Findings from a 2019 evaluation of Building Quality Coaching

Parent Aware, Minnesota’s voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System, offers Building Quality Cohorts, an initiative which offers coaching and other supports to participating early care and education (ECE) programs prior to their joining the Full-Rating Pathway. Programs in a Building Quality Cohort receive up to 30 hours of coaching over six months, and up to 60 hours of coaching over 12 months. After meeting a minimum of 20 hours of coaching in a six-month cohort, a program is eligible to receive a grant worth up to $1,000. The Minnesota Department of Human Services contracted with Child Trends to conduct an evaluation of Building Quality.

Methodology. Child Trends researchers invited 10 programs that participated in the January 2019 Building Quality Cohort to describe their experiences with their Parent Aware Quality Coach. To reflect the distribution of programs within the Building Quality Cohort as closely as possible, Child Trends invited programs from the Twin Cities metropolitan area and from Greater Minnesota, and included both family child care providers and center-based child care directors. Providers from a total of eight programs from across Minnesota, including five family child care providers and three center-based child care directors, completed a 30-minute phone interview in June 2019.

Programs’ motivations for joining Building Quality*

Half of the providers said that their program had joined Building Quality to learn more about Parent Aware (n = 4) and to get expert advice from coaches (n = 4). One quarter said they had joined to receive feedback about teaching practices (n = 2) and to earn the Parent Aware grants (n = 2). One respondent said they joined to support their professionalism (n = 1).

*Providers were able to name more than one reason.


1 For more information about Building Quality and the supports offered to programs, refer to https://parentaware.org/programs/choose-your-path/.
“[I joined Building Quality] to get perspective from an outsider with fresh eyes and early childhood experience. [The coaches] know what the best practices are out there, what’s changed, and what’s stayed the same in the field. They are able to inform you of the newer research. They can suggest what can be done better, and what’s already doing well. [It is] good to have someone to process things with, give feedback, listen and not only give advice, and help address staff development issues.”

– Family child care provider

100% of providers (n = 8) described their relationship with their coach as positive.

Key takeaways from Building Quality, by program type

Family child care

100% of providers who participated in group coaching stated that it was beneficial because they could gain input from other providers. Half of these providers also highlighted the importance of group coaching to building a community of providers.

“The group coaching] opened up a full new circle for me so I can know providers and other mentors....We were very isolated [when the provider was practicing 20 years ago]. Knowing that I do easier one-on-one or in smaller groups, [the coach] would introduce me to like-minded people so we were able to get a conversation going. [The coach] was able to pair me up. [The other provider and I] now talk to each other on Facebook—without her introduction, I wouldn’t have that outlook.”

– Family child care provider

Center-based care

100% of directors said that one of the largest parts of the coaches’ work was to help coach the lead teachers in classrooms.

Limitations: The findings in this fact sheet reflect the experiences of 8 programs and are not considered representative of all Building Quality programs. Future research with full cohorts of providers would be helpful to learn whether any patterns or themes of providers’ experiences with coaching develop over time. See the full report about the Building Quality Relationship Based Coaching Model for more information.