



Child Development and Family Studies

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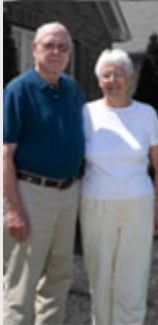
What's New in Indiana: Paths to QUALITY (PTQ) Child Care Rating System

Research shows that high quality early learning experiences prepare children for future success in school, work and life. Birth through age three is a most important time for growth and development of the human brain. A child's significant relationships with others and experiences with the environment form the foundation for future learning.

Nationally, at least 14 states have implemented statewide Quality Rating Systems to address the importance of early learning. Quality Rating Systems are a vital informational tool for parents of young children to use as they make decisions about what early care settings are best for their family. Quality Rating Systems also provide an accountability measure for funding and create an alignment between licensing, subsidy and quality across child care, Head Start and kindergarten learning foundations.

Indiana has chosen to implement a voluntary Quality Rating System that builds on a home-grown model. **All regulated child care providers will have the opportunity to volunteer to participate.**

The original model was implemented by Early Childhood Alliance in Allen County and is known as "Paths to QUALITY" (PTQ). The model and its replication in other areas of the state have shown success in assisting parents in locating quality child care and in improving the overall level of care in these areas.



Implementation Timeframe

A phased-in statewide implementation period began January 2008 and will continue through January of 2009. LaGrange, Steuben, Noble, DeKalb, Whitley and Allen counties in the northern part of the state, and Knox, Daviess, Martin, Gibson, Pike, Dubois, Posey, Vanderburgh, Warrick, Spencer, and Perry in the southern part of the state are the first groups of counties to roll-out this new rating system. Thereafter, other groups of counties will join the roll-out in May 2008, October 2008, and January 2009. (Refer to [Map of Rollout Schedule](#)). The system is being implemented in partnership with the [Indiana Association of Child Care Resource and Referral](#)

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(IACCRR), the [Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children \(IAEYC\)](#), and [The Consultants Consortium \(TCC\)](#).

Quality Child Care Standards



The standards for Paths to QUALITY (PTQ) are consistent but tailored for family child care homes and for licensed centers and unlicensed registered ministries. Paths to QUALITY is a system where each level builds on the foundation of the previous one, resulting in significant quality improvements at each stage and resulting in national accreditation at the

highest level. The system validates programs and providers for ongoing efforts to achieve higher standards of quality and provides incentives and awards for success. The four levels address:

- Level One: Health and safety needs of children met (state licensing required).
- Level Two: Environment supports children's learning.
- Level Three: Planned curriculum guides child development and school readiness.
- Level Four: National accreditation (the highest indicator of quality) is achieved.

Incentives for child care providers voluntarily participating in Paths to QUALITY include on-going mentoring relationships, non-cash Recognition Awards, and cash awards (\$300 to \$1,500 per site) for the higher levels ([Provider Benefits to Participating in Paths to QUALITY](#)).

For information about Quality Rating Systems in other states, visit the [National Child Care Information Center](#) Website. Review information about PTQ in the [latest newsletter](#) from the Child Care Bureau's Administrator, Michelle Thomas.

(Source: [Family and Social Services Administration CareFinder Indiana Website](#))

Getting to Know You: Dr. James Elicker Indiana PTQ Child Care Rating System Evaluation

In 2007, [James Elicker, PhD](#) received a grant from the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, Bureau of Child Care, to conduct the statewide evaluation for the **Paths to QUALITY (PTQ)** child care rating system currently being implemented in our state. In a recent interview with Dr. Elicker, he gave further insight into the importance of this initiative and the evaluation study to come:



Q: What is your role with the new quality rating system in Indiana—*Paths to QUALITY (PTQ)*?

A: Purdue has entered a new 4-year evaluation contract with the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration covering the time period from 6/1/07 to 9/30/11. The goal of the evaluation project is to determine if the **Paths to QUALITY (PTQ)** child care quality rating system program is *effective*. As such, I will be seeking to answer two basic questions related to the quality rating system in Indiana:

1. Is the system effective in improving child care quality across the different child care settings in Indiana (licensed family child care homes, licensed child care centers, and registered ministry settings)? Do the various levels within each child care setting really affect meaningful differences in quality?
2. The second question addresses whether or not children within the system are benefiting—Are children's development and learning being supported by the system? Are children in higher level child care settings doing better than children in lower levels?

Q: How does your evaluation project for PTQ differ from evaluations being done in other states with quality rating systems?

A: Most state quality rating systems (14 other states in the U.S.) are evaluating the quality assessment of the child care environment; however, to my knowledge no other state system evaluations to date have measured child development assessments of children within the rating system as well (infants to age 5). I believe our evaluation study will be the most comprehensive evaluation of a statewide system to date, and it has the potential of having impact not only on the child care system in Indiana, but also on quality rating systems nationwide.

Q: How will you conduct the evaluation?



A: The evaluation will begin nine months after each official roll-out. (Refer to [Map of Rollout Schedule](#)) For example, the first roll-out began January 2008 in the Ft. Wayne and Evansville areas of the state. In September 2008, we will begin our evaluation for those areas and will randomly select an equal number of child care providers from each region to participate in our study (from each child care setting type). Each evaluation study will be conducted for six months in each roll-out region. All data will be collected by 2010. Regional reports will be generated long the way based on roll-out dates. The final evaluation report for the entire state will be completed in 2011.

Q: Have you had previous experience with child care rating system evaluation?

A: Yes, the Paths to QUALITY rating system model was piloted in Indiana prior to its full adoption. We were contracted to evaluate and validate the proposed standards for both pilots. As a part of this project, we completed a comprehensive literature review on child care quality rating systems. We also conducted an evaluation study of one of the Indiana pilot sties.

For more detailed information about Dr. Elicker's evaluation, refer to the project report (with co-authors Carolyn Clawson Langill, Kren Ruprecht, and Kyong-Ah Kwon): *Paths to QUALITY: A Child Care Quality Rating System for Indiana: What is its Scientific Basis?*

You can request a printed copy of the report from [The Center for Families at Purdue University](#) or you can download [an electronic copy](#) of the report as well.

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