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Child Care Quality Improving in Contra Costa County

County's new rating and improvement system leads to better child care

(Concord, CA) Results from a new rating system show that child care quality is improving in Contra Costa County, with nearly all re-rated programs meeting or exceeding quality standards.

The *Quality Matters* rating system launched in 2012 when Contra Costa was one of 15 California counties to receive federal funding to pilot a child care quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). QRIS systems are used throughout the country to provide a consistent way to measure, improve, and communicate levels of child care quality.

Currently, 95 child care programs serving 3,500 children voluntarily participate in Contra Costa's system, with most located in low-income communities. Sites are rated every two years and receive intensive coaching, training, financial incentives and support to maintain or improve ratings.

Results from the first batch of re-rated programs show this support is working. Of the 55 programs re-rated, nearly half (26) increased their quality rating, 27 maintained their rating, and two decreased. Only one site did not meet quality standards. The programs were first rated in 2014.

"Quality Matters is improving the quality of child care in our county, especially for low-income children – kids who benefit most, but are the least likely to receive it," said Sean Casey, Executive Director of First 5 Contra Costa. "Our rating system helps providers focus on which elements of quality to improve and makes it easier for parents to identify quality programs."

Quality Matters programs are rated on a scale of one to five on elements including providing positive, engaging teacher-child interactions, providing a safe, healthy and stimulating environment, teacher training and education, use of recommended assessments to check children's skills and development, and ratio and class size. A rating of "3" or above means programs have met or exceeded quality benchmarks.

For Benu Chhabra, a Concord family child care owner who's been providing child care for twenty years, having access to an improvement system made all the difference. In 2014, she earned a "2", a score indicating she was approaching quality standards but not yet meeting them. At the time, she had high scores for teacher-child interactions, but was not using recommended tools to track children's development and learning.

Chhabra worked with a coach, took classes, and received training on tools to assess children's developmental progress. Two years later, her rating jumped to a "5", the highest score available and a score only 6% of California's 3,200 rated programs have achieved.

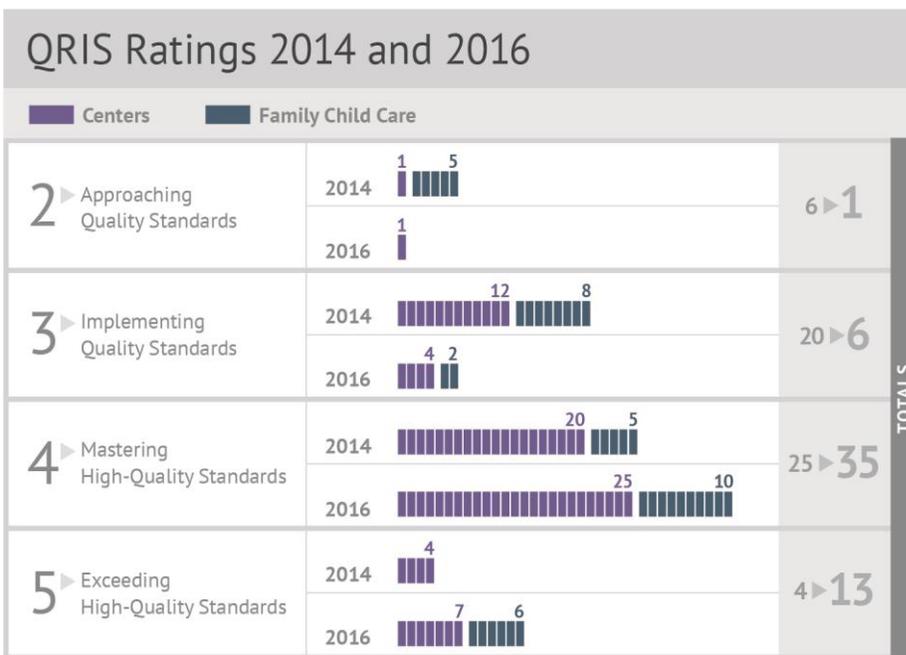
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“After attending each workshop and working with my coach, I felt more confident,” said Chhabra. “And with the assessment tools, I’m now better able to understand each child, offer activities to help them progress to the next level, and communicate better with their parents.”

First 5 Contra Costa developed *Quality Matters* with the Contra Costa Child Care Council, Contra Costa County Office of Education Local Planning and Advisory Council for Early Care and Education, and Contra Costa, Diablo Valley, and Los Medanos Community Colleges.

Find quality ratings for child care sites in Contra Costa County: www.qualitychildcarematters.org.

Contra Costa’s Re-Rated Programs 2014-2016:



Signs of Quality Child Care:

- **Teacher-Child Interactions:** Providers that interact positively with the kids in their care.
- **Ratio and Group Size:** Small group sizes and a small number of kids to every adult.
- **Learning Activities:** A mix of creative, fun and educational activities that are right for a child’s age and help them learn new skills.
- **Staff:** Warm and knowledgeable staff who have a lot of training and rarely quit. Providers have taken classes or earned degrees in Early Childhood Education.
- **Environment:** A rich learning environment with varied materials, activities and routines. Areas are healthy, clean and safe.
- **Child Health & Development:** Providers make sure children receive health screenings and that children are developing on track and learning new skills.

About First 5 Contra Costa: First 5 Contra Costa helps young children start school healthy and ready to learn by investing Proposition 10 tobacco tax funds in programs focused on children during their first five years, the most important time in children’s development. First 5 is leading the effort to create a countywide quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) for Contra Costa child care programs. Learn more: www.first5coco.org.