

# **Focusing on Infants and Toddlers in State QRIS: Key Issues**

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Child Trends

# Potential

- Inclusion of explicit focus on infants and toddlers as well as preschool-age children in state QRIS has the potential to:
  - Changes the perspective on quality across the full age range
  - Expand the set of key stakeholders

# Potential

- Example from Catherine Scott-Little's work on early learning standards (Early Learning Standards Across the Ages: Conceptualizations of Development and Policy Frameworks, presented at Head Start's National Research Conference, June 23, 2008)
  - All 50 states have early learning standards (ELS) for preschool-age children
  - 22 have ELS for infants and toddlers and more states are developing them

# Potential

- ELS for infants and toddlers place much greater emphasis on health and socioemotional development
  - Juxtaposing or having coordinated set of ELS increased awareness of health and socioemotional issues across ages in state
- Development of ELS for infants and toddlers had greater representation of health professionals and early intervention specialists
  - Broadened set of key stakeholders

# Potential

- Looking at quality through lens of infant and toddler development heightens the salience of specific facets of quality. These facets are not unique to infancy and toddlerhood but are more likely to be considered:
  - Continuity of relationships with primary caregivers
  - Daily reciprocal communication with parents
  - Affirming home culture
  - Responding to child's attempts to communicate
  - Introduction of nutritional practices
  - Exploration at child's own initiation

# Challenges

- Limited available options for measuring quality:
  - Only one measure specific to infants and toddlers with established reliability and validity, while multiple measures for other age groups
  - Many infants and toddlers in home-based care. Limited measurement options especially for family, friend and neighbor care

# Challenges

- Need for quality measure to capture the issues of particular salience in infancy and toddlerhood
  - Can QRIS measures of quality be structured to capture such issues as continuity in relationships and reciprocal daily communication with parents?
- Need for quality measures to provide recognition to certification and training focusing specifically on care during earliest years