional Credential, whereas more Level 2 centers had directors with a Child Development Associate's (CDA). Higher-rated centers were more likely to have directors with a higher degree level.

Table 32. Center program characteristics

	Level 2 (N=69)	Level 3-5 (N=50)	Alternative Pathway (N=69)
Percent of programs in the Denver metro area	69.6%	82.0%	85.5%
Average number of children ages 0-5 enrolled	54 children	77 children	88 children^
Percent of programs that accept children:			
Less than 6 months	34.8%	34.0%	33.3%
6 months- up to 1 year	33.3%	38.0%	30.4%
1 year	47.8%	60.0%	40.6%
2 years	55.1%	72.0%	55.1%
3 years	84.1%	90.0%	84.1%
4 years	82.6%	92.0%	87.0%
5+ years	68.1%	74.0%	58.0%
Percent of programs that are currently full	41.3%	44.4%	58.7%
Percent of programs that hold a wait list	65.1%	67.4%	71.1%
Average percent of children served who:			
Receive county child care assistance	26.3%	30.7%	18.4%
Have an IEP/IFSP	4.9%	3.9%	18.1%
Are dual language learners	7.1%	13.8%	17.1%
Live in poverty	26.6%	36.9%	39.1%
Average percent of children served who are:			
Hispanic/Latino of any race	20.5%	26.7%	23.3%
White	60.5%	54.9%	60.4%
Black or African American	8.1%	11.4%	8.5%
Two or more races	4.2%	6.4%	6.2%
Asian	2.8%	2.6%	4.0%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1.5%	.81%	.61%
American Indian or Alaska Native	.86%	1.7%	.78%
Average number of staff in program			
Teachers	7 teachers	8 teachers	9 teachers
Aides	4 aides	6 aides	8 aides
Director qualifications			
Average years working in ECE	15.8 years	20.2 years	17.1 years
Has a Colorado EC Professional Credential	71.4%	97.8%	64.5%
Has a Child Development Associates (CDA)	12.9%	2.3%	6.5%
Has the following degree			
High school diploma or GED	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Some college, no degree	27.0%	17.4%	7.9%
Associate's	17.5%	21.7%	20.6%
Bachelor's	34.9%	41.3%	41.3%

Graduate	19.1%	19.6%	30.2%

^Two programs were excluded from the calculation because enrollments numbers were above 500 children, which significantly skewed results.

Table 33 similarly shows that most family child care programs in the study were in the Denver metropolitan area. These programs enrolled fewer children than child care centers (an average of 7-10 children under the age of five years) and were more likely to serve children spanning all ages. Most family child care homes had full programs, and almost all Level 3-5 programs held a wait list (less than half of Level 2 programs held a wait list). A lower percentage of family child care programs served special populations of children (e.g., those who receive county child care assistance, have an IEP/IFSP, are dual language learners, or who live in poverty) than child care centers. However, Level 3-5 family child care programs were more likely than Level 2 programs to serve children who receive county child care assistance or who live in poverty. Most children served in family child care programs were identified as White.

Family child care providers had similar years of experience in ECE (about 13 years) regardless of their Colorado Shines rating, but they had less experience than directors of child care centers overall. Level 3-5 programs were more likely to have a provider with a Colorado Early Childhood Professional Credential than Level 2 programs, but had comparable percentages of providers with a CDA. Most providers had some college, but were more likely to have a high school degree and less likely to have a graduate degree than directors of child care centers.

Table 33. Family child care program characteristics

	Level 2 (N=15)	Level 3-5 (N=23)
Percent of programs in the Denver metro area	86.7%	78.7%
Average number of children ages 0-5 enrolled	7 children	10 children
Percent of programs that accept children:		
Less than 6 months	66.7%	56.5%
6 months- up to 1 year	53.3%	52.2%
1 year	73.3%	69.6%
2 years	73.3%	82.6%
3 years	80.0%	91.3%
4 years	80.0%	87.0%
5+ years	86.7%	65.2%
Percent of programs that are currently full	71.4%	81.8%
Percent of programs that hold a waitlist	42.9%	95.5%
Average percent of children served who:		
Receive county child care assistance	7.5%	16.3%
Have an Individualized Education Plan or Individualized Family Service Plan	5.3%	3.3%
Are dual language learners	4.3%	2.1%
Live in poverty	.86%	14.2%
Average percent of children served who are:		
Hispanic/Latino of any race	10.8%	23.4%
White	79.6%	72.1%
Black or African American	8.7%	18.7%
Two or more races	5.3%	5.0%
Asian	3.0%	1.1%

	Level 2 (N=15)	Level 3-5 (N=23)
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.0%	1.1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.0%	0.0%
Family child care qualifications		
Average years working in ECE	13.5 years	13.3 years
Has a Colorado EC Professional Credential	53.3%	90.0%
Has a Child Development Associates (CDA)	26.7%	21.1%
Has the following degree		
High school diploma or GED	13.3%	0.0%
Some college, no degree	26.7%	45.0%
Associate's	13.3%	25.0%
Bachelor's	40.0%	25.0%
Graduate	6.7%	5.0%

Summary

The study sample represented a diverse group of programs currently participating in the Colorado Shines program. Both child care centers and family child care homes primarily served children in the Denver metropolitan area who were identified as White. However, there were differences between child care centers and family child care programs. For example, child care centers were more likely than family child care homes to serve more children, particularly at older ages (three years or above) who are considered high needs. Family child care programs were more likely to run full programs than child care centers. Child care centers were more likely to have directors with a higher education level and with more experience working in ECE, but were less likely to have a CDA than family child care providers.

There were also differences between higher-rated and lower-rated programs regardless of program type. For instance, higher-rated programs were more likely to serve children with high needs (e.g., county child care assistance or living in poverty) and minority children (e.g., children identified as Hispanic).

To what extent do Level 3-5 programs have higher observed program quality than Level 2 programs as measured by the ECERS-3, ITERS-R, and FCCERS-R?

To address this research question, Child Trends examined the potential variation in program quality of Level 2 programs. T-tests were conducted to determine if there were observed differences in quality between Level 2 and Level 2 rated programs using the ECERS-3 and ITERS-R. Figure 1 (and Table 34) indicate that Level 2 programs in the study sample did not significantly differ from one another on these two measures. Therefore, all Level 2 programs were included as one group for subsequent analyses.

Figure 1. T-tests of ECERS-3 and ITERS-R scores between Level 2 and Level 2 rated centers
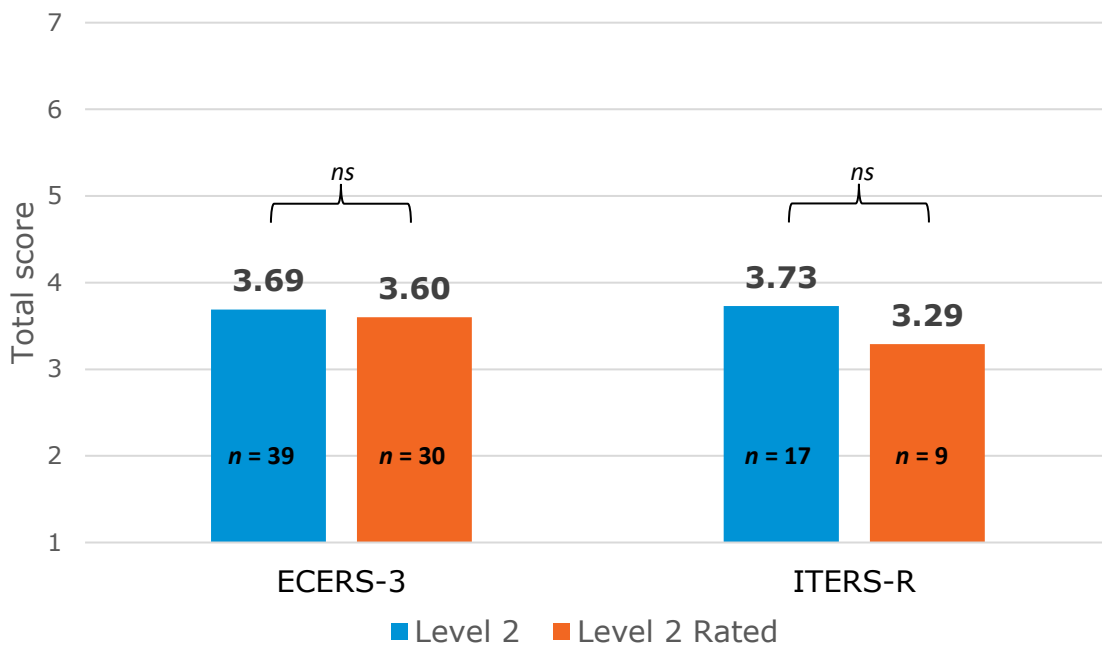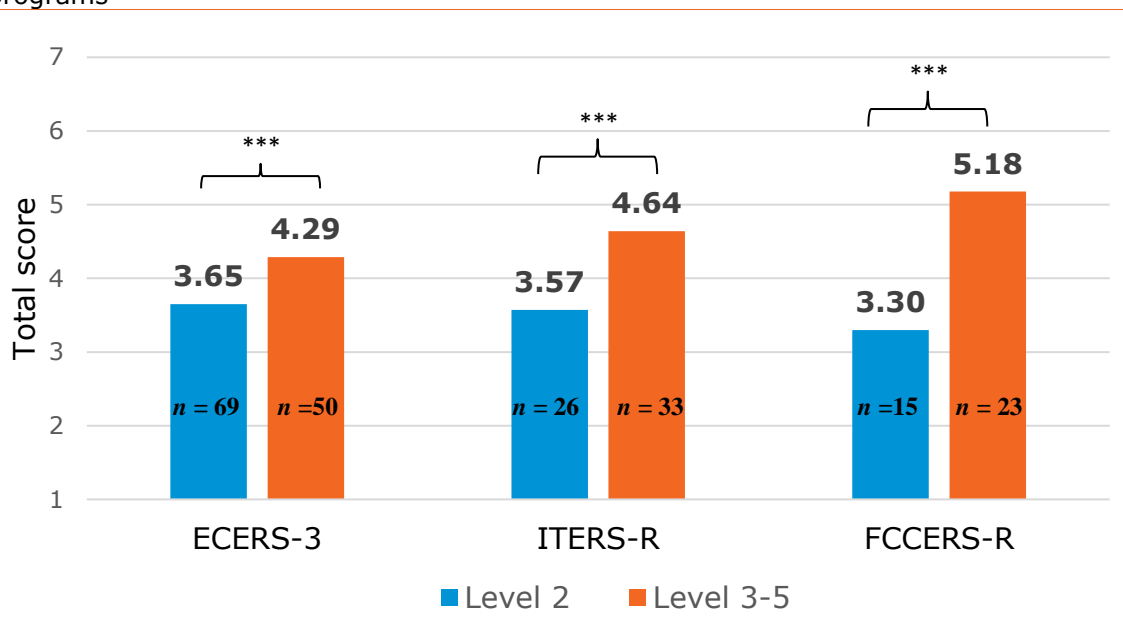

Notes. *$p<0.05$ **$p<0.01$ ***$p<0.001$ ns: $p>0.05$

Table 34. T-tests of ECERS-3 and ITERS-R scores between Level 2 and Level 2 rated centers

	Level 2 M(SD)	Level 3-5 M(SD)	t	p	Cohen's d
ECERS-3	n=39	n=30			
	3.69 (.87)	3.60 (.92)	0.42	0.68	
ITERS-R	n=17	n=9			
	3.73 (1.1)	3.29 (.88)	1.04	0.31	

Notes. *$p<0.05$ **$p<0.01$ ***$p<0.001$ ns: $p>0.05$

To confirm whether the Colorado Shines rating structure distinguishes quality between higher- and lower-rated programs, the study hypothesized that higher-rated programs would score higher on measures of observed quality than lower-rated programs. T-test results suggest that Colorado Shines differentiates observed quality between Level 2 and Level 3-5 centers with Level 3-5 centers scoring higher on the ECERS-3, ITERS-R, and FCCERS-R (Figure 2).

Figure 2. T-tests of ECERS-3, ITERS-R, and FCCERS-R scores between Level 2 and Level 3-5 programs

Notes. *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 ns: p>0.05

On the ECERS-3, preschool classrooms in Level 2 programs scored an average total score of 3.65, and classrooms in Level 3-5 programs scored an average total score of 4.29. Differences between Level 2 and Level 3-5 centers for total ECERS-3 scores were statistically significant at the p<0.001 level with a moderate effect size of 0.71 (Table 35).

Table 35. T-tests of ECERS-3, ITERS-R, and FCCERS-R scores between Level 2 and Level 3-5 centers

	Level 2 M(SD)	Level 3-5 M(SD)	t	p	Cohen's d
ECERS-3	n=69	n=50			
	3.65 (.89)	4.29 (.90)	3.85	***	0.71
ITERS-R	n=26	n=33			
	3.57 (1.0)	4.64 (.99)	4.06	***	1.06
FCCERS-R	n=15	n=23			
	3.30 (.86)	5.18 (.89)	6.47	***	2.15

Notes. *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 ns: p>0.05

For infant-toddler classrooms, the ITERS-R further confirms observed differences in quality between Level 2 and Level 3-5 programs. Level 2 programs scored an average total score of 3.57, and Level 3-5 programs scored an average total score of 4.64. Differences between Level 2 and Level 3-5 centers total ECERS-3 scores were statistically significant at the p<0.001 level with a large effect size of 1.06 (Table 35).

Although the sample size for comparisons with family child care programs was small, findings suggest that Level 2 programs have lower average total scores than Level 3-5 programs. Level 2 programs scored an average total score of 3.30, and Level 3-5 programs scored 5.18.

Differences between Level 2 and Level 3-5 centers total ECERS-3 scores were statistically significant at the p<0.001 level with a large effect size of 2.15 (Table A2).

Summary

These findings summarize an important step in the analysis process for this study. First, among programs participating in this study, there were no observed differences between Level 2 programs that were "rated" (n=30) and Level 2 programs that were not (n=39). As a result, both of these types of Level 2 programs were combined when compared to programs at higher levels of Colorado Shines. Second, these findings provide evidence for the validity of the Colorado Shines rating structure in meaningfully differentiating higher-rated programs from lower-rated programs. There were significant and meaningful differences in observed quality between Level 3-5 and Level 2 programs on the ECERS-3, ITERS-R, and FCCERS-R.

To what extent do programs who earn their rating through an alternative pathway demonstrate levels of quality comparable to fully rated Level 3-5 programs?

To understand whether the alternative pathway process accurately assigns the appropriate rating level to automatically rated programs (e.g., accredited and Head Start programs), Child Trends conducted two analyses of the alternative pathways ratings. First, because alternative pathway programs receive an automatic rating of Level 3 or 4, the research team tested to see if alternative pathway programs had similar observed program quality as Level 3-5 centers. Second, if the scores of alternative pathways programs are comparable to Level 3-5 programs, it was expected that these programs would score higher than Level 2 programs on the ECERS-3.

Comparisons between Level 3-5 and Alternative Pathway Programs

T-test results indicate that alternative pathway programs generally score similarly to their Level 3-5 center counterparts as expected (Figure 3). Level 3-5 centers scored a 4.29 on the ECERS-3, and alternative pathway programs scored a 3.98. While differences between ECERS-3 scores of Level 3-5 centers and alternative pathway centers were not statistically significant, note that the observed difference was approaching significance with a p-value 0.051 (Table 36).

Figure 3. T-tests of ECERS-3 scores between Level 3-5 and alternative pathway centers
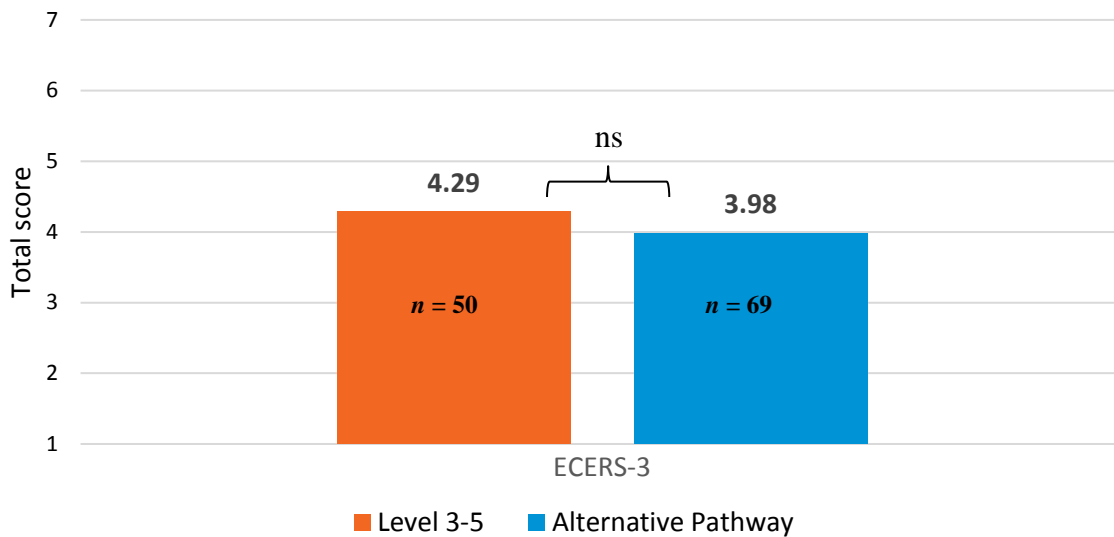
Notes. *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 *ns*: *p*>0.05

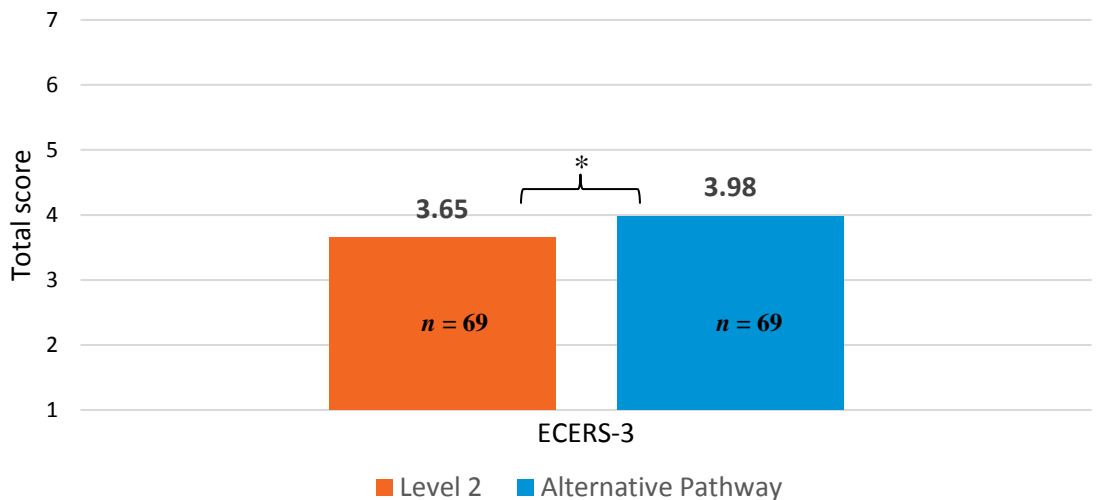**Table 36.** T-tests of ECERS-3 scores between Level 3-5 and alternative pathway centers

	Level 3-5 M(SD)	Alternative Pathway M(SD)	t	P	Cohen's d
ECERS-3	n=50 4.29 (.90)	n=69 3.98 (.82)	-1.97	0.051	

Notes. *p<0.05 **p<0.01   ***p<0.001 *ns*: *p*>0.05

Comparisons between Level 2 and Alternative Pathway Programs

The second comparison examined whether alternative pathway programs scored higher on observed program quality than Level 2 programs. T-test results show that alternative pathway programs, score significantly higher than Level 2 programs (Figure 4). Alternative pathway programs scored an average total score of 3.98 on the ECERS-3 compared to a 3.65 for Level 2 programs. These were significantly higher at the p<0.05 level with a moderate effect size of 0.38 (Table 37).

Figure 4. T-tests of ECERS-3 scores between Level 2 and alternative pathway centers

Table 37. T-tests of ECERS-3 scores between Level 2 and alternative pathway centers

	Level 2 M(SD)	Alternative Pathway M(SD)	t	p	Cohen's d
ECERS-3	n=69 3.65 (.86)	n=69 3.98 (.82)	2.23		0.38

Summary

These results indicate that alternative pathway programs score similarly to the Level 3-5 center counterparts and score higher than Level 2 centers. Therefore, the findings suggest that the alternative pathways process assigns ratings as expected.

Part IV Summary & Recommendations

Evidence review. Overall, Colorado Shines' Quality Standard Categories and Criteria align with the early childhood research base and professional consensus related to these elements of quality. While in some instances the research demonstrates mixed findings or the empirical evidence is limited, the ECE field continues to investigate the relationships between standards of quality and children's development and learning.

Rating Process. The policies and procedures that guide the Colorado Shines rating process are clearly articulated and aligned with best practice, which can help to ensure consistently across rating specialists and assessors and the accuracy the rating determinations.

Validation Analysis. Findings indicate that the Colorado Shines rating criteria differentiate quality between higher- and lower-rated programs. Higher-rated programs (i.e., Level 3-5 programs) scored higher than lower-rated programs (i.e., Level 2 programs) on ECERS-3, ITERS-R, and FCCERS-R assessments. When examining programs that achieved a rating

through alternative pathway, these programs scored similarly to Level 3-5 centers and scored higher than Level 2 centers on measures of observed quality as expected, suggesting that the alternative pathway process is able to assign a meaningful quality rating.

Recommendations

Pursue periodic updates to the Colorado Shines Quality Categories and Indicator review. As noted in the full Colorado Shines Evidence Review report, as the ECE field continues to expand and refine the evidence base for quality practices, Colorado Shines leaders can integrate new findings into ongoing discussions and periodically, QRIS quality indicator revisions.

Continue to incorporate validation analyses as a part of the Colorado Shines ongoing evaluation plan. The findings suggest that the Colorado Shines rating process can distinguish quality among child care programs. However, it may be important to monitor whether the Colorado Shines rating process continues to differentiate quality over time. Ongoing monitoring will be important for many reasons. First, as the overall Level 2 through Level 5 participation rate increases, the mix of programs at Level 2 may continue to change. For example, there may be more distinct variations in quality between Level 2 programs that decide not to apply for a higher rating and Level 2 programs that tried but received a Level 2 rating. As was true in this study, going forward the characteristics of the Level 2 programs will continue to have important implications for understanding the extent to which the Colorado Shines rating structure is able to determine meaningful differences in program quality.

Second, as more programs participate in Colorado Shines at higher levels of the system, additional types of analyses will be possible that will provide further understanding of how well the rating structure is functioning. For example, when more programs are participating at Levels 3 through 5 it may be possible to determine if the Level 5 programs are higher quality than the Level 3 Programs. In addition, it may be possible to collect data from more alternative pathways programs and examine the extent to which Head Start programs are comparable to Level 4 programs and accredited programs are comparable to Level 3 programs. Analyzing data on these programs over time will continue to help inform an understanding of the overall performance of the Colorado Shines rating structure.

Limitations

Some limitations to this study may have implications for the overall interpretation of findings and application of the recommendations. First, it is important to acknowledge that Colorado Shines implemented a validation study in the first years of its implementation. As a result, many issues common during the early years of implementation of any new initiative may have biased data collected for this study, particularly perception data collected through surveys and interviews. For example, themes related to communication, confusion, or frustration may be common themes of a program or initiative in the early stages of implementation. While this does not change the findings, it is helpful to keep the early stage of implementation in mind when reviewing the findings.

Second, data were collected in over 300 programs across the state. However, study participation was limited to the programs participating in Colorado Shines as of February and August 2016, when Child Trends developed the sample for the study. As a result, the sample size for some types of programs was limited. For example, the sample size of fully rated Level 3–5 family child care programs is relatively small compared to the number of center-based programs. In addition, the study sample represented a small portion of the larger Level 2 population. Programs that were included were those that agreed to participate in the validation study. Therefore, findings may not be generalizable to the entire population of programs, as there may be selection bias. When interpreting findings, it is important to also acknowledge that accredited child care centers and Head Start programs were analyzed as one group for the analyses. As more programs participate in Colorado Shines, particularly at higher levels, more direct comparisons can be conducted between Level 3 child care centers and accredited child care centers, as well as Level 3 child care centers and Head Start programs.

These limitations are presented to ensure that the summary of findings and recommendations are considered with this context in mind.

Colorado Shines Validation Study Discussion and Recommendations

The goals of the Colorado Shines Validation Study were two-fold. One goal was to examine the extent to which the Colorado Shines rating structure is fair and accurate, and results in meaningful ratings for programs and families. The second goal was to provide immediate feedback to the Office of Early Childhood about the early stages of implementation of Colorado Shines, to highlight successes and opportunities for continued quality improvement.

Regarding the first goal, Colorado Shines has a strong overall foundation as a valid structure for rating the quality of early care and education settings. The Colorado Shines quality categories and criteria align with the existing early childhood research base and professional consensus related to these elements of quality. The policies and procedures that guide the Colorado Shines rating process are clearly articulated and aligned with best practice, which can help to ensure consistency across rating specialists and assessors and, ultimately, the accuracy of rating determinations. In examining independent assessments of program quality, Level 3–5 programs scored higher than Level 2 programs on the ECERS-3, ITERS-R, and FCCERS-R measures of program quality. Similarly, alternative pathway programs received similar scores on the ECERS-3 to Level 3–5 centers, and scored higher on the ECERS-3 than Level 2 centers, suggesting that the alternative pathway process can assign meaningful quality ratings. Overall, the key underlying concepts supporting the Colorado Shines quality indicators, the measurement

strategies used to determine a program rating, and the outputs of the rating process collectively contribute to the validity of the Colorado Shines rating structure.

While establishing the validity of Colorado Shines was an important goal for the Office of Early Childhood, collecting information about successes and areas of continued improvement was equally important. An important success of Colorado Shines noted in this study is the increased participation rate over the course of the two years during which the study was conducted. The number of programs receiving a Level 2–5 Colorado Shines rating increased steadily to about half (48%) of licensed ECE programs when the study closed in May 2017. Although more center-based programs (65%) participate at Levels 2–5 in Colorado Shines compared to family child care providers (33%), the increased rate of participation at these levels was an important goal for Colorado.

When asked about effective recruitment strategies, QI Navigators agreed that face-to-face outreach and opportunities to build relationships with providers were the most successful strategies for recruiting participation in Levels 2–5 of Colorado Shines. Participation in Colorado Shines was also motivated by providers' reported interest in being recognized as part of a quality initiative in the state, and their desire to access professional development opportunities, funding, and coaching for quality improvement activities. The study also highlighted the unique needs of Level 1 centers and family child care home providers that may require different incentives and recruitment strategies to participate in Colorado Shines. For example, some Level 1 providers felt it unnecessary to participate in Colorado Shines because they did not believe that they needed a rating to attract families, because they perceived the rating application and process as difficult, or because they worried that their potential rating would not accurately reflect their program's quality.

When examining the successes and challenges faced by those who provide quality improvement supports to providers, Council members and coaches reported that the most effective coaching strategies included observing and providing feedback, helping providers with their environment, and helping providers use their QI funds effectively. Councils, coaches, and providers agreed that one of the biggest challenges they faced was insufficient time to work together; conversely, many providers felt they lacked enough access to coaches. Councils also frequently reported that their coaches did not have enough time to work with the number of providers demanding their services, nor did they have enough coaches on staff to meet the demand. QI Navigators reported that the most effective strategy they used to provide technical assistance was in-person visits with providers. The biggest challenge faced by QI Navigators was related to technology—providers lacking experience and/or access to technology, and issues encountered with the data systems.

Level 2–5 providers were also asked for their perspective on participating in Colorado Shines. Most reported an overall impression of Colorado Shines that was extremely positive, positive, or somewhat positive. When asked to share more about their experiences, many providers noted the benefits of going through the rating process or working with a coach, an appreciation for the trainings provided, or an appreciation for Colorado Shines as a unifying quality framework for child care programs. However, providers also offered feedback on the challenges they encountered, which centered around four common themes: (1) the time, burden, and paperwork required to participate; (2) a sense that the process felt unfair, inflexible, or frustrating; (3) a request to clarify the requirements or evidence needed for the rating; and (4) a request to address challenges that providers encountered related to technology issues or the burden of uploading documentation. Family child care providers also expressed a sense that Colorado Shines was not tailored to the unique culture and structure of their programs.

Similarly, a sub-group of center directors commented that they felt Colorado Shines did not account for their unique program philosophies or structures (i.e., Montessori and rural programs).

When asked for suggestions on improvements, Level 2–5 family child care providers primarily suggested tailoring Colorado Shines to the unique structure of their care settings, reducing the time/paperwork involved in the rating process, and offering support with technology requirements or addressing challenges related to the online platforms. Center directors suggested that Colorado Shines provide more clarification around the evidence needed to meet specific requirements; consider the unique structures and philosophies of programs across the state; simplify the rating process and reduce the amount of paperwork; and provide more support during the rating process from a coach or mentor.

The increased participation in Colorado Shines is largely attributed to the collective efforts of the Colorado Shines state leadership, the Early Childhood Councils, Colorado Shines coaches, QI Navigators, and the Colorado Shines team of Assessors and Data Specialists. The surveys and interviews conducted as part of this study provide insight into the roles, successes, and potential areas of improvement these Colorado Shines key contributors might consider in the future. The following recommendations are offered in response to the data and information gathered for this study.

Recommendations

Recruitment strategies should focus on relationship building and an ongoing communications campaign to continue building participation in Colorado Shines.
Building trust and rapport with providers, especially those new to Colorado Shines and QRIS, takes time and is best accomplished through in-person interactions. This kind of recruitment method can be resource-intensive, requiring many staff hours and possibly travel, so it should be limited to programs registered with Colorado Shines that have expressed readiness to participate to Councils. The state should continue to support Councils by investing in effective outreach strategies and de-emphasizing, or discontinuing, the less effective outreach strategies, such as mass communication. Promoting awareness and general information sharing can instead shift toward statewide Colorado Shines marketing and communications campaigns for both parents and providers.

Continue to invest in participation incentives that are most meaningful for providers: quality improvement resources, professional development, and marketing to families.
The state should continue to promote the professional development opportunities afforded by participation in Colorado Shines (e.g., coaching, the credentialing process, and the PDIS), as this was identified as an important motivator for providers, as well as quality improvement resources (i.e., funds for materials and coaching) and strategies to promote awareness of Colorado Shines with families. While access to professional development was frequently noted as a reason to participate by Level 1 providers, it was identified by only one-third of these providers. Colorado might also consider continuing conversations and conducting surveys with Level 1 providers to learn more about which professional development opportunities—including additional opportunities—might meet their interests and engage them in participating at higher levels. To increase parental awareness of Colorado Shines while also increasing demand for rated programs, the OEC should continue to invest in an ongoing marketing and communications campaign. Other states have invested in PSAs on public television, radio, and through online advertising. Increasing parental knowledge about the importance of high-quality

child care and promoting Colorado Shines as a tool to help parents choose higher-quality programs may be an important driver of program participation.

Continue supporting strategies to reduce the time needed from providers to complete a rating application, reduce confusion related to the application process, and reduce frustration related to technology issues. Develop a process to streamline documentation requirements when there is an opportunity to revise the evidence guide. For example, commission a group of stakeholders to review the evidence guide in conjunction with notes kept by quality rating specialists, to identify where clarification may be needed around evidence requirements and where documentations may be streamlined or pared down. Participants might include quality rating specialists, a coach, an Early Childhood Council member, a QI navigator, and a few representatives from the provider community. This recommendation also supports the state's ongoing efforts to provide support and tutorials on the Colorado Shines Technology System and PDIS to continually address technology glitches inherent with any online system, and to continue supporting users who are less tech-savvy.

Engage providers who feel that Colorado Shines may not align with their program structure of philosophy, to better understand their perspectives and consider these perspectives when there is an opportunity to revise Colorado Shines. Talk with family child care providers to address perceptions that Colorado Shines is designed for centers, rather than family child care homes. Similarly, Montessori programs and programs in rural or isolated areas expressed challenges related to alignment of program philosophies with the Colorado Shines rating criteria. If there are opportunities to revise aspects of Colorado Shines, engage these providers in the process to ensure that the rating structure works for their programs.

Consider the most efficient and effective way to maximize resources to support programs. Councils, coaches, and providers agreed that one of their biggest challenges was insufficient time to work together. Many providers felt they did not have enough access to coaches or coaching hours. This finding may be due, in part, to the timing of this study and the participation goals articulated in Colorado's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant. From 2015 to 2017, participation in Colorado Shines grew rapidly, and it simply may not have been possible to provide extensive coaching to all providers who pursued a rating under the new system. Even if the pace of new ratings and the request for more coaching slows in the coming years, developing a strategy to maximize coaching resources should be considered for sustainability purposes. This may involve developing coaching assessments and program self-assessments to understand programs' self-identified needs and readiness for coaching, so that councils can strategize about how and which coaches to deploy for work with programs. In addition, some coaches might consider specializing in certain areas so they can be utilized in a focused way across programs. QI Navigators can also develop efficient ways to work with providers while offering to meet in-person to provide face-to-face supports. For example, QI Navigators can offer open houses where they can work with providers to address their questions about Colorado Shines, clarify application requirements, and offer support to providers who are not as comfortable with technology.

Pursue periodic updates to the Colorado Shines quality categories and indicators. The full Colorado Shines Evidence Review report notes that, as the ECE field continues to expand and refine the evidence base for quality practices, Colorado Shines leaders can integrate new findings into ongoing discussions and, periodically, QRIS quality indicator revisions.

Continue to incorporate validation analyses as part of the Colorado Shines ongoing evaluation plan. The findings suggest that the Colorado Shines rating process can distinguish quality among child care programs. However, it may be important to monitor whether the rating

process continues to differentiate quality over time. Ongoing monitoring will be important for many reasons. First, as the overall Level 2–5 participation rate increases, the mix of programs at Level 2 may continue to change. For example, there may be more distinct variations in quality between Level 2 programs that decide not to apply for a higher rating and Level 2 programs that tried to advance but received a Level 2 rating. As was true in this study, the characteristics of Level 2 programs will continue to have important implications for understanding the extent to which the Colorado Shines rating structure can determine meaningful differences in program quality.

Second, as more programs participate in Colorado Shines at higher levels, additional types of analyses will be possible to provide further understanding of how well the rating structure functions. For example, when more programs participate at Levels 3–5, it may be possible to determine if the Level 5 programs are of higher quality than the Level 3 programs. In addition, it may be possible to collect data from more alternative pathways programs, and to examine the extent to which Head Start programs are comparable to Level 4 programs and accredited programs are comparable to Level 3 programs. Analyzing data on these programs over time will continue to inform an understanding of the overall performance of the Colorado Shines rating structure.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Colorado Shines rating structure is a valid approach for identifying meaningful differences in observed quality. By conducting a validation study in these first years of implementation, Colorado is now equipped with data to inform minor adjustments to the system in the coming years to support its own continuous quality improvement efforts.

Appendix: Colorado Shines Validation Study Methods

The Colorado Shines Validation study employed a mixed method data approach to complete the objectives of the study. This section includes details of the data collection procedures that were used in this study, which involved the following primary methods:

Classroom Observations: Observations provided data about the quality of the classroom environment and interactions. This section reports the sampling methodology, recruitment strategies, and data collection procedures for conducting classroom observations.

Surveys: Several different groups engaged with Colorado Shines were surveyed by Child Trends for this study. Surveys provided information about the perceptions of Colorado Shines from various perspectives. This section provides information about each of the groups that were invited to participate in the evaluation surveys, how the surveys were developed, and the data collection procedures.

Interviews: Key stakeholders who are a part of the team implementing or who may be supporting Colorado Shines were interviewed about their experiences and perceptions. These interviews were conducted to gather initial insights and feedback from those closest to the implementation of Colorado Shines. This section explains who was interviewed, the types of questions they were asked, and the protocol for conducting interviews.

Classroom Observations

In February 2016, the OEC provided Child Trends with a list of all Colorado Shines programs that were rated as of 12/01/2015. Programs eligible to participate in Colorado Shines include centers seeking a full rating through Colorado Shines, family child care homes seeking a full rating; and alternative pathways programs, which includes center- and home-based providers that have received an accreditation from an approved accrediting body, and Head Start programs.

The target populations of the classroom observations were:

- Directors of child care centers (both fully rated programs and accredited centers)

- Head Start Center Managers

- Family child care providers

Table A1. Planned vs. Actual Classroom Observation Sample

Population	Planned	Actual
Fully Rated Centers	170	151
Alternative Pathway Programs	70	75
Family Child Care Providers	25	26

Recruitment

Directors of Level 2 through Level 5 child care centers and family child care homes participating in Colorado Shines between February 2016 and May 2017 were recruited to participate in this study. Center directors and family child care home providers were contacted via USPS mail or email with a formal request to participate in the study. After the recruitment letters were sent, a member of the Child Trends team followed up with programs over the phone to discuss the program's interest in participating. Email addresses and telephone numbers were accessed from administrative data provided by the Office of Early Childhood. Lead program personnel (center directors, center managers, and family child care providers) were offered a $50 incentive as thank you for participating in the study.

After a program agreed to participate, Child Trends worked with them to identify one preschool classroom and one infant/toddler classroom (if applicable in center-based programs) to participate. If there was more than one classroom serving each age range of children, the participating classroom was selected at random as part of the recruitment process. Classroom teachers were informed of the classroom observation through the director. Child Trends then emailed an Evaluation Information Sheet to the teacher after the initial recruitment phone call with the director, which provided information to the teacher about the purpose of the observation as well as answers to frequently asked questions. Details related to scheduling and conducting the observation are included below in the data collection procedures section.

Data Collection

Field Team Training. Child Trends hired six staff (the "field team") in the Denver area to conduct observations in child care centers and family child care homes across the state. The Child Trends field team was trained in using the data collection tools required for classroom observations. These tools include the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – 3rd Edition (ECERS-3) and the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ITERS-R). The Environment Rating Scales (ECERS-R, ECERS-3, ITERS-R, FCCERS-R) are tools developed by Thelma Harms, Richard Clifford, and Debby Cryer, of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Each rating scale is designed to assess the quality of the child care environment for a specific age group and child care setting. Each rating scale is made up of seven subscales focusing on different aspects of the child environment: Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Listening and Talking, Activities, Interaction, Program Structure, and Parent and Staff. Observations result in seven subscale scores and an overall score of 1-7; 1 indicating inadequate care, 3 indicating minimal care, 5 indicating good care, and 7 indicating excellent care (as defined by the scale authors).

The field team was also trained on other protocols such as data security, mandated reporting procedures for suspected or known child abuse and neglect, and research procedures for maintaining confidentiality and the protection of human subjects. Observers were also trained on project specific Child Trends protocols which included:

- Scheduling observations;
- Data collection procedures beyond what is required for the tools being used (i.e., other survey data to be collected, procedures for interacting with teachers, children, etc.);
- Online data collection entry (including how to enter collected data and how to enter scheduling information); and
- Mailing hard copies of the data to a Child Trends office.

Clayton Early Learning. Child Trends hired Clayton Early Learning (Clayton) to perform several roles in the Colorado Shines Evaluation. Clayton trained the Child Trends field team on the suite of Environment Rating Scale tools used, specifically the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – 3rd Edition (ECERS-3) and the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ITERS-R). Clayton also conducted all the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale – Revised (FCCERS-R) observations used in home-based settings and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R) conducted in alternative pathway programs.

Data Collection Procedures. All observational visits were conducted during three waves of data collection: January 2016 to June 2016, September 2016 to December 2016, and January 2017 to May 2017. Level 2 *child care centers* received an observation using the ECERS-3 and if applicable, the ITERS-R. Level 2 through 5 child care centers only received ECERS-3 observations. If the Level 3-5 participating program also served infants and toddlers, the most recent ITERS-R data for these programs were obtained from the OEC administrative data.

Participating Level 3-5 *alternative pathway (AP) programs* received an ECERS-3, ECERS-R, and if applicable, an ITERS-R observation. The first 50 programs recruited were asked to participate in a simultaneous ECERS-3 and ECERS-R observation. The ECERS-3 data were used for the validation study. The ECERS-R and ECERS-3 data were used for a separate ERS comparability study. The remaining AP programs were asked to participate in an ECERS-3 observation only.

Observations were only conducted in Level 2 *family child care homes* using the FCCERS-R. Child Trends recruited a group of Level 3-5 family child care homes to participate in the study, which did not require a separate FCCERS-R observation. Instead, the most recent FCCERS-R data for these programs were obtained from the OEC administrative data.

To schedule each observation, Child Trends staff called programs to ask them to identify an approximate two-week window of time to have the observation(s) and to identify possible blackout dates. Each observational visit lasted approximately three hours and took place between the hours of 8:00 AM and 11:30 AM. If a program required two classroom observations (i.e., one preschool classroom observation and one infant/toddler classroom observation) the observer tried to conduct observations within one week of each other.

Inter-rater Reliability. Clayton conducted all reliability observations with the field team. Reliability observations were conducted every tenth observation per observer or every three months, whichever happened first. Observers were deemed reliable if they achieved 85% consensus with the anchor observer. If the field staff did not achieve reliability at the 85% percentile, they were required to conduct another reliability observation. If an observer did not achieve 85% reliability during the second reliability observation, the observer was required to undergo reliability testing over the course of three days, conducting observations with an anchor observer.

Data Checking and Feedback Reports. The score sheet for each classroom that participated in an ERS observation for this study was checked by Child Trends staff. After a score sheet was received, a Child Trends staff member checked that all indicators were marked and that all items were calculated correctly. If any indicators were missing, the observer was contacted; if items were calculated incorrectly, then the data checker would make any necessary corrections. After checking the physical score sheet, the data checker then checked the scores in the Child Trends online data collection system, made any needed corrections, and a note about any corrections that were made.

After each observation was completed and scores were assigned, programs received a feedback report. The feedback report provides classroom teachers and family child care providers with their ERS scores, information on how to interpret their scores, and highlights of strengths and potential areas for improvement. Clayton was responsible for reviewing all feedback reports. This process involved checking all feedback report sub-scores and total scores against the scores reported in Portal. Clayton staff would then make any needed changes to the feedback report scores as well as grammar and copy editing changes.

Communication and Supervision. Communication and supervision of fielding team consisted of weekly check-in calls, reviewing and approving timesheets, and reviewing and approving expense reimbursements. The weekly check-in calls provided an opportunity for the field team supervisor, scheduler, and the field team to troubleshoot situations that arose in the field, discuss reliability procedures, and observation logistics. Additional feedback and support was offered to each field team member on a one-on-one basis by phone.

Surveys

In collaboration with the Colorado Office of Early Childhood (OEC) and Colorado Department of Education (CDE), Child Trends developed surveys of the following groups:

- Colorado Shines Coaches and Early Childhood Credentialed Coaches (*Coaching Survey*)

- Quality Improvement Navigators (*Quality Improvement Navigator Survey*)

- All Level 2-5 Colorado Shines Center Directors and Family Child Care Providers (*Level 2-5 Rated Provider Survey*)

- Level 1 Center Directors and Family Child Care Providers (*Level 1 Provider Survey*)

- Teachers, Center Directors, and Family Child Care providers that participated in the validation study (*Validation Surveys*)

While specific content and logistics of each survey differed, all were administered through the Survey Gizmo online survey platform, and all respondents were offered an incentive for their participation.

The survey data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Frequencies, percentages, or averages were calculated for quantitative responses. Respondents could leave questions unanswered, and many questions permitted respondents to provide multiple responses. Qualitative responses were analyzed using open coding techniques to identify common themes. For questions where quantitative and qualitative data were both collected (i.e., one of the response choices was "other" -- where respondents could specify their response), qualitative responses were either recoded into the initial response categories or analyzed to identify additional themes.

Coaching Survey

This survey included questions about coaching for Colorado Shines and questions about the Early Childhood Coaching Credential. Coaches answered different sets of survey questions depending if they provide coaching services for Colorado Shines and/or have completed the Coaching Credential. Topics covered in the survey included:

Colorado Shines Topics

- **About Your Role:** How much experience do coaches have and do they play more than one role? What are coaches' employment statuses, salaries, and benefits, and are they satisfied with their jobs?

- **Training and Ongoing Support:** What training have coaches received to prepare them to coach for Colorado Shines, and what additional trainings would be helpful? How helpful are the tools/materials/resources provided coaches, and what else would be helpful? What supports do coaches receive from their supervisor and otherwise?

- **Working with Providers:** How do coaches work with the providers on their caseloads (e.g., frequency of communication, length of visits)? What activities and strategies do coaches use to support ECE providers in improving quality? What are coaches' experiences with and perceptions of the practice based coaching model?

- **Perceptions of Colorado Shines:** What are coaches' perceptions of Colorado Shines and the role they play in the system?

Early Childhood Coaching Credential Topics

- **Perceptions of the Early Childhood Coaching Credential:** What are coaches' perceptions and experiences with the application process, criteria, and credential levels? How much has the credential influenced coaches' careers?

- **Relationship Based Professional Development:** What are coaches' perceptions and experiences with the RBPD component of the credential? How easy was it to access, what was the quality, and how valuable was it for their coaching practice?

- **Professional Development Plan:** What are coaches' perceptions and experiences with the professional development plan component of the credential? How easy was it to develop, how long did it take, and how valuable was it for their coaching practice?

- **Reflective Supervision:** What are coaches' perceptions and experiences with the reflective supervision component of the credential? What was the quality of the supervision they received and how valuable was it for their coaching practice?

Contact lists including coaches' email addresses were provided to Child Trends by the OEC and CDE. On October 18, 2016, Child Trends sent an online survey to all early childhood coaches in Colorado for which working email addresses were obtained (n=172). The survey remained open until November 10, 2016 (23 days), during which time 90 respondents completed surveys (52% response rate). Of these 90 respondents, 70 reported they were providing coaching services for Colorado Shines and 69 said they had completed the Coaching Credential. Participating coaches were entered into a lottery to win either one of many $35 Amazon gift cards or one $200 Amazon gift card. Three emails were sent to coaches reminding them to complete the survey (on October 31, November 3, and November 8th). To increase the response rate, after sending the second reminder, Child Trends offered the first 10 people who completed the survey that day a $25 Amazon gift card. A full report of survey findings was sent to the OEC and CDE in December 2016.

Quality Improvement Navigator Survey

The survey was intended for all individuals who were a QI Navigator for Colorado Shines. The survey included questions about QI Navigators' roles, the training and support they received, how they work with Colorado Shines providers, and their perceptions of the Colorado Shines rating system. Topics covered in the survey included:

- **Affiliation and Role:** How much experience do QI Navigators have and do they play more than one role? What are QI Navigators' employment statuses, salaries, and benefits?

- **Training and Ongoing Support:** What training have QI Navigators received to prepare them to coach for Colorado Shines, and what additional trainings would be helpful? How helpful are the tools/materials/resources provided, and what else would be helpful? What supports do they receive from their supervisor and otherwise?

- **Working with Providers:** What are the activities that QI Navigators do in their role? Has the role changed over time? If so, how has the role changed? How many QI Navigators are responsible for providing TA and recruiting new providers into Colorado Shines? What are the most effective strategies for TA and recruitment? How do QI Navigators individualize their support for different types of providers? What are the barriers they encounter in their role?

- **Collaborations:** Who do QI Navigators collaborate with most frequently? How do they feel about the quality of those collaborations?

- **Perceptions of Colorado Shines:** What are QI Navigators' perceptions of Colorado Shines and the role they play in the system?

On February 9, 2017, Child Trends sent an online survey to all QI Navigators with valid email addresses (n=70). The survey remained open until March 10, 2017 (30 days), during which time 39 respondents completed surveys (55% response rate). Participating QI Navigators were entered into a lottery to win either one of many $35 Amazon gift cards or one $200 Amazon gift card. QI Navigators received three emails on February 20, February 27, and March 3 reminding them to complete the survey. On the day the survey was launched, Survey Gizmo experienced a technical glitch which resulted in some QI Navigators being unable to take the survey. After Child Trends was alerted to the issue and communicated with Survey Gizmo, a brief invitation email was sent to the contact list notifying QI Navigators that they could once again access the survey. To increase the response rate, after sending the second reminder, Child Trends offered the first 10 people who completed the survey that day a $25 Amazon gift card. Findings from the QI Navigator Survey are incorporated into the final validation study report submitted to the OEC in September 2017.

Level 2-5 Rated Provider Survey:

This survey went to all Level 2-5 providers participating in Colorado Shines. Topics covered included:

- **Program information:** Is the program full/does it have a waitlist? How many children are enrolled? How many children in the program are receiving other services? How many children in the program are on an IEP or are dual language learners?

- **Perceptions of Colorado Shines:** How does the experience with Colorado Shines compare with expectations? What do providers think the primary purpose of Colorado Shines is? What is the impact of Colorado Shines? What are suggestions for improving communication?

- **Perceptions of the Rating Process:** How do providers feel about the rating process? What common challenges? What suggestions do providers have for improving the rating process?

- **Perceptions of Coaching and TA Supports:** How much time to providers spend with coaches? How do providers rate the helpfulness of Colorado Shines coaches and other quality supports? What are the barriers and challenges? What additional training needs do providers have?

On February 28, 2017, Child Trends sent the survey out to all center-based providers for which contact information (n=1,363) was obtained. The survey for family child care homes was sent out on March 8, 2017, and went to 80 providers. Each survey stayed open for about 6 weeks, with the center-based survey closing on April 14th and the family child care provider survey closing on April 17th. When the surveys closed, 475 centers and 38 FCC providers has responded, resulting in a 38% response rate for the center-based survey and a 52% response rate for the FCC survey. Center-based survey respondents were entered into a lottery to win either one of multiple $35 Amazon gift cards or one $250 Amazon gift card. In an effort to increase the response rate of center-based providers, Child Trends extended the deadline of the survey and offered a $25.00 Amazon gift card to the first 10 people to complete the survey after March 14th. Further reminders were sent and Child Trends offered an additional five $250.00 Amazon gift cards. For the FCC provider survey, all respondents were automatically sent a $50.00 gift card.

Survey participants were asked if they wanted to participate in follow up conversations about their perceptions of Colorado Shines. Among the participants who indicated they were interested in providing further feedback (n=136), only twelve participated in follow-up phone calls. Findings from the Level 2-5 Rated Provider Survey are incorporated into the final validation study report submitted to the OEC in September 2017.

Level 1 Provider Survey

This survey was sent to all Level 1 Colorado Shines providers. There are two types of Level 1 providers. Registered providers have gone to the Colorado Shines website and registered their contact information indicating their interest in learning more about Colorado Shines, the first step for participating. Unregistered providers have not yet registered with the Colorado Shines website and may not be aware of the goals and purpose of a QRIS. Topics covered in the Level 1 provider survey included:

- **Provider and Program Characteristics**: What are the demographic characteristics of registered and unregistered Level 1 providers? What are the program characteristics of registered and unregistered Level 1 programs? What types of providers do or do not register as Level 1 providers in Colorado Shines?

- **Interest and Awareness of Colorado Shines**: What is their knowledge and awareness of QRIS and Colorado Shines? How did providers first hear about Colorado Shines?

- **Decision-making About Participation**: Do providers plan to participate at a higher level in the future? What are the top reasons why providers would or would not want to participate in Colorado Shines at higher levels? Are there differences in how registered and unregistered providers make decisions about participating in Colorado Shines?

- **Perceptions of Colorado Shines**: What do Level 1 providers perceive as the benefits and challenges of participating at higher levels of Colorado Shines? What are providers' perceptions and beliefs about Colorado Shines? Do they think parents would use and value Colorado Shines ratings?

- **Instruction and Assessment Practices**: How do providers teach and track student learning? What training have providers received to teach and track student learning?

Child Trends sent an online survey to all center directors and family child care providers who had *registered* on the Colorado Shines website as a Level 1 program (n=967) on October 21, 2015. The survey remained open until November 25, 2015 (five weeks), during which time 445

respondents completed surveys (46% response rate). Participating respondents entered into a weekly lottery to win either one of multiple $35 Amazon gift cards or one $250 Amazon gift card. On June 13, 2016, Child Trends sent a modified version of this survey to all directors and family child care providers who were *unregistered* on the Colorado Shines website where an email address was available (n=1,632).[h] The survey was sent in conjunction with surveys to solicit feedback on services provided by Early Childhood Councils. The survey remained open until June 29, 2016 (about 2 weeks), during which time 213 respondents completed surveys (13% response rate). Participating respondents entered into a weekly lottery to win either one of multiple $50 Amazon gift cards or one $200 Amazon gift card. A full report of survey findings was sent to the OEC and CDE in February 2016.

Validation Surveys

The validation surveys were sent only to center directors and family child care providers who participated in the Child Trends study. Three types of respondents participated in these surveys: center directors, teachers, and family child care providers. Topics covered included:

- **About the Families You Serve:** What are the ages of children served? What are the ethnicities/races of children served?

- **About Your Program Environment:** How many aides or assistants are present? How does the program communicate with families? Does the program provide information or referrals to families for other services? Does the program/provider solicit feedback from parents? What role do parents have?

- **About Your Program Curriculum:** What type, if any, of curriculum is used? Have teachers or the provider received training on the curriculum used? How does the program document children's growth and learning?

- **Your Background:** How long has the provider been in the early childhood field? Does the provider have an Early Childhood Professional or Child Development Associate credential?

To encourage study participants to complete the survey as close to their observation date as possible, the link to the survey was sent the week of or a week after each scheduled observation date. Response times varied, with some providers completing the survey right away and others taking months to complete the survey. Program directors and their teachers were sent the survey link on the same day. Of the programs that were asked to complete a survey, 93% of directors responded (n=185), 95% of preschool teachers (n=180) and 94% of infant/ toddler teachers (n=60) responded, and 100% of family child care providers responded (100%). Directors received a $25 gift card for completing the survey. Teachers received a $50 gift card after the observation was completed, and then $25 after they completed the survey. Family child care providers received a $75 gift card after both the survey and observation were completed. Findings from the Validation Surveys are incorporated into the final validation study report submitted to the OEC in September 2017.

Key Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews were conducted with key partners across the state (e.g., Qualistar staff, Office of Early Childhood staff, Colorado Department of Education staff, staff at Clayton Early Learning,

---

[h] Available email addresses included emails after omitting duplicated emails, bounced messages, and recipients who unsubscribed.

Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance) who are engaged with Colorado Shines implementation to gather the perceptions of what is working well and what is not working well to recruit, support, and engage programs participating in the QRIS. Topics covered included:

- **Recruitment:** What strategies are used to recruit programs into Colorado Shines? What are the most effective strategies? What are the challenges and barriers to recruitment?

- **Rating Criteria and the Colorado Shines Quality Framework:** What is the level of familiarity with the details of the Colorado Shines rating criteria? What are perceptions of the rating criteria? How could the quality framework be improved?

- **Verification Process/ Process of Rating Assignment:** What is the level of familiarity with the details of the Colorado Shines rating verification process? What aspects of the verification process are successful? What are some of the barriers and challenges?

- **Quality Improvement Supports and Incentives:** What is the level of provider engagement with QI supports? What are some possible improvements? What are the key incentives to enroll in Colorado Shines and increase quality?

- **Marketing and Data Systems:** What are some effective ways to communicate to parents about the benefits of Colorado Shines? How well do the data systems support the rating process? How well does the data system support integration with other system components? How well does the data system support the "user experience" of providers?

Colorado Shines key stakeholders were identified with input from Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) and Colorado Department of Education (CDE) staff members. These 29 individuals represent perspectives from:

- Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), Office of Early Childhood (OEC)

- Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

- Denver Public Schools

- Denver Preschool Program

- Aurora Public Schools

- Colorado Children's Campaign

- Clayton Early Learning

- Qualistar Colorado

- Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance (ECCLA)

- Early Childhood Councils:

  o Alliance for Kids

  o Early Childhood Council of Larimer County

  o Denver Early Childhood Council

  o Mesa County Partnership for Children and Families

Interviews were conducted by four Child Trends researchers between March 18th, 2016 and June 28th, 2016. Twenty-eight of the 29 invited key stakeholders completed an interview, a response rate of 97%.[i]

All questions in the interview protocol were open-ended to encourage respondents to voice their thoughts and opinions. For each of the key interview topics, respondents were first asked about their level of familiarity with that topic—for example, "recruitment efforts." Only respondents who said they were familiar with the aspect of implementation in the section were asked further questions. Those who said they were unfamiliar moved on to the next topic. Interview responses were documented through notes and audio recordings. Child Trends researchers reviewed the responses to each question to identify and code themes that emerged, which were then reviewed by another member of the analysis team. When there was a discrepancy in coding, the two researchers met to discuss and resolve the discrepancy. Each response was coded to capture relevant points, meaning that one response may have been coded into multiple themes. When common themes were not identified, singular responses are included. Because respondents only answered questions about topics they were familiar with, the total number of responses varies. While 28 interviews were conducted, the total number of responses for each topic ranged from 18 to 26. A full report of findings from the Key Stakeholder interviews was sent to the OEC and CDE in December 2016.

[1] Zellman, G. L. & Fiene, R. (2012). *Validation of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems for early care and education and school-age care,* Research-to-Policy, Research-to-Practice Brief OPRE 2012-29. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

[2] https://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/applications/colorado.pdf

[3] A Request for Proposals, Early Childhood Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge Grant Evaluator 12/10/2014.

[4] Cryer, D., Harms, T., & Riley, C. (2003). All about the ECERS-R, p.xv. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

[5] Cryer, D. (n.d.). *Developing and maintaining reliability on the Environment Rating Scales*. Chapel Hill, NC: Environment Rating Scales Institute. Retrieved from http://www.ersi.info/info.html

[6] Ibid.

[i] In three cases, key stakeholders requested that an additional person join their interview. In cases where an interview included more than one key stakeholder, responses were combined and analyzed as a single respondent.