

# Instrument 1: Center Administrator Interview Protocol

VIQI Project

## Background

Thank you for joining me today. This discussion is being conducted as part of the *Variations in Implementation of Quality Interventions* project, also called the VIQI project.

By talking with you today, we're hoping to learn more about [CENTER NAME]'S experiences, successes, and challenges this past year as you participated in the VIQI project, and how these experiences may have compared to prior years. I expect this conversation to take no more than 60 minutes.

Please know that your participation is voluntary. If you need to leave early or don't want to answer certain questions, that's fine – just let me know. We will not use your name or the name of your center or otherwise identify you when we report our findings. Your name or other identifying information will be protected and will not be shared outside the research team. The information you provide will help contribute to the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation's understanding of the successes and challenges early care and education centers experienced during the year they participated in the VIQI project to help inform how we think about the findings that come out from this study.

This study has a Certificate of Confidentiality from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services which says that we cannot be required to share any identifiable information, even under a court order or subpoena. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB # is 0970-0356 and the expiration date is 02/29/2024.

### **Do you agree to participate in this interview?**

We are also asking to audio record the interview. The audio recording is to help our team keep track of what you said; the audio recording will never be shared beyond our research team, the recordings will be deleted after transcription, and your name will not be attached to the transcription.

### **Do you give permission for me to audio record?**

Do you have any questions before we start? Please feel free to ask me questions at any time.

## Interview Protocol

***From this point on, the discussion guide is meant to be tailored to the center administrator being interviewed, depending on whether the administrator oversees a center in one of the intervention groups or the control group. Only administrators that oversee a center in one of the two intervention groups should receive Modules 5 and 6. The questions below are illustrative and include example probes. Interviewers may adjust probes as needed to follow-up with administrators, depending upon their responses and how long the interview is taking.***

## Warm-up

1. **First, I'd like to understand how you are doing. Tell me what it has been like to be an [ADMINISTRATOR/CENTER DIRECTOR/PROGRAM DIRECTOR] of an early care and education center this past year.**

## Module 1: COVID Adaptations

Next, I'd like to understand how the COVID pandemic may have affected your center's operations this past year – that is, the 2021-2022 school year.

1. **Tell me about how COVID affected your center's ability to keep your center and classrooms open this past year.**
2. **Tell me about the process your center used to determine whether the center or a classroom stayed open or closed.**

[Probes]: Who was involved in the decision-making? Was there guidance from program director, state policy, city policy, etc.?

- a. What was it like to follow this guidance? (example probes: was it straightforward, was it confusing?)
  - b. Did that guidance change during the past year?
3. **What did you do when the center/classroom(s) closed?**
    - a. What did that look like?  
  
[Probes]: How did you notify teachers and parents? How quickly were you able to notify them?
    - b. What instructional activities did you offer to children when the center or their classroom closed, if anything?
  4. **Tell me about the changes or adaptations to instruction you had to make this past year due to COVID (if any)?**

[Probes]: Smaller class sizes, limited interactions across classrooms, limited who children can interact with in classrooms, changed format of activities, new topics?

- a. How did you fund making these COVID adaptations?
  - b. Are there any adaptations you have made due to COVID that you would use in the future? If so, tell me about them. Why would you continue to use them?
5. **Do you have any guidance for other administrators regarding how to navigate COVID challenges?**

## Module 2: Staffing

Next, let's talk about your center's staffing this past year – that is, the 2021-2022 school year.

**6. Tell me how your center’s staffing was different this past year, compared to prior years.**

**7. About how many staff left this past year?**

- a. What were their roles?
- b. How often did staff leave?
- c. What reasons did staff members give for leaving?

[Probes]: Why do you think they left? Where did they go?

- d. What did you do to provide coverage when staff left?

[Probes]: Close classrooms, reduce enrollment, cover a classroom yourself?

**8. Tell me how you think the teachers experienced these changes in staffing.**

- a. How do you think staffing changes affects teachers’ ability to implement a curriculum or any kind of lesson plan?

**9. Tell me how you think the children experienced these changes in staffing.**

**10. Tell me what it was like to recruit staff this past year.**

- a. Did you have to make changes to recruitment? If so, tell me about them.

[Probes]: How you recruited, expectations for qualifications?

- i. If relevant, tell me about challenges you have encountered in hiring.

### Module 3: Staff Well-being

Next, I have a few questions about your staff’s well-being this past year (the 2021-2022 school year).

**11. Tell me about the psychological well-being of your staff this past year.**

[Probes]: Burnout, stress, anxiety, worries, sadness.

- a. How does this compare to prior years?

**12. Tell me about the physical well-being of your staff this past year.**

- a. How does this compare to prior years?

**13. In what ways, if any, do you think your staff’s well-being this past year affected their day-to-day work?**

[Probes]: Classroom management, interactions with children, ability to take on new tasks, participation in professional development.

**14. How has your center tried to support staff well-being this past year?**

## Module 4: Center Operations

Next, I have a few general questions about your center's operations this past year (the 2021-2022 school year).

**15. Tell me about your funding situation this past year.**

- a. How has this compared to prior years?

**16. Tell me about your enrollment this past year.**

- a. How did it compare to prior years?
  - i. [If different than previous years]: Tell me about why your enrollment was different this past year.
- b. In what ways – if at all – have families' demand for care and employment circumstances affected enrollment this past year?
- c. In what ways – if at all – did your enrollment this past year affect your center's operations?

**17. Tell me about children's attendance this past year.**

- a. How did it compare to prior years?
  - i. [If different than previous years]: Tell me about why attendance was different this past year.
- b. In what ways – if at all – have families' demand for care and employment circumstances affected attendance this past year?
- c. In what was – if at all – did attendance this past year affect your center's operations?

**18. Tell me about the supports you offered families and parents this past year.**

- a. How did it compare to prior years?
  - i. [If different than previous years]: Tell me about why the supports you offered families this past year were different than prior years.
- b. In what ways – if at all – has the COVID pandemic this past year affected the types of supports families need?
- c. In what ways – if at all – have the economic conditions and labor market this past year affected the types of supports families need?
- d. In what ways – if at all – have parents' changed needs and priorities affected the supports you offered families this past year?

**19. Besides what we've already discussed, tell me about any other ways this past year looked different than previous years.**

20. In what ways, if any, did this past year look the same as previous years?

## Module 5: VIQI Professional Development (For Administrators of Centers Assigned to an Intervention Group)

Next, I have a few questions about the VIQI project. The VIQI project provided teachers with different types of professional development supports, including curriculum training, coaching throughout the year, and curricular materials.

21. Which professional development supports was the most useful for teachers, and why?

[Probe]: That is, which professional development supports best helped teachers as they implemented the curriculum?

- a. Are there any specific aspects of the professional development supports from VIQI that you would like to continue to use?

22. If you were to participate in VIQI again, what would you change about the professional development offered to teachers?

23. What were the main barriers to teachers accessing the professional development?

## Module 6: VIQI Curriculum (For Administrators of Centers Assigned to an Intervention Group)

Now, I have a few questions about the curriculum the teachers implemented as part of the VIQI project - that is, [[Connect4learning](#)/[Creative Curriculum](#)].

24. Tell me about the level of engagement teachers needed to implement

[[Connect4learning](#)/[Creative Curriculum](#)].

[Probe]: That is, how much work or effort was required for teachers to do the curriculum? How much time did it take?

25. What were the main barriers to teachers being able to implement [[Connect4learning](#)/[Creative Curriculum](#)]?

26. What kept teachers engaged and implementing [[Connect4learning](#)/[Creative Curriculum](#)]?

[Probe]: That is, what motivated teachers to continue doing the curriculum?

27. Do you plan to continue using [[Connect4learning](#)/[Creative Curriculum](#)]?

- a. Why or why not?

## Module 7: Ending the Interview

We have just a couple of questions left.

**28. Thinking about the VIQI project at your center/program this past year, tell me about the level of involvement in implementing VIQI that was needed from you or other administrators at your center or program?**

[Probe]: That is, what level of effort was required from you or other administrators to implement and support the VIQI project throughout the year – for example, about how much time did you spend? In what ways were you or other administrators involved in implementing VIQI?

**29. Lastly, is there anything else you would like to tell me about operating an early care and education center this past year or your experience participating in the VIQI project that we haven't already discussed?**

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today!