

Quality Improvement Services

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Issue

- High-quality early learning practices are linked to children's optimal development and well-being.
- Over half of all early care and education (ECE) programs provide only "mediocre" experiences for young children and alarmingly high numbers of programs provide "poor" services.
- The competencies of the ECE workforce are essential to quality programming.
- Most people enter the ECE field because of an intrinsic love of young children, yet they are often ill-prepared for the job of educating and nurturing children.
- In Florida, early childhood educators are not required to hold a high school diploma, and program licensing requirements address only minimum standards for child health and safety.
- The ECE workforce typically experiences low education levels, low compensation, and high turnover rates, all of which are linked to diminished child outcomes.

Response

- The Children's Forum is contracted by The Children's Trust to provide Quality Improvement Services to programs and early childhood educators participating in Quality Counts Miami-Dade County's Quality Improvement Rating System (QIRS), through classroom-based coaching and professional development supports (e.g., coaching, scholarships, and wage stipends).
- Quality Improvement Specialists (QIS) work with programs and early childhood educators to establish individualized professional development plans and classroom practices that enhance skills and program quality.

Accomplishments

- Nearly 4,000 early childhood educators and over 400 programs receive QIS services in Miami-Dade County.
- More than 90% of early childhood educators have shown professional growth, either achieving an ECE credential, high school diploma or college degree, or accepting a scholarship toward their professional goals.
- Use of scholarships and wage stipends is linked to higher rates of staff retention.
- Education, training, and English language proficiency increase early childhood educators' compensation.

Importance

- Coaching on classroom practices and professional development paired with financial resources helps build a qualified ECE workforce and high-quality early learning environments.
- The effects of high quality ECE programs benefit EVERYONE:
 - Administrators and early childhood educators receive clear guidance on strategies for program improvement and professional growth.
 - Children tend to have a positive trajectory of success well into adulthood.
 - Society benefits with monetary returns of as much as \$17.00 for every \$1.00 invested.

...because kids can't wait

