

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON ASSESSING THE IMPLEMENTATION AND COST OF HIGH QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION (ECE-ICHQ)

➤ **Q: WHAT IS ECE-ICHQ ABOUT?**

High quality early care and education should prepare all children with the social, emotional, and cognitive skills to enter school ready to learn, and help close the achievement gap for low-income, disadvantaged children. Programs with particular elements in place should have greater potential to provide high quality ECE. The premise of the ECE-ICHQ study is that centers vary in their investments in and capacities to implement key functions in ways that support quality.

The purpose of the ECE-ICHQ is to produce measures of implementation and costs that can be used with existing observational measures of quality to find out what activities and investments can make a difference for children’s early childhood experiences and outcomes.

➤ **Q: WHO IS CONDUCTING THE PROJECT?**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, sponsors the study. The study is being conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, a respected, independent policy research organization whose studies of education initiatives and other programs have been used to inform national policymakers for more than 40 years.

➤ **Q: HOW WERE CENTERS CHOSEN?**

The ECE-ICHQ team is visiting centers in three states across the country. Centers are being chosen within states to reflect a range of characteristics, such as whether or not they serve infants and toddlers, and whether they are based in elementary schools. In this first phase of the study, the study team will conduct on-site visits with 24 centers; each visit will last approximately 1 day. We recognize that the first priority of each center is the care of children; our team will be flexible in conducting study activities around staff schedules and the needs of the children. As a token of our appreciation, participating centers will receive a \$350 gift card.

➤ **Q: WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN THIS SPECIFIC LOCATION WHEN OUR SITE IS PART OF A LARGER ORGANIZATION OR PROGRAM?**

Individual physical locations or sites provide the best way to build measures for use across a variety of contexts. An individual, physical location is the basic “unit” that is common across all early care and education providers and programs. Measuring the capacities and resources that exist for any one location supports comparisons of what varies and what can make a difference for children.

➤ **Q: WHAT IS BEING ASKED OF CENTER DIRECTORS?**

After a brief call to explain the study and answer any questions, we will schedule an initial 60-minute call, during which directors will be asked about their center's characteristics and staffing structure and we will discuss the logistics of the site visit. In addition, center directors will be asked to participate in interviews conducted in-person and over the phone to help us understand the center's activities and services.

➤ **Q: WHAT IS BEING ASKED OF STAFF WHO MANAGE FINANCES?**

Staff who are familiar with a center's finances will be asked to work with a study team member to help us collect information about the center's expenditures during a recently completed fiscal year, such as those on salaries and benefits; nonlabor costs (for example, costs for facilities or materials); and indirect (or overhead) costs. Before the site visit, the study team member will schedule a phone call with the appropriate staff member to describe the cost information we plan to collect and how the process could work best for your center. During the site visit, the team member will work with the finance manager, or use information the finance manager provides, to complete a cost workbook.

➤ **Q: DO I HAVE TO PARTICIPATE?**

Taking part in ECE-ICHQ is your choice. We hope you will support this important work that will benefit you and many centers in the future by helping to identify investments that support quality care for young children. However, if you decide not to participate, there is no penalty. If you do participate, you may also decline to answer any questions we may ask.

➤ **Q: WHY SHOULD I PARTICIPATE?**

Policy makers and state administrators need information about the costs of quality early care and education in order to make decisions about funding priorities. Understanding variations in what centers do to support quality, and what that costs, can inform funding decisions so that resources are better aligned with expectations for quality. Your participation will help ensure that the tools we develop capture the information needed to describe the costs associated with implementing quality care, and that these tools are applicable to providers like you.

➤ **Q: WILL THE INFORMATION BE KEPT PRIVATE?**

The research team follows strict rules to protect privacy. All study staff are trained to protect privacy. No reports will describe any person or center in a way that would allow identification.

➤ **Q: IS THERE A NUMBER TO CALL FOR FURTHER QUESTIONS?**

If you have additional questions about ECE-ICHQ, you may contact Gretchen Kirby, Project Director at 202-484-3470 or Cassandra Meagher, Survey Director at 202-250-3599 or by email at eceichq@mathematica-mpr.com.