

High 5 For Quality Initiative

Research has shown quality early care and education programs improve a child's readiness for school. Program quality is measured in two ways (1) the classroom environment and (2) the preparation of the teaching staff. First 5 El Dorado Commission has made significant investments in quality early care and education defining the standards for environmental and teacher quality through the Accreditation Project, the CARES Program, and the El Dorado County Early Education for All Plan. Building on over a decade of successful quality investments, First 5 El Dorado has implemented a quality rating system, "High 5 For Quality" based upon the Race To the top Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT-ELC) Matrix.

Infrastructure:

High 5 For Quality is intended to serve as a universal access point for all quality improvement activities in the county. El Dorado County has adopted the RTT-ELC QRIS Matrix as the definition of quality improvement activities. All local quality improvement dollars have been leveraged and mapped to the Matrix.

First 5 El Dorado Children and Families Commission is the grantee for RTT-ELC funding and contracts with El Dorado County Office of Education, Early Care and Education Planning Council (LPC) for program implementation. The LPC facilitates a subcommittee that serves as the Local Consortia.

Implementation of the local quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) is facilitated through local partnerships. Partners include:

- El Dorado County Early Care and Education Planning Council (LPC): Local program coordination including the implementation of the CARES Plus Program offering education, training advising and incentives.
- First 5 El Dorado Commission (F5EDC): Funder for Community Strengthening, School Readiness and High 5 for Quality Initiatives and providing coordination on state and regional levels.
- El Dorado County Office of Education, Child Development Programs: Training opportunities for Title V and federal child development programs.
- El Dorado County Office of Education, School Readiness Initiative (SRI): Transition support including articulation between kindergarten and early childhood teachers, professional development opportunities and universal kindergarten screening tool (Kindergarten Student Entry Profile, KSEP).
- El Dorado County Office of Education, High 5 for Quality (H5Q): Offers parent and provider support through training and technical assistance delivered by Early Childhood Specialists through a coaching model. Trained Inclusion Specialists are available upon referral to assure that children with special needs are fully included in public and private early care and education programs through a coaching model.
- El Dorado County Resource and Referral Agency, Choices For Children (CFC): Training opportunities and parent education.
- El Dorado County Library: Early Childhood Literacy Specialists provide specialized coaching and mentoring for early childhood teachers on the California Preschool Language and Literacy Foundations and Frameworks through site visits.



Funding:

El Dorado County *leverages quality early care and education funding* offering a quality improvement system (QIS) for licensed public and private providers through a single point of entry.

Quality Improvement Funding, El Dorado County, 2014-15			
Funding Type	Program Name	Lead Agency	FY 14-15
Administration for Children and Families	Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge	First 5 El Dorado Commission	\$340,769
CA Department of Education	Local Child Care Planning Council	EDCOE Child Development Programs	\$53,117
	AB 212	EDCOE Child Development Programs	\$42,000
	Child Care Initiative Project	Choices For Children, Child Care Resource and Referral	\$9,600
First 5 CA Commission	Child Signature Program – RFA #2	First 5 El Dorado Commission	\$135,344
	CARES Plus	EDCOE Early Care and Education Planning Council	\$50,000
First 5 El Dorado Commission	High 5 for Quality	EDCOE Early Care and Education Planning Council	\$285,000
	School Readiness - KSEP	EDCOE Superintendent's Office	\$2,000
Total Quality Improvement Funding			\$917,830

The El Dorado County Office of Education (EDCOE), Child Development Programs, fully participates in High 5 for Quality and offer access to all training and technical assistance opportunities.

EDCOE Child Development Programs Funding, El Dorado County, 2014-15			
Funding Type	Program Name	Lead Agency	FY 14-15
Administration for Children and Families	Head Start	EDCOE Child Development Programs	\$2,891,131
	Early Head Start	EDCOE Child Development Programs	\$1,495,522
CA Department of Education	State Preschool	EDCOE Child Development Programs	\$1,655,220
Total EDCOE Direct Service Funding			\$6,041,873



Program Overview:

All licensed and legally licensed exempt early care and education providers serving children ages 0-5 years of age in the county are eligible to apply for program services. Applications are accepted on a continuous basis with programs enrolled on a quarterly basis. Program enrollment consists of completing and application and self-assessment.

The objective of High 5 for Quality is to engage provider in ongoing quality improvement activities. Early Childhood Specialists will contact program participants to review self-assessment and develop a Site Improvement Plan (SIP). The SIP assesses where the provider might fall on the QRIS Matrix, prioritizes quality improvement activities for the year and provides guidance on implementation. Providers who complete SIP are eligible for funding ranging from \$250 to \$1,500 to implement activities.

- A provider whose self-assessment indicates their program qualifies at a Tier 1 or 2 will develop a plan for continuous quality improvement. They are reassessed annually.
- A provider whose self-assessment indicates they program qualifies at a Tier 3 or above are referred for validation. An assessor is scheduled to conduct the CLASS and ERS tools with scores recorded in the Matrix. Sites that score at a Tier 3 and above are eligible for an Achievement Award ranging from \$500 to \$1,500 per site. After validation, a SIP is developed and reviewed annually.

All sites are encouraged to enroll staff into the CARES Plus Program to access education, training and technical assistance opportunities. Providers enrolling in CARES Plus are eligible for incentives. Coaching, mentoring and technical assistance is provided by the Early Childhood Specialists on a monthly basis to support progress on the SIP. Program Administrators develop a training calendar based upon needs indicated in the SIP's.

Site administrators and their staff will be invited to participate in semi-annual Early Childhood Articulation networking sessions facilitated by the County Office of Education as part of their countywide school readiness planning. The primary goals of these meetings are to develop leadership, offer professional development opportunities and network with other early childhood providers and kindergarten teachers.

Evaluation:

First 5 El Dorado Commission's objective is by 2017, 85% of licensed early care and education providers caring for children 0-5 know how to provide high quality ECE services. The indicators are:

- # and % of ECE providers report using Screenings, Assessments and Site Improvement Plans to provide high quality early care and education services as measured by the Community Partner's Survey.
- # and % of parents report the early childhood education program where my child attends regularly shares information about quality (such as child and program assessments, curriculum, staff education and training) as measured by the Client Satisfaction Survey.
- # and % of licensed early care and education programs are tier 3 and above on the quality rating matrix as reported by program level data.

Implementation:

In 2012 when the RTT-ELC grant was written, El Dorado County had 59 licensed child care centers and 123 family child care homes. Ambitiously, the El Dorado RTT-ELC Action Plan has the goal of enrolling 89 sites by June 30, 2014 reaching 721 high needs children. Currently the program is on course with 44 programs rated and three new sites. A total of 1,290 high needs children are being served. An additional 42 sites will be targeted through the Library outreach strategy.

Strengths:

Strong collaboration and relationships facilitated through the LPC are key to program participation.

1. ***Local decision making is facilitated through the local child care planning council (LPC).*** The LPC utilizes CA quality improvement funding through the Department of Education to assess early care and education services in the county. Representation includes consumers, public and private early care and education providers, community agency representatives, public agency representatives and designees of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors and Office of Education.
2. ***The LPC has built trust with the early care and education community through a history of quality improvement initiatives:*** CARES, National Accreditation, Preschool for All, Environmental Rating Scale training, and other activities.
3. ***These long-term, community relationships have led to innovative strategies:***
 - One of our State Preschool and General Child Care contractors, Happy Kids Preschool and Child Care Inc., sub contracts her slots to other licensed providers in the county meeting Title 5 requirements, expanding access to services in rural communities. Those providers fully participate in High 5 for Quality.
 - All sites are encouraged to enroll staff into the CARES Plus Program to access education, training and technical assistance opportunities. Staff works with the CA Department of Education to align Matrix requirements with CARES Plus components to leverage provider incentives for quality improvement activities.
 - Identify Child Signature Program RFA#2 as Tier 5 and utilize funding for providers identified in this program for technical assistance, training and assessment.
 - A collaborative proposal was developed with the Child Care Resource and Referral, Choices For Children, to leverage Child Care Initiative Project funding to enhance access for family child care home providers.
 - High 5 for Quality is a countywide program promoting quality improvement activities for all licensed and legally licensed exempt providers. Having broad access to program services creates a balance among private and public providers.
 - Collaborating with the County Office of Education to facilitate school readiness screening, articulation, and substitute and credentialing services.
 - Beginning this year, Early Childhood Literacy Specialist with the El Dorado County Library will provide on-site coaching and mentoring to providers on the CA Preschool Foundations and Framework in the area of Language and Literacy. This Library outreach strategy is targeted to encourage participation among small family child care home providers.

Opportunities:

Through program implementation, High 5 for Quality staff have identified the following strengths and opportunities for future Early Care and Education Quality Improvement funding:

Key Elements	Strengths	Opportunities
Centralized program administration	Universal access point for all early care and education providers to participate in quality improvement activities.	Deliver quality improvement funding through a <i>block grant</i> would consolidate funding streams, reduce administration and eliminate consolidate fiscal and program reporting requirements.
Training	Variety of training opportunities from the CA Department of Education, Child Care and Development Funding (CCDF).	Trainings could be organized in <i>alignment with the CA Preschool Foundations and Frameworks</i> providing alignment between objectives, reducing training costs, and increasing access in rural communities.
Technical Assistance	Bringing technical assistance to ECE sites provides translation and application of the variety of quality improvement measures.	Incorporate technical assistance funding for mentors and coaches in all quality improvement funding streams.
Incentives	Incentives encourage and validate participation in quality improvement activities for a typically low wage occupation, especially in the private sector.	Systematic incentives such as tiered reimbursement provide ongoing revenue allowing providers to invest in their staff and programs.
Ratings	Using a symbol or number to represent high quality early care and education programs is very useful in communicating the value of care to parents, providers and the community.	Current state investments can be coordinated to ensure all counties have early care and education quality improvement systems (QIS); however, additional funding is required to support the rating (QRIS) process including incentives, assessments and validation.
Communications	Communicating the quality of early care and education providers will create a demand for services, encouraging consumers to seek and secure high quality care.	A statewide quality early care and education campaign would provide clear, succinct messages and offer consistency across the state.

