



RAND STUDY ON QUALISTAR EARLY LEARNING

Assessing Child Care Quality: How Well Does Colorado's Qualistar's Quality Rating Improvement System Work?

A study will be released on June 30, 2008 by the RAND Corporation, which explores the effectiveness of the Qualistar child care quality rating improvement system. Since its inception in 1999, Qualistar has been a leader in the child care industry, having been one of the first organizations in the country to implement a quality rating system.

As an organization defined by its commitment to evaluation and quality, Qualistar turned that accountability standard on itself by commissioning the RAND evaluation. This groundbreaking research, which is the first of its kind in the country, has shed light on the best ways to measure child care quality.

Findings of the RAND research:

Based on thirty years of research, the Qualistar Rating measurement components are widely accepted indicators of the quality of care and education being provided in a given classroom, center or family child care home. The RAND evaluation found validation for the following:

- The five components that Qualistar uses to measure quality correlate well with each other, which is strong evidence of the value of the system.
- The quality of care and education for child care providers participating in the Qualistar program improved over time, suggesting that providers respond when they are held to high standards.
- The report provided first-of-its-kind insight into how child care quality ought to be measured in Quality Rating Systems. As a result of these findings, Qualistar has already made improvements to its measurement techniques. Additionally, as a pioneer in the field, Qualistar's self-reflection will also add value to the field by informing the Quality Rating System evaluation processes used by other states.

Implications of the report:

In the last nine years, Qualistar has made amazing strides in raising awareness among providers and policymakers about the importance of child care quality and accountability, which has led to new partnerships and processes. That collaboration has become a national model, representing a paradigm shift around the idea that child care quality should be evaluated. Since Qualistar's inception, 35 states have added some form of accountability for child care providers into statutes. This has made a focus on quality the norm and has changed the way that the child care industry does business and the way that parents select programs for their children. This social movement cannot be undervalued, as it has informed child care providers and led to meaningful improvements across the industry.

The RAND report represents the first comprehensive study of the validity of quality rating systems as a tool for improving child care quality. It has already resulted in real improvements in measuring quality and will continue to foster additional change. Qualistar is committed to using the findings and recommendations in the report as an opportunity for improvement in order to be the best quality child care rating system available.