

## ExceleRate Subcommittee, Minutes of September 2019 meeting

Thursday, September 19, 2019, 10:30 – 12:30

National-Louis University's Chicago campus, 122 S. Michigan Ave, and by conference phone

### Present

Artiya Nash, Barb Volpe, Beth Knight, Bethany Patten, Carie Bires, Cindy Wall, Colleen Bandy, Cornelia Grumman, Deborah Chalmers, Donna Emmons, Emily Ropars, Felichia Crawford, Gail Nelson, Iveree Brown, Jamilah R. Jor'dan, John Wenge, Kisha D. Davis, Lori Lansdale (Ounce), Marie Masterson, Pam Wicking, Pat Chamberlain, Tamara Sanders-Carter, Teri Talan, Theresa Hawley, Tom Layman, Toni Porter

### 1. **Welcome and introductions**

### 2. **Minutes of previous meeting**

Beth Knight's name was added to the list of participants. Bethany Patten moved to approve the minutes of the August 15 meeting. Beth Knight seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

### 3. **Discussion of questions to frame standards revisions**

- A. *Do we recommend separate, tiered funding based on staffing? What is the relationship between Circles of Quality and levels of funding?*

Subcommittee members pointed out that one purpose of QRIS systems is to allow for differentiated funding based on quality. Currently, child care rate add-ons serve that purpose, but they do not fully cover the increased costs for achieving the higher Circles. Also, they are not always used to support increased staffing costs, which the Subcommittee has identified as the primary cost obstacle. These costs include better staff-child ratios, higher levels of credentialing, and higher compensation for staff. A further problem with rate add-ons is that they are awarded after quality has been achieved and do not support programs as they work toward quality.

Subcommittee members also pointed out that while staffing is highly dependent on funding levels, professional practices are more dependent on program culture. Programs with a culture of improvement can engage in some level of professional practice even at lower funding levels. The Circles of Quality reflect levels or steps that programs can strive for.

At a previous meeting, the Subcommittee considered a "Hybrid Concept Graphic" with 2 bar charts – one for Circles of Quality and one for Levels of Staffing/Funding. Today, the co-chairs pointed out that we have not decided on the relationship of those two elements. After discussion, Bethany Patten suggested that we decouple staffing standards (and funding for staffing) from professional practice standards. Participants suggested that rate add-on "incentives" could remain for achieving the professional practice standards at each Circle, but in addition, programs would receive funding for defined levels of staffing related to each Circle. The group discussed how that might be presented to programs and families in a way that made sense, and whether it all needed to be done through ExceleRate or if there were other mechanisms for the funding portion. Participants noted that some states, including NC and TN) have tiered or "rated" licenses, in which better staffing levels are defined. Also, contracts might play a role, so that the child care funding would be based on line item budgets, as in Preschool for All and Head Start funding. This approach would allow

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the state to adopt the “2-4-6-8” program funding system that Chicago Public Schools used to bring its birth to three programs up to Prevention Initiative standards.

Discussion concluded with 2 decisions:

1. The Subcommittee recommends separate, tiered funding based on staffing.
2. We will collect and review options for how that tiered funding might be structured.

- B. *Do we recommend using external assessments primarily for formative purposes (giving programs information on where they can improve)? Should there be a threshold of quality on a global assessment of learning environment (e.g., ERS, CLASS) that must be achieved before having option of using other assessments for CQI (e.g., EE, ECWES, Inclusive Classroom)?*

The group discussed the potential value of an ERS global assessment for programs at the start of an improvement process. Program teams could review the results and choose areas for improvement. The program and assessors could track progress in those areas. Cornelia Grumman added that school districts use the 5 Essentials for this purpose and had to learn to work on one area of improvement at a time. Teri Talan pointed out that ExceleRate now allows programs some choice in which PAS subscales they want to measure and work on. However, when programs use only part of the instrument, it is impossible for ExceleRate to test our hypothesis that improvement work in one area actually tends to improve all areas. If we go back to using the whole instrument, but not for high-stakes purposes, programs would have more data for deciding on an improvement area and ExceleRate could test the hypothesis. In summary, baseline PAS assessments and baseline ERS assessments would provide a comprehensive picture of program quality and establish baseline data for improvement planning. Donna Emmons pointed out that aggregated assessment scores can reveal equity needs as well.

Cindy Berrey asked if we have an instrument to measure the quality of leadership? Would the PAS play a role, or another instrument? The Assessment workgroup had asked this question at the previous meeting and further investigation is needed.

The group discussed the importance of connecting TA supports to data and chosen improvement areas. Tamara Sanders-Carter reported that ISBE is working toward analysis of programs’ CQIP goals so it can enhance TA supports in the areas indicated. Emily Ropars reported that Early Choices is supporting PFA CQIP goals for inclusion through Zoom meetings. Toni Porter emphasized that in INCCRRA’s experience, programs need help in figuring out what to do to advance their CQIP goals. (Jenny Metcalf, who was not at the meeting, has subsequently suggested that the LearnERS program improvement protocols would align well with use of ERS for global assessments.)

Tom noted that this was a rich discussion that can guide system development, but we still need to decide whether final, summative global assessment scores will have a role in assigning Circles of Quality, or if other indicators are preferable in order to avoid high-stakes use of the instruments. The Standards and/or Assessment workgroup can continue this discussion.

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- C. How do we incorporate the 8 components of CQI that have been approved by ELC into the existing ExceleRate standard(s)?

The Subcommittee did not have time to discuss this question.

#### **4. Nest steps for co-chairs and workgroup facilitators**

The workgroups will continue to discuss these questions and report their thinking at the next Subcommittee meeting.

#### **5. Next meeting**

(The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, October 17 at the NLU Lisle campus, but it has been cancelled so workgroups can continue their discussions. The next full Subcommittee meeting will be held at the NLU Chicago campus, as scheduled, on November 21.)