

BrightStars Think Tank Recommendations

April 2018

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I. Purpose of Think Tank

The 2018 BrightStars Think Tank was convened in order to develop recommendations to the Department of Human Services (DHS) on ways to strengthen Rhode Island’s Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) so that it is more effective in supporting the continuous quality improvement of child care programs. Over the course of four meetings, the Think Tank looked at other QRIS models used by other states, used the 2016 BrightStars validation study and national expertise to inform recommendations, and reviewed specific barriers and challenges to programs advancing along the pathway to high quality.

The four meetings were held on January 19, February 16, March 23, and April 13 and invited more than 40 participants representing a diverse set of stakeholders, including child care providers, public school districts, Head Start programs, early childhood intermediary organizations, state agencies, legislators, and advocates.

This document presents the recommendation from the Think Tank to DHS.

The following principles and frameworks guided the Think Tank’s work. The group collectively modified an original version of BrightStars principles in order to ensure group alignment on these principles.

1. BrightStars is a resource for all Rhode Island families and for all Rhode Island early learning and child care programs
2. BrightStars incorporates research-based evidence and national best practices that are linked to improved outcomes for children in its design and implementation
3. BrightStars uses a common definition of quality across all setting—centers, public schools, family child care homes, and school-age—with measurement and supports appropriate to the setting
4. BrightStars values streamlined and simplified paperwork for its standards
5. BrightStars uses valid and reliable measurement tools for programs, in a manner that supports continued quality improvement
6. BrightStars supports the professionalization of the existing workforce including, but not limited to, promoting college coursework, degrees, and ongoing professional development opportunities in the languages spoken by the workforce
7. BrightStars recognizes the importance of health and safety standards in licensing and builds on that foundation to support programs on the path to quality improvement

II. Recommendations

Over the course of four meetings, the BrightStars Think Tank produced recommendations on standards, rating model, and an approach to implementation. The attendees were able to reach consensus for the following recommendations. Other changes that were considered but ultimately did not reach consensus can be found in the appendix.

A. Recommendations for Standards:

Across Multiple Domains: Program Observation Measures

DHS reviews the current program observation tools in use (ERS and CLASS Pre-K) across all programs, collaboratively with BrightStars and RIDE staff, in order to determine the versions and cut scores that will be used and align the tools across the two agencies and their programs to allow shared, coordinated use of scores. Final recommendations are reviewed and approved by the Children’s Cabinet.

Domain One: Learning Environment

Standards Implementation

1. Licensing: Licensing compliance is essential. Work with DCYF to continue to assure consistent licensing measurement and enforcement as part of the foundation for BrightStars.
2. ERS: Assure sufficient capacity to meet the demand by teachers and program administrators for ERS training.

3. ERS: Work in close cooperation directly with FCC providers to reshape the ERS training so that is more meaningful to the FCC community.
4. ERS: Expand on-site coaching and mentoring on the ERS to providers at BrightStars Levels 1 and 2 to reduce anxiety and build confidence. Providers should not wait until they have met teacher qualifications at Level 3 to start working on improving program practices. Improve communications and other strategies to ensure that providers are aware of these supports.
5. ERS: Make an observation by BrightStars reliable raters an option at BrightStars Level 2 to support quality improvement.

Domain Two: Enrollment and Staffing

Standards Changes

1. Change the Kindergarten group size and ratio to match licensing (for School Age framework only)

Standards Implementation

1. Improve the licensing regulations so that they are clearer around capacity and staffing for family child care.

Domain Three: Staff Qualifications and PD

Standards Changes

1. Reconsider the progression of staff qualifications to make Level 3 more attainable by allowing a stand-alone CDA or 3 college credits. (*Does not impact the 75% of staff requirement.*)
2. Consider including continuing education in lieu of course credit; specifics to be further developed.
3. Reduce college credits at Level 5 from 24 to 18 college credits.
4. In FCC, consider qualifications of either the provider or designated full-time assistant(s) when determining whether staff qualifications have been met.
5. Look deeper into a workforce strategy to allow some more flexibility in teacher credentials at Level 4 or above. For example, if a teacher is enrolled in classes and provides evidence that she/he is going to receive a credential within a set amount of time (example: 3-6 months), the program would get credit towards a higher rating and any associated monetary support (tiered rates) for attaining this rating.

Standards Implementation

1. RIELDS: Revise the entire RIELDS system, including but not limited to a focus on revision of training, reduction of total training hours, use of a competency based approach, access to online or other strategies to improve accessibility, improved connections to program practice, and consideration of reciprocity with other states.
 - a. This work needs to be thorough and comprehensive, and thus should be done over an appropriate timeframe.
2. ECE/Related Fields: Better distribution of the guidance about what is a related field and the processes for reviewing.

3. Determine which fields could be accepted in full as related, rather than make course-by-course determinations in all fields (for example: ALL Psychology courses instead of selected ones).
4. Improve communication and coordination with CCRI and other institutions of higher education.

Domain Four: Administration (CQI)

Standards Change

1. For school age, also allow the use of the SACERS for the self-assessment. Provide an option of using either the RIPQA or the SACERS.

Standards Implementation

1. Improve and expand supports, including mentors, to assist programs with self-assessment and plan development so that programs can maximize continuous quality improvement.

Domain Five: Early Learning and Development

Standards Change

1. At Level 5, clarify the requirement so that certified “valid and reliable” child assessment tools can be used, but other child assessment tools also can be used, as defined by BrightStars.
2. Change the progression so that Level 4 developmental screening and collaboration matches Level 5.
3. Inclusive Classroom Practices: explore whether there is a way to have measurable practices; money and supports are a concern for child care programs to serve children with disabilities and developmental challenges.

B. Recommendations on Rating Model

The Think Tank recommends exploring a hybrid rating model to replace the current building blocks rating model.

C. Recommendations for Implementation

The Think Tank recommends a phased in approach for implementation. Phase One would be to implement the standards recommendations contained in this report within the existing block rating model. Phase Two would be exploring a Hybrid model after seeing the impact of the implemented revisions.

The Think Tank also recommends convening a BrightStars advisory group that continues to meet several times per year, composed of a similar group as the Think Tank.

Appendix

A. Think Tank Participants

- Beautiful Beginnings Child Care Center
 - Khadija Lewis Khan
- Center for Early Learning Professionals
 - Sue Washburn
- Doctor Day Care
 - Amy Vogel
- Family Child Care Homes of Rhode Island
 - Donna Chartier
- KIDS COUNT Rhode Island
 - Leanne Barrett
 - Elizabeth Burke Bryant
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation
 - Cindy Larson
- Providence Public School District
 - Kim O'Connell
- Providence Talks
 - Caitlin Molina
- Ready to Learn Providence
 - Leslie Gell
- Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children & BrightStars
 - Lisa Hildebrand
- Rhode Island Childcare Directors Association
 - Patty Carbone
- Rhode Island Business Owners in Child Care Assoc.
 - MaryAnn Shallcross Smith
- Rhode Island Head Start Association
 - Mary Varr
- SEIU 1199 NE Family Child Care Union
 - Chas Walker
 - Maria Fajardo
- YMCA of Greater Providence
 - Kate Messier
- Department of Children Youth and Families
 - Veronica Davis
 - John Neubauer
- Department of Human Services
 - Alisha Pina
 - Karen Beese
 - Blair Lynch
 - Christina Clement
 - Maria Cimini
 - Yvette Mendez
 - Annette Durasno
- Executive Office of Health and Human Services

- Rose Jones
- Michael Cronan
- Ashley O'Shea
- Governor's Office
 - Jaclyn Porfilio
 - Cara Harrison
- Rhode Island Department of Education
 - Lisa Nugent
 - Ruth Gallucci
- Rhode Island Legislature
 - Deb Ruggiero, State Representative
 - Grace Diaz, State Representative
 - Kendra Cervone, House Policy Office
 - Molly McCloskey, Senate Policy Office
 - Marea Tumber, Senate Policy Office
 - Elizabeth Crowley, Senator

B. Meeting Agendas

Public Agendas:

Meeting #1: January 19, 2018 8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Time	Topic	Presenter
8:30 a.m.	Coffee	
9:00 a.m.	Welcome and Purpose of 2018 Think Tank	Courtney Hawkins, Director DHS Karen Beese, DHS Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
9:30 a.m.	Introductions	Harriet Dichter, ICF (Facilitator)
10:00 a.m.	Review of Agenda	Harriet Dichter
10:10 a.m.	BrightStars overview	Lisa Hildebrand, RIAEYC
10:30 a.m.	BrightStars evaluation overview	Kelly Maxwell, Child Trends
10:45 a.m.	Break	
11:00 a.m.	Identifying key issues	Harriet Dichter
11:30 p.m.	Working Lunch (continuing previous discussion)	
12:45 p.m.	Prioritizing Issues	Harriet Dichter
1:25 p.m.	Closing Remarks and Adjourn	Karen Beese

Meeting #2: February 16, 2018 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Time	Topic	Presenter
8:30 a.m.	Coffee available	
9:00 a.m.	Welcome & Opening Remarks Introductions	DHS Welcome & opening Remarks Introductions--Harriet Dichter (Facilitator)
9:10 a.m.	Review Agenda for today's meeting Review Notes from Last Meeting Review BrightStars Handout	Harriet Dichter Cara Harrison – Governor's Office Lisa Hildebrand – RIAEYC
9:25 a.m.	Guiding Principles and Frameworks for the Think Tank's Work	Harriet Dichter
9:40 a.m.	BrightStars Evaluation and Program Quality Research	Kelly Maxwell/Harriet Dichter
9:50 a.m.	Our Path Forward and Today's Focus	Karen Beese – DHS Jaclyn Porfilio – Governor's Office
10:10 a.m.	Learning from Other States	Debi Mathias and Harriet Dichter
10:30 a.m.	Break	
10:40 a.m.	Group Work Time	Harriet Dichter
11:45 a.m.	Break	
12:00 p.m.	Group Share Out	Harriet Dichter
12:20 p.m.	Closing Remarks	Karen Beese

Meeting #3: March 23, 2018 9:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Time	Topic	Presenter
8:30 a.m.	Coffee available	
9:00 a.m.	Welcome & Opening Remarks Introductions & Ice breaker Review Agenda for Today's Meeting	DHS Harriet Dichter (Facilitator)
9:25 a.m.	Draft Recommendations for Standards Changes and Standards Implementation Work	Harriet Dichter

	<i>Whole group discussion</i>	
11:00 a.m.	Break <i>Lunch available</i>	
11:15 a.m.	Rating Model Discussion	Leanne Barrett (Rhode Island KIDS COUNT) Harriet Dichter
1:15 p.m.	Closing Remarks and Next Steps	Karen Beese (DHS)

Meeting #4: April 13, 2018 9:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Time	Topic
8:30am	Coffee available
9:00am	Welcome & Opening Remarks
9:25am	Rating Discussion Opportunities
11:00am	Break
11:15am	Options Review
11:45am	Lunch
12:00pm	Consensus Taking
12:30pm	Task Force Next Steps
1:15pm	Closing Remarks Thank You and Celebration

C. Recommendations WITHOUT CONSENSUS from Think Tank:

The majority of the Think Tank recommended AGAINST the following:

Domain Two: Enrollment and Staffing

Standards Changes

1. Consider moving this entire domain from Enrollment and Staffing into Learning Environment.

Domain Three: Staff Qualifications and PD

Standards Changes

1. Consider including continuing education in addition to course credit.

The majority of the Think Tank did not recommend for or against the following:

Domain Six: Family Engagement

Standards Change

1. Simplify family engagement to ensure that this standard is simpler, has greater flexibility and does more than “check the box.” The proposal is below:

- Level 2: One method
 - Level 3: Two methods
 - Level 4: Two methods PLUS conferences
 - Level 5: Three methods PLUS conferences
(For school-age only, conferences not required)
2. These should all be in addition. Methods that are in the licensing regulations should not be included in this; duplication should not be allowed

D. Acknowledgements

We thank the Think Tank participants for their ongoing engagement and contribution to this work. Additionally, we thank the Alliance for Early Success and the Rhode Island Foundation for supporting this process, and we thank Rhode Island KIDS COUNT for their work to engage these funders in support of the Think Tank.

We thank Courtney Hawkins for her partnership in supporting the Think Tank. We thank Cara Harrison, M.Ed. Education Policy Fellow, Office of Governor Gina M. Raimondo, for her support in preparing agendas and notes for each meeting. We thank the planning committee, consisting of Leanne Barrett, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT; Lisa Hildebrand, RIAEYC & BrightStars; Jaclyn Porfilio, Office of Governor Raimondo; Karen Beese, Rhode Island Department of Human Services, and Harriet Dichter, Consultant.