



## **Engaging Licensed Family Child Care in Parent Aware: Lessons from the Field May 2014**

### **Background**

Minnesota's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant plan seeks to improve school readiness of Minnesota's children by improving the quality of early care and education programs and connecting children with high needs with those high quality programs. The Parent Aware Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System is Minnesota's framework for improving program quality. By the end of the grant period (December 2015), Minnesota's goal is to engage 27% of Licensed Family Child Care (LFCC) programs in Parent Aware rating. There are over 6,000 non-accredited LFCC programs eligible for Rating, and as of 12/31/13, only 233 were rated. Recruiting LFCC to participate in a voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is a challenge faced by states across the country. Other states' experience indicates that once a critical mass of any type of program participates in ratings, the QRIS becomes much more self-sustaining and built into the fabric of the State's quality early learning system. Therefore, recruiting LFCC programs into Parent Aware Rating is a critical goal between now and the end of 2015.

### **Who's Working on Recruiting LFCC into Parent Aware?**

LearnTogetherMN reached out to organizations around the state currently working on recruiting LFCC into Parent Aware outside the existing publicly funded Parent Aware infrastructure. The organizations were identified through conversations with foundations, the Governor's Early Learning Council, the Minnesota Department of Human Services and other LearnTogetherMN partners. Emails were sent to each of those organizations, asking them if they would be willing to share information about their work in this area and participate in a learning group to share what's working and what's not. Some forwarded information on other related efforts, which LTMN then contacted. Twelve efforts are summarized in Attachment I, some involving multiple funders and partners and communities. Participants gathered on May 21 to share learning, and agreed to meet again in the last quarter of 2014.

In addition, information was gathered from the Delaware Stars QRIS staff, since they've made great progress in recruiting LFCC into Rating over the past twelve months. The results of that interview are summarized in Attachment II.

Organizations and individuals contacted through this project are listed in Appendix III.

## What Are We Learning?

### ***Approaching and Engaging LFCC: Messengers***

- It takes time – build relationships and trust first. This is a “one starfish at a time endeavor” and we need to allow time to engage and motivate providers.
- Reach providers through organizations or individuals they already know/trust, who already value the work that LFCC providers do for kids and families.
- It depends on the provider, but good messengers may include school districts, formal and informal provider associations/networks, CACFP food program staff, Minnesota Reading Corps, Resource & Referral agencies, and others.
- Consider using the licensing process – catch new LFCC providers when they get initial orientation or training, and keep connected with them to recruit them into Parent Aware before they hear negative messages.
- Host public forums on child care in the community – invite both parents and providers and local businesses.
- Great success using the Minnesota Teacher of the Year as a spokesperson, since she is an early educator.
- Use participating providers as champions/ambassadors and pay them for that work, and also use them as spokespeople for quality and related systems change. Be sure to provide them with preparation and support to help them be successful.
- Willmar public schools sent out a “Growmobile” mobile classroom to reach FFN and LFCC, giving mini preschool lessons to engage children and their providers.
- Use social media.
- Big lesson learned – it helps a lot to have a person/people whose primary job is to work with LFCC programs, just on the recruiting side (and have others do quality coaching).
- No matter who does outreach, it MUST be coordinated, so the LFCC provider doesn't get stuck worrying about who is doing what in the rating process.

### ***Approaching and Engaging LFCC: Messages***

- Frame initial events as “Child Care Appreciation” events, and focus them in that way, celebrating the work that LFCC providers are doing and help them see that the larger community cares and is interested in their work.
- Change language from “provider” to “educator” and “entrepreneur.”
- Talk about quality broadly, not a hard sell about Parent Aware.
- Help providers see the “value-add” for them, including that Parent Aware can help them access additional families, and that Parent Aware can help them improve the quality of early care and education for all the children they serve.
- Let providers direct the path of their engagement – focus resources where it makes sense to them, as long as the resources align with or lead to Parent Aware. Ask them what they want to do to help the kids they serve.
- Don't start with the hard sell of Parent Aware – take time in orientations to find out what the providers want and value – and help them see their work in larger

context (brain development, child development, economic development, business owners).

- Put “congratulations” messages in local papers to celebrate providers that get rated.
- Send postcards to every provider in the community, telling each of them how much training they’ve already completed that counts toward Parent Aware.

### ***Incentives to Build Quality***

- Free training or low-cost training. Different opinions on which is better –some projects find better attendance with small fee, some find even small cost is prohibitive.
- Package free training in a larger context – for example, pay for all the training required to earn the Minnesota Child Care Credential.
- Delivering training in community settings is effective, and also delivering training to mixed groups of providers (school-based staff, Head Start staff, LFCC, etc.).
- Quality improvement grants linked to Parent Aware standards. Some projects found focused grants (such as those only for curriculum, assessment and/or related training) are most effective.
- Public policy creates incentives, such as tiered reimbursement that provides higher rates for rated programs and Early Learning Scholarships that require Parent Aware rating.
- Have drawings where providers get entered when they sign participation agreement and can win iPads to help them with child assessments, gift cards for Lakeshore Learning or other educational material providers.
- In-home coaching is seen as a great motivator once programs get started.
- Connect providers with a cohort of other LFCC from their community in the same cohort (including language-specific cohorts).
- Help providers get set up in the professional development Registry and provide “reward” like a gift card once they get registered.
- Northwest Minnesota Foundation had a large business in their community offer significant monthly “bonus payments” to child care providers who would serve the children of their employees, because the employer calculated how much staff turnover was costing them, and understood stable childcare is key to stable employment.

### ***Systemic Barriers/Supports***

- January cohort is harder to fill than July cohort – consider rolling entry rather than cohorts. Hard for providers to commit to something big in December, given holidays, breaks, etc.
- Saturday events work OK during the school year, but weeknights are better in the summer.
- At local level, consider partnering with Public Health agency to use SHIP funding, especially around helping providers meet the nutrition and obesity prevention indicators in Parent Aware.
- Building Quality is only available to programs serving CCAP children, but some programs would be willing to serve CCAP children if they could get rated.

- Need more, better & more relevant curriculum and assessment trainings, and more approved trainers (especially in Greater Minnesota). Those providing training need to get approved and in the Registry, so providers don't get frustrated by taking training that doesn't count toward Parent Aware.
- Consider more use of online training that meets PA requirements. (Not clear that LFCC are helped too much by this – high speed internet is barrier in Greater MN, some just prefer face-to-face).
- Make clear that much of the licensing-related training does count toward Parent Aware.
- In the Metro area, it's harder to leverage local connections/connectors – keep it as local as possible.
- It is hard for providers to assess where they are in the Parent Aware training/education lattice before they sign up. Thus, helping them get into the Registry is seen as a big benefit.
- Make sure the private funding community understands the big picture of how much impact their support is having on early learning in Minnesota.
- We need to be thinking about how to continue supporting Four Star providers, keeping them engaged and making sure they renew ratings, since most of the incentives are for lower-rated programs.

### ***Evaluation***

- It may be useful to have some shared evaluation questions across the various efforts.
- Northland Foundation is working with Wilder Research on developing and testing a pre-post assessment for participating providers (centers and LFCC) to use to self-assess their quality, as a way to help Northland and other funders see the impact of their investments. They will share that once it is further tested in their project.

Attachment I: Survey Results

Project Name/ Location/Contact	Funder/ Budget	Project Period	Project Goals	Implementing Organization(s) & Strategies
<p>Child Care Aware System Parent Aware Recruitment Initiative/Statewide</p> <p>Contact: Deb Swenson- Klatt, DHS</p>	<p>DHS (FY14 -- \$197,000; FY15 -- \$403,000) – this is public funding only</p>	<p>January, 2014 – June, 2015</p>	<p>Adds staffing for comprehensive recruitment of non-accredited child care programs to local Child Care Aware agency services, using community organizing principles to reach providers in “hard to reach” communities.</p>	<p>DHS working through local Child Care Aware agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a systemic results-oriented, big-picture recruitment plan and campaign statewide</li> <li>• Target counties/regions with lowest levels of participating programs compared to targets as well as specific cultural communities</li> <li>• Use data on new and existing providers to identify and reach out to non-participating providers</li> <li>• Build relationships with other provider-serving organizations</li> <li>• Assess and increase the capacity of the Child Care Aware system to organize at the grassroots level</li> </ul>
<p>Bloomington-Richfield Community Provider Alliance</p> <p>Contact: Karen Cadigan, We Believe Alliance</p>	<p>Pro bono and/or in-kind resource alignment</p>	<p>2012-ongoing</p>	<p>Reduce health and education disparities. Specifically, increase number of children ready for K, support licensed and unlicensed providers in quality improvement and alignment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a common and clear description of what it means to be K ready and what strategies can ensure all children and their families are ready for K.</li> <li>• Providing free training that is aligned with Early Childhood Standards, is on topics providers themselves identify as important, is in their home language, and is convenient for their participation.</li> <li>• Providing program quality supports and business planning support to stabilize and expand this network of important small business owners.</li> <li>• Providing connection to other existing community resources, including connections among providers themselves, in order to strategically leverage all possible opportunities for child care providers to have the support they need to deliver ready kids at Kindergarten entry.</li> </ul>

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<p>BC/BS Think Small Targeted Strategies Region 11 (Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington)</p> <p>Contact: Sandy Myers, Think Small</p>	<p>BC/BS Foundation (\$25,000)</p>	<p>November 2013 – August 2014</p>	<p>No specific target beyond increase LFCC participants in PA</p>	<p>Think Small staff working with LFCC providers to offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free PA trainings</li> <li>• Quality Improvement Grants of \$200</li> <li>• Engage Successful Parent Aware providers as Champions for recruitment - \$200 stipend to attend orientation sessions, answer questions from interested providers and support recruitment with some follow-up calls to providers in their associations</li> <li>• \$50 gift card to providers recruiting others providers</li> </ul> <p>Note Think Small also targets ELL providers using public funds, including above strategies plus language-specific info sessions, 1:1 info sessions, bilingual and bicultural coaches, and training.</p>
<p>ELL Access to Parent Aware through Child Care Aware-MN</p> <p>Contact: Maria Moeller, CCA-MN</p>	<p>Sheltering Arms (\$20K)</p>	<p>July 1 2013 – June 30 - 14</p>	<p>Reach parents and LFCC providers to increase their awareness of Parent Aware.</p>	<p>Child Care Aware of MN developing communication strategy focused on parents and providers in ELL communities. Mobile app focused on ELL and other hard to reach communities to increase access to info on how to choose care. Also focused on developing materials related to PA to reach ELL communities. The app and materials will be available for others to promote and use.</p>
<p><a href="#">GreaterThanMN</a> through First Children’s Finance (Greater MN – each of the 6 Initiative Foundations)</p> <p>Contact: Heidi Hagel-Braid, FCF</p>	<p>Bremer (\$50K) and Bush (\$200K)</p>	<p>Pilot in 2013 Launch 9/13 – 11/15</p>	<p>Focus of the project is linking child care and regional economic development, using strategies in each MIF region. Rating LFCC is not necessarily a goal, but is it an outcome in many areas.</p>	<p>Each involves learning cohorts of providers (could be LFCC and/or centers) that promote business and program quality. Other strategies vary by region – community-wide planning process results in action plan. Finds related to what works with LFCC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking business quality and program quality.</li> <li>• Individual consultant.</li> <li>• Peer group.</li> <li>• Development of business plan, which allows them resources to build and sustain quality.</li> </ul>

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Increasing Quality of Care (Hennepin)  Contact: Carol Miller, Hennepin County	Hennepin County Board – Human Services Budget (\$200,000)	April 1 – December 31, 2014 (possible renewal for 2015)	Increasing the quality of care for low income children at risk of not being school ready	Contract with Think Small – specific strategies include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paying for ALL training costs for providers in Hennepin.</li> <li>• Parent Aware approved training to neighborhood and community groups.</li> <li>• \$200 quality improvement awards to help providers meet Parent Aware indicators</li> <li>• Enhanced coaching</li> <li>• Special focus on newly licensed providers</li> <li>• Some classes in Spanish, Hmong and Somali.</li> </ul>
Minnesota Reading Corps/Think Small LFCC Partnership  Contact: Sadie O'Connor, ServeMinnesota	Kellogg Foundation (\$125K/year x 2 years) and Sheltering Arms \$15K  Think Small providing .5 FTE in-kind	Two Years	Engage 9 LFCC providers in Year 1, and 9 additional in Year 2. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase children’s literacy</li> <li>• Increase provider capacity to build literacy skills</li> <li>• Encourage family literacy, especially in transition to K</li> <li>• LFCC get PA rating</li> </ul>	Think Small and Minnesota Reading Corps working to engage LFCC in NAZ and Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place literacy tutors in LFCC to work on children’s literacy, with support from Internal Coaches from Think Small.</li> <li>• Use student portfolios to engage and empower parents as partners in their children’s literacy development.</li> <li>• Train LFCC providers in SEEDS of Early Learning, supported by tutors and Internal Coaches, leading to Parent Aware rating.</li> </ul>

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Parent Aware Pathway Initiative (Saint Louis and Carlton)  Contact: Lynn Haglin, Northland Foundation	Mardag Foundation (\$375,000) & Northland Foundation (\$25,000+)	2013 - 2016	163 rated providers in St. Louis County by the end of the next 2 ½ years. 20 rated providers in Carlton County by the end of the next 2 ½ years.	Working closely with Child Care Aware: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public forums</li> <li>• Meetings with small groups of providers</li> <li>• One-on-one conversations to encourage participation/sign-up</li> <li>• Financial incentives to providers, including reduction in cost for training, to help remove barriers for providers to get on the Parent Aware Pathway</li> <li>• Ongoing peer learning meetings for providers either on pathway to rating or already rated</li> <li>• Annual Child Care Appreciation &amp; Training for area providers, with special recognition for those rated or on pathway.</li> <li>• Financial incentives to individuals to become certified as Child Care Aware trainers in the region.</li> </ul>
Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (Brown, Watonwan, Mower, Steele)  Contact: Teri Steckelberg and RaeJean Hansen, SMIF	Mardag Foundation (\$20,000)  Bremer Foundation (\$26,200)	February 2014- January 2015	Increase program quality by helping providers begin Parent Aware process, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40 participants in training</li> <li>• 30 on track for PA rating</li> <li>• 30 implement quality curriculum</li> <li>• More families have access to scholarships</li> </ul>	Partnership between Southern MN Initiative Foundation, First Children’s Finance & Child Care Resource and Referral, Inc.: Child Care Aware Southern to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group trainings – two sessions, taking time to introduce providers to multiple concepts - quality, brain development, business aspects of CC, Parent Aware, and PD.</li> <li>• After training, providers commit to track that best meets their needs – Business (w/FCF), Program (with mentor/coach based on their needs); or Building Quality (w/CCA, path to PA) – can pick one, two or all three</li> <li>• Free training in curriculum, assessment and other trainings needed for 1-4 star rating.</li> <li>• Continue work in small cohort or 1:1</li> <li>• Incentives – books, bags, pens, first aid kits, calendars, bookshelves, iPads for assessment, and storyboxes</li> </ul>



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<p>West Central Initiative (Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, Wilkin, and including White Earth Reservation)</p> <p>Contact: Nancy Jost and Marsha Erickson, WCI</p>	<p>Sheltering Arms (\$10,000 total) Mardag (\$286,000) WCI Family Economic Success (\$25,000)</p>	<p>Sheltering Arms: 2013-2014 Mardag: 2014 – 2016 WCI: 2014</p>	<p>Implement Parent Aware region-wide to increase the number of high quality ECE settings so more children are prepared for school and life success</p>	<p>Partnership between Child Care Aware and the 10 Early Childhood Initiative Coordinators to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each of 10 communities host community dialog (child care, schools, parents, etc.) about improving ECE services by supporting each other and using PA as a tool, connecting PreK-grade 3</li> <li>• Learning cohorts</li> <li>• Implemented child care consultation, then refocused on Parent Aware Recruiter</li> <li>• Free or reduced cost curriculum and assessment trainings</li> <li>• Free or reduced cost PA trainings</li> <li>• Funding another Child Care Aware coach</li> <li>• Funded Parent Aware recruiter</li> <li>• Funding train the trainer</li> </ul>
<p>Willmar Children’s Cabinet quality improvement project (Willmar)</p> <p>Contact: Jodi Wambeke, Willmar Public Schools</p>	<p>Private funder, Willmar Area Community Foundation, Jennie-O Turkey Store, Bremer, Mardag, and district (community ed/rec)</p>	<p>Launch 2013 - ongoing</p>	<p>Increase number of high quality ECE programs. Increase the number of children accessing high quality programs. Reduce disparities in children’s learning across settings.</p>	<p>Willmar Public Schools working with United Way, Head Start, Child Care Aware, public health and other partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common PD – school-based, center &amp; LFCC</li> <li>• Alignment of curriculum and assessment – Creative Curriculum, TS Gold, SEEDS, IGDIs and ECIPs</li> <li>• Maximizing capacity in existing programs</li> <li>• Enhancing outreach to families not accessing ECE, for example through their Growmobile (mobile ECE classroom). In the summer, it visits parks serving high concentrations of ELL families. Visits 16 LFCC providers during the school year (2xmonth), including mentoring. 3 providers got iPads, TS Gold, curriculum, and engage in PA. Satellite sites currently under public school rating umbrella going through PA, too.</li> </ul>

## **Delaware Stars QRIS: Efforts to Recruit LFCC**

Notes from interview with Valerie Smirlock (University of Delaware)

Valerie's Role: State gives the University funding to evaluate the QRIS, plus to do the coaching and the PD. Valerie started this project in April 2013.

### *Background on Delaware Stars*

- Current participation of LFCC in QRIS = approximately 20% of eligible programs are rated.
- Their QRIS was piloted in 2007, has been statewide since 2009, revised in 2011, and revising again this year. They have approximately 1100 licensed programs eligible for QRIS in Delaware, and 70% of those are child care centers. 492 programs in Stars right now (including 20% of LFCC).
- Tiered reimbursement for Star rated programs – big incentive. At Star Levels 3, 4, 5 incrementally tiered reimbursement increases by 15%, 25% and 35% (3, 4, 5). They also have quality improvement grants (\$750 grant at each star level for smaller LFCC, \$1000 for larger LFCC and child care center grants, based on enrollment). Some extra quality supports through their RTT-ELC grant that are for technology and capital improvement. The first two matter more.

### Key Lessons from Delaware

#### *Messaging*

- Start the conversation with FCC/LFCC by acknowledging how critical they are – they are early childhood educators and business leaders in their communities. They aren't viewed as second-rate or "babysitters." You are a really important part of our system, and here's where our system is going, and here's how we can work together...
- They put it in context for providers – how many kids you serve x how many years in business = you've been responsible for the development of X children over the years.
- Teaching them about "WHY" - kids and families do well, not just about the money or the financial benefits.
- All in the connection and the relationships – someone who has done FCC or truly knows and values in their heart the work that FCC does. Word of mouth is starting to spread positive stories.
- Think about where the LFCC providers have to go – licensing, training – figure out where they are already gathering and GO THERE and recruit them!
- Use Facebook and other social media (Ambassadors are doing that work in Delaware).

## Attachment II: Delaware Stars Interview Summary

### *Four Key Project Components in Delaware Efforts*

1. Reach for the Stars meetings in communities around the state – “come hear the real deal about Stars” – answer questions honestly. They started that process by conducting four focus groups to learn what LFCC knew and thought about Stars (if anything), etc, targeted areas with lots of high risk kids and LFCC – sent postcard, then followed up with phone call, door prizes, snacks, gift cards to school supply company for attendees. 18 providers attended – and 15-16 ended up applying for Stars.
2. Connection with licensing process: Licensing office conducts orientation sessions for providers seeking provisional child care licensing. Val goes to that meeting for providers entering LFCC. They haven’t heard myths about Stars, because they aren’t in the field yet. Val follows up 3 months into provisional license with those still in business. Same at 5 months. They can apply for Stars even during provisional license period, and if they do, they can do online Stars orientation and Building on Quality training (6 hours). They get 6 hours credit toward licensing, and it is free.
3. Recruitment Training Strategy – teaching pyramid – framework of evidence-based practices for supporting children with challenging behavior ([www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel)) - there are hour-long trainings on website – she gives them an hour training, and they get 1.0 hour credit toward their license, plus 30 minutes on why to join Stars, and tie the SEFEL training to Stars for them.

Professional development done in cohort model for areas with high concentrations of children with high needs. They support each other and empower each other – they get the PD as a cohort. PD is free to the providers in those high-need areas.

4. Delaware Stars Ambassadors – Coaches nominate LFCC providers in Stars that have strong commitment to building their own quality, but also a larger community-level quality improvement – picked 10 to be Stars LFCC Ambassadors – they meet first Saturday of each month – they get training, they call providers, they get paid stipend based on hours spent in the role, they sometimes come to town meetings, and they also do things on their own, like attending LFCC support group meetings to talk about Stars. The ambassadors are across the star levels (2 to 5). Val has so many requests for these Ambassadors that she’s going to take in another cohort of Ambassadors. Example - They got a cohort of Spanish-speaking providers – one Spanish speaking provider invited a bunch of her friends to a meeting at her house. They created one cohort with a TA (coach) and a translator.

## Attachment III: Participating Organizations/Contacts

### Current Work Group Participants

- Bloomington Public Schools
  - Karen Cadigan [Kcadigan@bloomington.k12.mn.us](mailto:Kcadigan@bloomington.k12.mn.us)
- Child Care Aware of Minnesota
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## Attachment III: Participating Organizations/Contacts

### Funders

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### Other Interested Stakeholders

- AFSCME
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- Child Trends
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