



**First Five Years Fund**

November 23, 2010

**Comment by the First Five Years Fund  
on the Draft for Public Comment (September 24, 2010)**

**Child Care and Development Fund Plan**

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**Draft for Public Comment Advances Important Framework and Questions for States as they Design and Implement Child Care Programs to Support All Areas of Child Development and Learning:**

The proposed CCDF State Plan draft represents an important and welcome contribution by the Office of Child Care at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The draft is noteworthy for its comprehensive approach, seeking to understand how states are approaching their work to plan for and implement a systematic approach to child care and development services that promote evidence-based practices for investment in child care assistance and quality improvement activities to support all areas of child development and promote school success. The document outlines key elements for states to consider as they do this work and provides a vital set of questions. As stated in *Pathways and Partnerships for Child Care Excellence*, the “child care quality section has been redesigned to focus on the components of a strong child care system: health and safety requirements, early learning guidelines, quality improvement systems for programs, and professional development and workforce initiatives. The new Preprint establishes a planning process for States and Territories that includes a self-assessment, goal-setting for quality in the coming biennium, and an annual progress report known as the Quality Performance Report. For the first time, the Quality Performance Report will collect data on child care quality activities and quality outcomes.” These changes are of critical importance to advancing an evidence-based framework, and we strongly endorse the inclusion of each area in which questions have been developed. The framework will provide states with a framework to engage in thoughtful planning and implementation and to interact with stakeholders. By asking questions that are related to an evidence-based approach and best practices, the states will be supported in basing their initiatives funded through the CCDF on best practices and evidence.

Specific comments, provided in chronological order and tracked to the sections in the draft plan for public comment, follow:

**Full Scope of CCDF Program:** To assure consistent understanding of the full scope of the CCDF program, pay greater attention to the questions asked regarding the scope of CCDF responsibilities in Section 1.3. Under Section 1.3.1, the attributes of the CCDF program are limited to the subsidy (assistance) program in Part 2. None of the other program features, e.g., core elements of quality as further described in Part 3 are included in 1.3; this omission should be corrected in order to advance the purpose of the plan to speak to the entire comprehensive breadth of the system and services funded through the CCDF. Section 1.3.2 starts to incorporate other elements beside child care assistance but would benefit from greater attention in this area and a more considered and intentional inclusion of selected high-level elements of the CCDF.

**Governance and Management:** To assure complete information on existing options for governance and management, enlarge Section 1.6.3 to include other types of models such as integrated management structures (e.g., current models in Maryland, Pennsylvania, etc.) and consider asking questions beyond coordination that move into a more unified and integrated approach to management and governance.

**LEP and ELL Providers, Children and Families:** To assure greater clarity, in Section 2.1.7, separate questions on LEP children and families from those concerning supports to LEP and ELL providers.

Assure that both sets of questions relate to all aspects of services and systems funded with CCDF resources and are not limited to assistance or subsidy, and that the questions incorporate practices with regard to licensing, program quality improvement, and professional development.

**Evidence-Based and Data-Based Approaches:** To assure greater clarity, consider additional information on the use of evidence-based and data-based approaches in the introduction to Section 3. This section poses important questions to the states about how they are approaching the design and implementation of the system and services to promote continuous quality improvement for programs and practitioners and how they support all areas of child development and promote school success. The use of four key interrelated components of quality is valuable. It would be helpful to stress the relationship of these four components of quality to evidence-based practices as the Office of Child Care seeks to promote data-driven, evidence-based development of policy and practice through the Child Care and Development Fund.

**Integration of Elements:** To assure greater clarity in Section 3, provide additional follow up questions and gather more information about the integrated nature of the elements that are specified in the introduction, along with their linkage to child care assistance. This integration is mentioned in the narrative; further attention can and should be paid to developing questions for the state plans that ask states to show how they are integrating and linking these elements. A sample chart is provided in the comments below to demonstrate one possible way to approach this.

**Balance for Elements of Licensing and Enforcement:** To assure a more balanced approach to the elements of licensing and its enforcement, consider amending 3.1.2 by including these other elements:

1. Are providers required to submit plans to correct violations cited during inspections?
2. Do licensing staff approve the plans of correction submitted by providers?
3. Do licensing staff verify correction of violations cited during inspections?
4. Do licensing staff provide technical assistance regarding how to comply with a regulation?
5. Does your state have procedures in place to issue a negative sanction to a noncompliant facility?
6. What types of negative sanctions does your state issue to licensed facilities:
  - a. Provisional or probationary license
  - b. License revocation or nonrenewal
  - c. Injunctions through court
  - d. Emergency or immediate closure not through court action
  - e. Fines for regulatory violations
7. How does your state respond to illegally operating child care facilities?
  - a. Cease and desist action
  - b. Injunction
  - c. Emergency or immediate closure not through court action
  - d. Fines
8. Does your state require providers to attend or participate in training relating to opening a child care facility prior to issuing a license?

To assure greater clarity concerning enforcement, clarify existing 3.1.2(a) to assure that the purpose of announced/unannounced visits within the policy and/or statutory and/or regulatory framework of the state is clear. Consider reducing the scope of the clearance questions in order to achieve a more balanced and comprehensive approach to the information about effective licensing, using the elements noted above.

**Early Learning Guidelines:** We commend the inclusion of information on the Early Learning Guidelines in the state plan. The guidelines, when fully and appropriately implemented, are the foundation for developing of a comprehensive approach to child development and children's school

success. Collecting information about the current status of the state's work is critical to the goals outlined by the Office of Child Care in this document. Greater attention could be paid in this section to supports to move the guidelines from theory to practice and implementation.

To assure a complete description is provided of the content of Early Learning Guidelines, add the domain of social studies.

To better understand how the early learning guidelines are used to inform and support families, modify 3.2.3 by separating the questions about which parents/families are informed about the early learning guidelines from the methods or manner by which parents/families are informed about the guidelines. Consider whether the list of parents/families as well as methods/manner apply only to services/systems receiving funding from the CCDF or whether the scope of this is meant to apply to all early childhood programs within the state that are involved with the Early Learning Guidelines.

Modify 3.2.4 to indicate the types of professional development used to support practitioners as well as administrators in knowing and using the Early Learning Guidelines, i.e. non-credit mandatory professional development; non-credit voluntary professional development; credit-bearing professional development; etc and the relationship of these professional development options to programs offered by the state such as a QRIS or state pre-k program or kindergarten, etc. and whether professionally is optionally or mandatorily integrated into these initiatives.

Modify 3.2.5 to include all parts of the early learning system that incorporate the Early Learning Guidelines, such as state pre-k, Early Intervention (Part B and Part C), state-funded Head Start and/or home visiting, and include how the Early Learning Guidelines are incorporated and implemented. It might be helpful to reverse the order of 3.2.5 and 3.2.4 so that the information in 3.2.4 is a follow up and answers questions about how the guidelines are incorporated into the initiatives identified in 3.2.5, including but not limited to mandatory or voluntary professional development in the context of each part of the child care and broader early learning system.

Modify 3.2.6 to ask whether an alignment study has been conducted and if so, the nature of the alignment study (i.e., by external third-party study; by internal process, etc.). This will help the Office of Child Care determine whether or how to address this work as it seeks to adjust its technical assistance, consistent with the work outlined in *Pathways and Partnerships for Child Care Excellence*.

Modify 3.2.7 to include examples of the type of performance measurement connected to Early Learning Guidelines in order to assist states in understanding best practices in this area and to encourage their use.

**Pathways for Excellence/Program Quality Improvement and QRIS:** We commend the inclusion of Section 3.3. This will help states indicate which critical elements support continuous quality improvement, designed to benefit children's development and learning, and how these elements are linked together.

Under definition in 3.1, modify element 3 from "financial incentives" to "financial supports" to provide a clearer definition.

Assure consistency and clarity between the sections on core elements for health and safety, Early Learning Guidelines, and program standards in 3.3.1 by having the states provide specific information about whether and how there is an overlap between the health and safety elements in

3.1; the elements in the Early Learning Guidelines in 3.2; and the program standards requested in 3.3.1(a). Add this to the information requested in 3.3.1.a.

Assure greater clarity in 3.3.1(a) by separating staff qualifications from professional development. For readability, alphabetize this list.

Assure greater clarity in 3.3.1(b) by defining what is meant by a child with special needs. Provide consistency in use of terminology for children who are dual language learners. Earlier, the draft refers to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) children. Within this section, require an explanation of how the program standards would specifically focus on the groups of children described in the question.

Consider rewording and repositioning the placement of 3.3.1(d) to allow the states to indicate whether they have tackled both vertical and horizontal alignment. For vertical alignment, for example, request information to show the alignments of the program standards to the early learning guidelines and to the K-12 core standards from early childhood into the elementary grades. As part of this rewording, also ask whether horizontal alignment has taken place to link, the ELGs with program standards, curriculum and developmentally appropriate assessment. Consider a different place for these questions as the alignment questions cover more than program quality standards and are getting at whether and how the state has aligned each of the critical elements for early learning guidelines, program standards, practitioner standards, and the supports used to move these concepts from theory into practice to support and amplify one another.

Assure consistency and coherence in 3.3.2(a) by substituting the list in 3.3.1.a for the left hand column (areas of support) found at 3.3.2(a). The areas of support for program quality improvement should match the program standards or “indicators” requested in 3.3.1(a). The purpose of the support strategies is to assist the programs in implementing the program standards, which is why it is important to use the key elements of the program standards as the indicators in the left column. Substitute the word professional development for “training.” Separate this into credit-bearing versus non-credit bearing in order to get more useful information and to help demonstrate the potential for integration. (*Pathways* and the introductory sections of the state plan document indicate such integration should occur to maximize the impact of the CCDF resources to best support child development.) Define on-site consultation. Add a column called “Other” for states to include other strategies for non-financial supports that you did not list.

Remove references to license-exempt providers in 3.3.3. In order to collect information about quality improvement goals and activities for regulation-exempt providers, create a new section to address what strategies are being used, i.e. required professional development as a condition of participation in the CCDF Assistance program; voluntary professional development; types of professional development; etc.

Provide for financial incentives in table under 3.3.3.a for resources that are awarded to programs to support and reward practitioners who achieve specified educational attainment. This is a best practice strategy and demonstrates integration across elements.

For the table at 3.3.4.a substitute the elements in the left hand column of the table at 3.3.1.a for the list of instruments provided in the left-hand column of the current table. The question appropriately asks about the monitoring and assessment of the program quality standards that the state has laid out. Logically, the information requested should relate to the specific standards that the state identified, and how the state elects to measure them. The proposed revision follows:

For each of the program quality standards (using the master list identified in 3.3.1.a) specify how you assess and monitor these standards and their implementation. Check all program standards that you use and then check the tools and methods you use to assess and monitor these standards. Include the name of any standardized instrument that is used and the frequency of its use in assessment/monitoring. Use the last column to indicate whether there is coordination or integration with any other early learning program in the state for the purpose of monitoring and assessment of the standard. If your state has other categories of program standards it uses, please list those in the first column and fill in the approach your state uses to assessing and monitoring implementation. If no assessment and monitoring is taking place, leave the row blank.

All Items from 3.3.1.a here	Customized Instrument and if so, indicate whether verification is self-report versus third party verified or a combination.	Standardized Program/Environmental Assessment (such as ERS, CLASS, PAS, etc.) Specify by name of the instrument used and whether the instrument is self-administered, done by a third party, or a combination.	Standardized Child Observation Screener or Outcome (such as Ages and Stages, Work Sampling, etc.) Specify by name of the observation tool.	Coordination with any other monitoring of an early learning program and if so, which ones, i.e. child care licensing; pre-kindergarten; etc. Answer yes or no, and describe.
Curriculum and Instruction				
Staff Qualifications				
Staff Professional Development				
Child Assessment for purpose of individualizing instruction and/or targeting program quality improvement				
Child Screening (developmental)				
Etc.				

Note: If this approach is used, section 3.3.4.c may no longer needed because information about child observation and assessment is collected in the chart above. However, if the approach above is not used, providing the states with thoughtful questions, grounded in evidence about the appropriate use of child assessment, is necessary as this is a fundamental link in an integrated approach to continuous quality improvement. Other important and evidence-based purposes for child assessment to promote continuous quality improvement would include feedback to parents/families and use of this information to inform technical assistance and professional development and should be included.

To assure clarity, under 3.3.5 separate outreach to parents, outreach to programs, and outreach to the general public. These items, while inter-related, often require different strategies, and it is important to be precise in the collection of the information.

Reconfigure 3.3.6 to assure the collection of more accurate and complete information to determine what elements a state is using to advance continuous quality improvement and whether the state is linking these elements. Consider the use of a table, as follows, which includes the early learning guidelines, the elements related to the program standards, and the six core elements from the PD section that starts at 3.4. All of these, together, help to create the focus on continuous quality improvement, and this table will provide you with an opportunity to understand how the state are approaching their work and integrating and linking these elements. The table below could be further modified by including the sub-components of each of the elements listed in the left-hand column below.

	Check whether you have this element in your state as it applies to your child care system	Indicate whether the element is linked to any other elements on this table and if so, how many of them and which ones	Indicate whether the element is linked in any way to Child Care Assistance and if so, how	Other Explanatory Information
Early Learning Guidelines, defined at 3.2				
Program quality standards, defined at 3.3.1				
Non-Monetary Supports to Achieve Program Quality Standards, defined at 3.3.2				
Financial Supports to Achieve Quality Standards, defined at 3.3.3				
Quality Assurance and Monitoring to Implement Quality Standards, defined at 3.3.4				
Outreach and Consumer Education To Promote Quality Standards, defined at 3.3.5				
Core Body of Skills and Knowledge, defined at 3.4.1				
Career Ladder, defined at 3.4.2				
Higher Education Capacity, defined at 3.4.3				
Training and Technical Assistance Capacity, defined at 3.4.4				
Access to Training and Education, defined at 3.4.5				
Compensation, Benefits 3.4.6				

**Data Systems:** Include additional questions on links to emerging and existing data systems. Require the states to provide information about CCDF investment in these data systems as well.

**For Additional Information:** Please contact Harriet Dichter, [hdichter@ffyf.org](mailto:hdichter@ffyf.org), or 202 569-0311, for additional information regarding these comments. We appreciate the opportunity to support this new edition of the CCDF State Plan.