

OMB Control No: 0970-0517

Expiration date: 12/31/2024

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Quality Progress Report (QPR)

For

Arkansas

FFY 2023

QPR Status: Accepted as of 2024-03-05 20:37:16 GMT

The Quality Progress Report (QPR) collects information from states and territories (hereafter referred to as lead agencies) to describe investments to improve the quality of care available for children from birth to age 13. This report meets the requirements in the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 for lead agencies to submit an annual report that describes how quality funds were expended, including the activities funded and the measures used to evaluate progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services.

For purposes of simplicity and clarity, the specific provisions of applicable laws printed herein are sometimes paraphrases of, or excerpts and incomplete quotations from, the full text. The lead agency acknowledges its responsibility to adhere to the applicable laws regardless of these modifications.

The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

QUALITY PROGRESS REPORT

The Quality Progress Report (QPR) collects information from lead agencies to describe investments to improve the quality of care available for children from birth to age 13. This report meets the requirements in the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 for lead agencies to submit an annual report that describes how quality funds were expended, including the activities funded and the measures used to evaluate progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services. Lead agencies are also required to report on their Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) quality improvement investments through the CCDF Plan, which collects information on the proposed quality activities for a three-year period; and through the ACF-696, which collects quarterly expenditure data on quality activities.

The annual data provided by the QPR will be used to describe how lead agencies are spending a significant investment per year to key stakeholders, including Congress, federal, state and territory administrators, providers, parents, and the public.

Specifically, this report will be used to:

- Ensure accountability and transparency for the use of CCDF quality funds, including a set-aside for quality infant and toddler care and activities funded by American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act
- Track progress toward meeting state- and territory-set indicators and benchmarks for improvement of child care quality based on goals and activities described in CCDF Plans; and
- Understand efforts in progress towards all child care settings meeting the developmental needs of children
- Inform federal technical assistance efforts and decisions regarding strategic use of quality funds.

What Period Must Be Included: All sections of this report cover the federal fiscal year activities (October 1, 2022, through September 30, 2023), unless otherwise stated. Data should reflect the cumulative totals for the fiscal year being reported, unless otherwise stated.

What Data Should Lead Agencies Use: Lead agencies may use data collected by other government and nongovernment agencies (e.g., CCR&R agencies or other TA providers) in addition to their own data as appropriate. We recognize that lead agencies may not have all of the data requested initially but expect progress towards increased data capacity. The scope of this report covers quality improvement activities funded at least in part by CCDF in support of CCDF activities. Lead agencies must describe their progress in meeting their stated goals for improving the quality of child care as reported in their FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan.

How is the QPR Organized?

The first section of the QPR gathers basic data on the population of providers in the state or territory and goals for quality improvement and glossary of relevant terms. The rest of the report is organized according to the ten authorized uses of quality funds specified in the CCDBG Act of 2014:

- 1) Support the training and professional development of the child care workforce
- 2) Improve the development or implementation of early learning and development guidelines
- 3) Develop, implement, or enhance a quality rating improvement system for child care providers
- 4) Improve the supply and quality of child care for infants and toddlers
- 5) Establish or expand a lead agency wide system of child care resource and referral services
- 6) Support compliance with lead agency requirements for licensing, inspection, monitoring, training, and health and safety
- 7) Evaluate the quality of child care programs in the state or territory, including how programs positively impact children
- 8) Support providers in the voluntary pursuit of accreditation
- 9) Support the development or adoption of high-quality program standards related to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development
- 10) Other activities to improve the quality of child care services supported by outcome measures that improve provider preparedness, child safety, child well-being, or kindergarten-entry.

The Office of Child Care (OCC) recognizes that quality funds may have been used to address the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. These activities should be reflected in the relevant sections of the QPR.

Reporting Activities Related to ARP Act Child Care Stabilization Grants

The ARP Act included approximately \$24 billion for child care stabilization grants, representing an important opportunity to stabilize the child care sector and do so in a way that builds back a stronger child care system that supports the developmental and learning needs of children, meets parents' needs and preferences with equal access to high-quality child care, and supports a professionalized workforce that is fairly and appropriately compensated for the essential skilled work that they do. Lead agencies must spend stabilization funds as subgrants to qualified child care providers to support the stability of the child care sector during and after the COVID-19 public health emergency. Please refer to the information memorandum [ARP Act Child Care Stabilization Grants](#) (CCDF-ACF-IM-2021-02) for further guidance on the child care stabilization grants made available through the ARP Act.

While the OCC has established a new data collection form, the ACF-901 – American Rescue Plan (ARP) Stabilization Grants Provider-Level Data, as the primary data collection mechanism for reporting related to ARP stabilization grants, Section 13 of the QPR asks about activities related to stabilization grants made possible through ARP funding. The OCC will inform lead agencies if the data reported through the ACF-901 is complete enough to warrant skipping Section 13 of the QPR. The following information is requested in Section 13:

- If the lead agency ran more than one grant program;
- How stabilization grants were used to support workforce compensation; and
- Methods to eliminate fraud, waste, and abuse when providing stabilization grants

Section 13 should be used to report on ARP Stabilization Grants ONLY. Other child care sustainability or stabilization grant programs established or ongoing using other funding mechanisms (i.e., CCDF or other supplemental funding e.g., CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary Funds) should be reported in Section 11.

When is the QPR Due to ACF?

The QPR will be due to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) by the designated lead agency no later than December 31, 2023.

Glossary of Terms

The following terms are used throughout the QPR. These definitions can also be found in section 98.2 in the CCDBG Act of 2014. For any term not defined, please use the lead agency definition of terms to complete the QPR.

Center-based child care provider means a provider licensed or otherwise authorized to provide child care services for fewer than 24 hours per day per child in a non-residential setting, unless in care in excess of 24 hours is due to the nature of the parent(s)' work. Associated terms include "child care centers" and "center-based programs."

Director means a person who has primary responsibility for the daily operations and management for a child care provider, which may include a family child care provider, and which may serve children from birth to kindergarten entry and children in school-age child care.

Family child care provider means one or more individuals who provide child care services for fewer than 24 hours per day per child in a private residence other than the child's residence, unless care in excess of 24 hours is due to the nature of the parent(s)' work. Associated terms include "family child care homes."

In-home child care provider means an individual who provides child care services in the child's own home.

License-exempt means facilities that are not required to meet the definition of a facility required to meet the CCDF section 98.2 definition of “licensing or regulatory requirements.” Associated terms include “legally exempt” and “legally operating without regulation.”

Licensed means a facility required by the state to meet the CCDF section 98.2 definition of “licensing or regulatory requirements,” which explains that the facility meets “requirements necessary for a provider to legally provide child care services in a state of locality, including registration requirements established under state, local or tribal law.”

Programs refer generically to all activities under the CCDF, including child care services and other activities pursuant to §98.50 as well as quality activities pursuant to §98.43.

Provider means the entity providing child care services.

Staffed family child care (FCC) networks are programs with paid staff that offer a menu of ongoing services and resources to affiliated FCC educators. Network services may include individual supports (for example, visits to child care homes, coaching, consultation, warmlines, substitute pools, shared services, licensing TA, mental health services) and group supports (for example, training workshops, facilitated peer support groups).

Teacher means a lead teacher, teacher, teacher assistant or teacher aide who is employed by a child care provider for compensation on a regular basis, or a family child care provider, and whose responsibilities and activities are to organize, guide and implement activities in a group or individual basis, or to assist a teacher or lead teacher in such activities, to further the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of children from birth to kindergarten entry and children in school-age child care.

1) Overview

To gain an understanding of the availability of child care in the state or territory, please provide the following information on the total number of child care providers.

1.1 State or Territory Child Care Provider Population

1.1.1 Total Number of Licensed Providers:

Enter the total number of licensed child care providers that operated in the state or territory as of September 30, 2023. These counts should include all licensed child care providers, not just those serving children receiving CCDF subsidies.

☒ Licensed center-based programs **1729**

☐ Unable to provide number. Indicate reason:

Additional clarification: Based on most recent submission of the FY 2023 ACF-800 data there were 725 licensed center-based programs receiving CCDF funding. Please report the number of ALL licensed center-based programs operating in the state here, regardless of receipt of CCDF funding.

☒ Licensed family child care homes **214**

☐ Unable to provide number. Indicate reason:

Additional clarification: Based on most recent submission of the FY 2023 ACF-800 data there were 98 licensed family child care homes receiving CCDF funding. Please report the number of ALL licensed family child care homes operating in the state here, regardless of receipt of CCDF funding.

2) Supporting the training and professional development of the child care workforce

Goal: Ensure the lead agency's professional development systems or framework provides initial and ongoing professional development and education that result in a diverse and stable child care workforce with the competencies and skills to support all domains of child development.

2.1 Lead Agency Progression of Professional Development

2.1.1 Professional Development Registry:

Did the lead agency use a workforce registry or professional development registry to track progression of professional development during October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023?

☒ Yes. If yes, describe: **The Arkansas Professional Development Registry (PDR) is the online workforce system that tracks training for early care and education practitioners in the state.**

The PDR has three components:

1. The Practitioner Registry maintains a record of individual early childhood practitioners' professional development hours. Licensing and Better Beginnings Specialists have access to the training transcripts of all providers to verify required training hours have been completed.

2. The Trainer Registry verifies trainer education, specialized training, and experience in training adults. Through the PDR, verified trainers may access summaries of their training evaluations and view preliminary rosters for registered training.

3. The Training Registry lists upcoming professional development opportunities as submitted by registered trainers. The PDR offers online registration.

☐ No. If no, what alternative does the lead agency use to track the progression of professional development for teachers/providers serving children who receive CCDF subsidy? Describe:

2.1.2 Participation in Professional Development Registry:

Are any teachers/providers required to participate?

☒ Yes. If yes, describe: **Arkansas Minimum Licensing Requirements for all facility types mandate all directors, assistant directors, site supervisors and staff who provide direct care to children to be registered in the PDR.**

☐ No. If no, describe:

2.1.3 Number of Participants in Professional Development Registry:

Total number of participants in the registry as of September 30, 2023 **73297**

2.1.4 Spending - Professional Development Registry:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

☒ CCDF quality funds

☐ Non-CCDF funds

☐ CARES funds

☐ CRRSA Funds

☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary

☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside

☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

☐ No

2.2 Workforce Development

2.2.1 Professional Development and Career Pathways Support:

How did the lead agency help teachers/providers progress in their education, professional development, and/or career pathway between October 1, 2022 and September 30, 2023 (check all that apply)? If selected, how many staff received each type of support?

☒ Scholarships (for formal education institutions) **377**

☒ Financial bonus/wage supplements tied to education levels **177**

☒ Career advisors, mentors, coaches, or consultants **377**

☐ Reimbursement for training

☐ Loans

☐ Substitutes, leave (paid or unpaid) for professional development

☒ Other. Describe: **All 377 T.E.A.C.H. scholarship holders had access to the T.E.A.C.H. counseling staff who offered advice and guidance in the areas of degree selection, course schedules, academic challenges and work/life/school balance. Counselors checked in multiple times each semester with each recipient.**

☐ N/A. Describe:

2.2.2 Spending - Professional Development and Career Pathways Support:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

☒ CCDF quality funds

☐ Non-CCDF funds

☐ CARES funds

☐ CRRSA Funds

☒ ARP Supplemental Discretionary

☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside

☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

☐ No

2.3 Child Care Provider Qualifications

2.3.1 Number of Licensed Child Care Programs Qualifications:

Total number of staff in licensed child care programs with the following qualification levels as of September 30, 2023:

☒ Child Development Associate (CDA) **1213**

☒ Associate's degree in an early childhood education field (e.g. psychology, human development, education) **72**

☒ Bachelor's degree in an early childhood education field (e.g. psychology, human development, education) **229**

☒ State child care credential **28**

☒ State infant/toddler credential **1**

☐ Unable to report this data. Indicate reason:

2.3.2 Number of Licensed CCDF Child Care Programs Qualifications:

Total number of staff in licensed CCDF child care programs with the following qualification levels as of September 30, 2023:

☒ Child Development Associate (CDA) **576**

☒ Associate's degree in an early childhood education field (e.g. psychology, human development, education) **39**

☒ Bachelor's degree in an early childhood education field (e.g. psychology, human development, education) **117**

☒ State child care credential **Data not available**

☒ State infant/toddler credential **Data not available**

☐ Unable to report this data. Indicate reason:

2.4 Technical Assistance for Professional Development

2.4.1 Technical Assistance Topics:

Technical assistance on the following topics is available to providers as part of the lead agency's professional development system (can be part of QRIS or other system that provides professional development to child care providers):

☒ Business Practices

☒ Mental health for children

☒ Diversity, equity, and inclusion

☒ Emergency Preparedness Planning

☒ Other. Describe other technical assistance available to providers as part of the professional development system: **Technical assistance is routinely provided on Infant & Toddler Care as well as Family Engagement. Arkansas funds infant/toddler specialists and the Arkansas Family Child Care Network through contracts with educational agencies.**

Professional development and technical assistance to support programs maintain compliance with health, safety and licensing standards is reported as a part of the total in 2.5.1. In addition, licensing staff salaries, travel, and equipment costs could be included.

Arkansas contracts with educational agencies to conduct professional development, technical assistance, and quality assessments to support programs in achieving quality. In addition, the state contracts for the evaluation of its programs.

2.4.2 Spending - Technical Assistance for Professional Development:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

☒ CCDF quality funds

☐ Non-CCDF funds

☐ CARES funds

☐ CRRSA Funds

☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary

☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside

☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

☐ No

2.5 Spending – Training and Professional Development

2.5.1 Spending – Training and Professional Development:

What is the total amount spent across all funding sources (i.e., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, and ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) to support the training and professional development of the child care workforce during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023? **\$8570534**

☐ Unable to report total amount spent. Indicate reason:

Optional: Use this space to tell us any additional information about how funds were spent that is not captured in the items already reported.

2.6 Progress Update

2.6.1 Progress Update – Training and Professional Development:

Supporting the training and professional development of the child care workforce

Measurable indicators of progress the state/territory reported in section 6.3.2 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan.

DCCECE provides tiered reimbursement for providers participating in the Better Beginnings system. Through the division's data systems, we can monitor and evaluate a program's effectiveness and qualifications. The division monitors the progress of

programs moving up in quality monthly through data retrieved from the DCCECE data systems.

Please include information on the outcomes and numerical targets achieved based on the measurable indicators of progress specified in section 6.3.2 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan: **The Office of Early Childhood contracts with several Universities and Child Care Aware agencies throughout the state to provide training, technical assistance and professional development for licensed providers in Arkansas. TA can be requested by the facility or by the licensing specialist. Many of these are done at the facility level or one on one with a specific teacher or director. A workshop can be requested as well. That would be more of a training on a specific topic than a targeted TA. There is a dedicated team that provides training and technical assistance for providers interested in participating or seeking a higher level in Better Beginnings.**

Between October 1, 2022 and September 30, 2023 the following number of TA visits were conducted listed by category:

**Business Practices - 4406
Mental Health for Children - 3742
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion - 872
Emergency Preparedness - 3593
Infant & Toddler - 6640
Family Engagement - 851**

3) Improving early learning and development guidelines

Goal: To ensure the lead agency has research-based early learning and development guidelines appropriate for children birth to age 12, including children with special needs and dual language learners that are used to inform practice and professional development.

3.1 Early Learning and Development Guidelines

3.1.1 Spending - Early Learning and Development Guidelines:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to improve early learning and development guidelines during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023?

☐ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

- ☐ CCDF quality funds
- ☐ Non-CCDF funds
- ☐ CARES funds
- ☐ CRRSA Funds
- ☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary
- ☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside
- ☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

What is the total amount spent across all funding sources (i.e., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, and ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) on improving upon the development or implementation of early learning and development guidelines? \$

☐ Unable to report total amount spent. Indicate reason

Optional: Use this space to tell us any additional information about how funds were spent that is not capture in the item already reported:

☒ No

3.2 Progress Update

3.2.1 Progress Update - Early Learning and Development Guidelines:

Improving upon the development or implementation of early learning and development guidelines.

Measurable indicators of progress the state/territory reported in section 6.4.3 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan:

Note: The information displayed is from the most recent approved FFY2022-2024 CCDF Plan.

Currently, Arkansas uses Environmental Rating Scales for all children.

Please include information on the outcomes and numerical targets achieved based on the measurable indicators of progress specified in section 6.4.3 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan:

Arkansas was awarded a PDG B5 renewal grant in December and began preliminary work to update the Child Development and Early Learning Standards. This work will continue in the next fiscal year.

4) Developing, implementing, or enhancing a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) and other transparent system of quality indicator

Goal: To ensure the lead agency implements a quality rating and improvement system, or other quality rating system, to promote high-quality early care and education programs.

4.1 Quality rating and improvement system status

4.1.1 QRIS or other system of quality improvement status:

Indicate the status and include a description of the lead agency's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) or other system of quality improvement during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023?

[x] The lead agency QRIS is operating state- or territory-wide.

- General description of QRIS: **Arkansas has a tiered quality rating and improvement system, Better Beginnings. Better Beginnings is a building block approach, meaning programs must meet all requirements for one level before moving on to the next. Better Beginnings is available to all licensed providers in Arkansas.**

Effective January 1, 2023, Better Beginnings was revised to add levels 4-6.

Changes in levels 4-6 include:

- ☒ **higher scores on the Environment Rating Scale, Program Administration Scale and the Business Administration Scale**
- ☒ **lower staff/child ratios**
- ☒ **self assessments and action plans in the areas of health, physical activity and nutrition**
- ☒ **developmental screenings**

The Better Beginnings Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System Provider Rule Book outlines the requirements to achieve each quality level:

<https://arbetterbeginnings.com/wp-content/uploads/Better-Beginnings-Provider-Rules.pdf>

- How many tiers/levels? **6** [insert number of tiers below as required and describe each tier and check off which are high quality]

- Tier/Level 1: **Level 1 is the foundation and any provider who meets minimum licensing requirements is eligible to participate in level 1.**
[] High Quality
- Tier/Level 2: **Level 2 introduces providers to the environment rating scales and program administration scales along with other requirements. CCDF participants are required to be level 2 or above.**
[] High Quality
- Tier/Level 3: **Level 3 was previously the top tier of the QRIS in Arkansas. It is still considered high quality with levels 4-6 building upon the requirements.**
[x] High Quality
- Tier/Level 4: **At level 4, staff/child ratios are reduced to further increase quality. ERS and PAS scores and other Better Beginnings requirements continue to build upon previous levels.**
[x] High Quality
- Tier/Level 5: **At level 5, staff/child ratios are reduced to further increase quality. ERS and PAS scores and other Better Beginnings requirements continue to build upon previous levels.**
[x] High Quality
- Tier/Level 6: **At level 6, staff/child ratios are reduced to further increase quality. ERS and PAS scores and other Better Beginnings requirements continue to build upon previous levels.**
[x] High Quality
- Tier/Level 7:
[] High Quality
- Tier/Level 8:
[] High Quality
- Tier/Level 9:
[] High Quality
- Tier/Level 10:
[] High Quality
- Total number of licensed child care centers meeting high quality definition: **722**
- Total number of licensed family child care homes meeting high quality definition: **42**
- Total number of CCDF providers meeting high quality definition: **527**

- Total number of children served by providers meeting high quality definition:
Arkansas does not currently have enrollment data available.

☐ The lead agency QRIS is operating a pilot (e.g., in a few localities, or only a few levels) but not fully operating state- or territory-wide.

- General description of pilot QRIS (e.g., in a few localities, or only a few levels):
- Which localities if not state/territory-wide?
- How many tiers/levels? [insert number of tiers below as required and describe each tier and check off which are high quality
 - Tier/Level 1:
☐ High Quality
 - Tier/Level 2:
☐ High Quality
 - Tier/Level 3:
☐ High Quality
 - Tier/Level 4:
☐ High Quality
 - Tier/Level 5:
☐ High Quality
 - Tier/Level 6:
☐ High Quality
 - Tier/Level 7:
☐ High Quality
 - Tier/Level 8:
☐ High Quality
 - Tier/Level 9:
☐ High Quality
 - Tier/Level 10:
☐ High Quality

- Total number of licensed child care centers meeting high quality definition:
- Total number of licensed family child care homes meeting high quality definition:

- Total number of CCDF providers meeting high quality definition:
- Total number of children served by providers meeting high quality definition:

☐ The lead agency is operating another system of quality improvement.

- General description of other system:
- Describe assessment scores, accreditation, or other metrics associated with this system:

- Describe how “high quality” is defined in this system?
 - Total number of licensed child care centers meeting high quality definition:
 - Total number of licensed family child care homes meeting high quality definition:

 - Total number of CCDF providers meeting high quality definition:
 - Total number of children served by providers meeting high quality definition:
- ☐ The lead agency does not have a QRIS or other system of quality improvement.
- Do you have a definition of high quality care?
 - ☐ Yes, define:
 - Total number of licensed child care centers meeting high quality definition:
 - Total number of licensed family child care homes meeting high quality definition:
 - Total number of CCDF providers meeting high quality definition:
 - Total number of children served by providers meeting high quality definition:
 - ☐ No

4.1.2 Spending - Quality rating and improvement system status:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

- ☒ CCDF quality funds
- ☐ Non-CCDF funds
- ☐ CARES funds
- ☐ CRRSA Funds
- ☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary
- ☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside
- ☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

☐ No

4.2 Quality Rating and Improvement Systems participation

4.2.1 QRIS or other system of quality improvement participation:

What types of providers participated in the QRIS or other system of quality improvement during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023 (check all that apply)?

- ☒ Licensed child care centers
- ☒ Licensed family child care homes
- ☐ License-exempt providers
- ☒ Programs serving children who receive CCDF subsidy
- ☒ Early Head Start programs
- ☒ Head Start programs
- ☒ State Prekindergarten or preschool programs
- ☒ Local district-supported Prekindergarten programs
- ☒ Programs serving infants and toddlers
- ☒ Programs serving school-age children
- ☒ Faith-based settings
- ☐ Tribally operated programs
- ☐ Other. Describe:

4.3 Quality Rating and Improvement Systems Benefits

4.3.1 Quality Rating and Improvement Systems Benefits:

What types of financial incentives or technical assistance are available for providers related to QRIS or other system of quality improvement? Check as many as apply.

- ☒ One-time grants, awards or bonuses
 - ☐ Licensed child care centers **401**
 - ☐ Licensed family child care homes **32**
- ☐ On-going or periodic quality stipends
 - ☐ Licensed child care centers
 - ☐ Licensed family child care homes
- ☒ Higher CCDF subsidy rates (including tiered rating)
 - ☐ Licensed child care centers **773**
 - ☐ Licensed family child care homes **98**
- ☒ Ongoing technical assistance to facilitate participation in QRIS or improve quality of programs already participating in QRIS (or some other technical assistance tied to QRIS)
- ☐ Other. Describe

4.3.2 Spending - Quality Rating and Improvement Systems Benefits:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

☒ CCDF quality funds

☐ Non-CCDF funds

☐ CARES funds

☐ CRRSA Funds

☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary

☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside

☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

☐ No

4.4 Spending – Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

4.4.1 Spending – Quality Rating and Improvement Systems:

What is the total amount spent across all funding sources (i.e., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, and ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) related to QRIS or other quality rating systems during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023? **\$1591500**

☐ Unable to report total amount spent. Indicate reason

Optional: Use this space to tell us any additional information about how funds were spent that is not captured in the items already reported. **Arkansas contracts with educational agencies to support programs in achieving quality through professional development and technical assistance. The amount reported represents incentive funds given to providers that achieved higher quality levels. The contract expenditures are reported in 2.5.1.**

4.5 Progress Update

4.5.1 Progress Update – Quality Rating and Improvement Systems:

Developing, implementing, or enhancing a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) or other transparent system of quality indicators.

Measurable indicators of progress the state/territory reported in section 7.3.6 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan:

Note: The information displayed is from the most recent approved FFY2022-2024 CCDF Plan. **The data indicating growth of QRIS by measuring percentage of providers participation and facility upward movement.**

Please include information on the outcomes and numerical targets achieved based on the measurable indicators of progress specified in section 7.3.6 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan: **The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) has a team dedicated to Better Beginnings. In addition, OEC contracts with educational agencies to support providers through technical assistance and professional development and to conduct assessments on behalf of Better Beginnings. Effective January 1, 2023, Better Beginnings added quality levels 4-6. The three new levels offer additional quality benchmarks for providers to reach.**

Data regarding Better Beginnings levels:

October 1, 2022:

Level 1 = 532

Level 2 = 475

Level 3 = 725

Total = 1732

September 30, 2023:

Level 1 = 158

Level 2 = 495

Level 3 = 523

Level 4 = 135

Level 5 = 48

Level 6 = 58

Total = 1417

Newly licensed facilities may apply for Better Beginnings at any time, however it takes approximately 90 days to get through the process due to the self assessments and action plans they must complete. Prior to the change in the Better Beginnings requirements there was a significantly higher number of facilities at level 1. Prior to the rule changes, many licensed providers were given level 1 without having to submit an application. This process changed and

providers who did not apply were removed from participation.

5) Improving the supply and quality of child care programs and services for infants and toddlers

Goal: Ensure adequate and stable supply of high quality child care with a qualified, skilled workforce to promote the healthy development of infants and toddlers. Please report on all activities funded by quality dollars and infant toddler set-aside.

5.1 Infant/Toddler Specialists

5.1.1 Infant/Toddler Specialists:

Did providers have access to infant/toddler specialists during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023?

☒ Yes

- Number of specialists available to all providers **33**
- Number of specialists available to providers serving children who receive CCDF **33**
- Number of specialists available specifically trained to support family child care providers **20**
- Number of providers served **390**
- Total number of children reached **15,951**

☐ No, there are no infant/toddler specialists in the state/territory.

☐ N/A. Describe:

5.1.2 Infant/Toddler Specialists Supports Provided:

If yes, what supports do the infant/toddler specialists provide?

☒ Relationship-caregiving practices (or quality caregiving/developmentally appropriate practices)

☒ On-site and virtual coaching

☒ Health and safety practices

☒ Individualized professional development consultation (e.g., opportunities for or awareness on career growth opportunities, degreed/credential programs)

☒ Group professional development

☒ Family engagement and partnerships

☐ Part C early intervention services

☐ Mental health of babies, toddlers, and families

☐ Mental health of providers

☒ Behavioral Health

☐ Other. Describe

5.1.3 Spending – Infant/Toddler Specialists:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

☒ CCDF quality funds

☐ Non-CCDF funds

☐ CARES funds

☐ CRRSA Funds

☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary

☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside

☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

☐ No

5.2 Staffed Family Child Care Networks

5.2.1 Number and Description of Staffed Family Child Care Networks:

How many staffed family child care networks operated during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023?

☒ Number of staffed family child care networks: **1**

- Describe what the network/hub provides to participating family child care providers: **The Family Child Care Network in Arkansas offers a wide array of targeted training, technical assistance, and resources to family home providers in the state. Examples range from the basics of how to operate a business to the skills of how to conduct developmental screenings. The network places an emphasis on helping providers achieve state and national quality accreditation. The network helped a cohort of nine family homes through the national accreditation process. One additional home is in the cohort as well, but has paused her work temporarily due to a health issue. She is expected to complete the accreditation process but not with the other nine homes.**

☐ No staffed family child care networks operate in state/territory

5.2.2 Spending - Staffed Family Child Care Networks:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

☒ CCDF quality funds

☐ Non-CCDF funds

☐ CARES funds

☐ CRRSA Funds

☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary

☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside

☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

☐ No

5.3 Spending - Programs and services for infants and toddlers

5.3.1 Spending - Programs and services for infants and toddlers:

What is the total amount spent across all funding sources (i.e., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, and ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside), above and beyond to the 3% infant and toddler set-aside, to improve the supply and quality of child care programs and services for infants and toddlers during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023? \$

☒ Unable to report total amount spent. Indicate reason: **Arkansas funds infant/toddler specialists and the Arkansas Family Child Care Network through contracts with educational agencies. The total amount spent is reported in 2.5.1. A breakdown of expenditures by individual category is not available.**

Optional: Use this space to tell us any additional information about how funds were spent that is not captured in the items already reported.

5.4 Progress Update

5.4.1 Progress Update - Programs and services for infants and toddlers:

Improving the supply and quality of child care programs and services for infants and toddlers.

Measurable indicators of progress the state/territory reported in section 7.4.2 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan:

Note: The information displayed is from the most recent approved FFY2022-2024 CCDF Plan. DCCECE uses **Better Beginnings**, a program designed to measure and improve the level of quality in child care and early childhood education programs across the state of Arkansas. Currently **Better Beginnings** has three levels of quality and is working towards adding three higher levels of quality during the next few years. Each of the current and proposed levels of quality have specific benchmarks that programs must meet to be classified at that level. For programs which serve infants and toddlers, one key component used to measure quality is the **Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS)** assessment. DCCECE uses its data systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of services provided by programs which serve infants and toddlers. Additionally, DCCECE uses data to routinely instruct providers to amend their activities to meet identified goals.

Please include information on the outcomes and numerical targets achieved based on the measurable indicators of progress specified in section 7.4.2 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan: **The Office of Early Childhood contracts with a university who has a team dedicated to conducting technical assistance and the Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) as a part of the Better Beginnings application and recertification process. All applicants for levels 1-6 are required to have an ITERS assessment.**

Arkansas began work on several infant and toddler initiatives. An Infant/Toddler Professional Development Workgroup was created and continues to meet. A national consultant has been secured to facilitate an Infant/Toddler Certificate workgroup to revise the Certificate.

Arkansas launched a LENA Grow Pilot and has already implemented this in 19 classrooms in the pilot area, including 185 children.

Arkansas increased infant & toddler care using expansion and supply building grants.

Infant slots added = 2,234

Toddler slots added = 3,019

Total = 5,253

6) Establishing, expanding, modifying, or maintaining a statewide system of child care resource and referral services

Goal: Lead agency provides: services to involve families in the development of their children, information on a full range of child care options, and assistance to families in selecting child care that is appropriate for the family's needs and is high quality as determined by the lead agency.

6.1 Spending – Child Care Resource and Referral Services

6.1.1 Spending – Child Care Resource and Referral Services:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to establish, expand, modify, or maintain a statewide CCR&R during October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023?

☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

☒ CCDF quality funds

☐ Non-CCDF funds

☐ CARES funds

☐ CRRSA Funds

☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary

☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside

☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

What is the total amount spent across all funding sources (i.e., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, and ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) to establish, expand, modify, or maintain a statewide CCR&R during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023? **\$2578018**

☐ Unable to report total amount spent. Indicate reason:

Optional: Use this space to tell us any additional information about how funds were spent

☐ No

6.2 Progress Update

6.2.1 Progress Update – Child Care Resource and Referral Services:

Establishing, expanding, modifying or maintaining a statewide system of child care resource and referral services.

Measurable indicators of progress the state/territory reported in section 7.5.2 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan:

Note: The information displayed is from the most recent approved FFY2022-2024 CCDF Plan.

DCCECE contracts with five (5) agencies to operate the Arkansas Child Care Aware Resource and Referral Networks Each contractor is required to submit detailed monthly reports to the state and to evaluate the effectiveness of their services. DCCECE monitors all contracts for fiscal responsibility, quality, and accessibility. Contractors, with input from the state, routinely adjust their services to meet provider needs.

Please include information on the outcomes and numerical targets achieved based on the measurable indicators of progress specified in section 7.5.2 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan: **The Office of Early Childhood contracted with five agencies to operate Child Care Aware (CCA) resource and referral agencies.** In addition to resource and referral services, all CCA agencies offered training and technical assistance to providers including pre-licensing training for those interested in opening a child care facility and targeted support to help providers with increasing quality. During the reporting period 20,956 technical assistance touchpoints and 8,896 trainings were reported among the five agencies.

7) Facilitating compliance with lead agency requirements for inspection, monitoring, health and safety standards and training, and lead agency licensing standards

Goal: To ensure child care providers maintain compliance with lead agency licensing, inspection, monitoring, and health and safety standards and training.

7.1 Complaints about providers

7.1.1 Number of Complaints about providers:

How many complaints were received regarding providers during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023? **1322**

7.1.2 Spending - Complaints about providers:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity (including maintaining a hotline)?

☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

☒ CCDF quality funds

☐ Non-CCDF funds

☐ CARES funds

☐ CRRSA Funds

☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary

☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside

☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

☐ No

7.2 Licensing Staff

7.2.1 Number of Licensing Staff:

How many licensing staff positions were there in the state or territory during October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023? Number of staff **47**

7.2.2 Spending – Licensing Staff:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

- ☒ CCDF quality funds
- ☐ Non-CCDF funds
- ☐ CARES funds
- ☐ CRRSA Funds
- ☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary
- ☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set aside
- ☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

☐ No

7.3 Health and Safety Standards Coaching and Technical Assistance

7.3.1 Coaching or technical assistance on health and safety standards as a result of inspection:

How many child care programs received coaching or technical assistance to improve their understanding and adherence to CCDF health and safety standards as a result of an inspection or violation during October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023? **105**

7.3.2 Spending - Coaching or technical assistance on health and safety standards as a result of inspection:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

- ☒ CCDF quality funds
- ☐ Non-CCDF funds
- ☐ CARES funds
- ☐ CRRSA Funds
- ☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary
- ☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside
- ☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

☐ No

7.4 Spending - Compliance with health, safety, and licensing standards

7.4.1 Spending - Compliance with health, safety, and licensing standards:

What is the total amount spent across all funding sources (i.e., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, and ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) on facilitating compliance with lead agency requirements for inspections, monitoring, health and safety standards and training, and lead agency licensing standards during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023? \$

[x] Unable to report total amount spent. Indicate reason: Professional development and technical assistance to support programs maintain compliance with health, safety and licensing standards is reported as a part of the total in 2.5.1. In addition, licensing staff salaries, travel, and equipment costs could be included in this area.

Optional: Use this space to tell us any additional information about how funds were spent that is not captured in the items already reported.

7.5 Progress Update

7.5.1 Progress Update - Compliance with health, safety, and licensing standards:

Facilitating compliance with lead agency requirements for inspection, monitoring, health and safety standards and training, and lead agency licensing standards.

Measurable indicators of progress the state/territory reported in section 7.6.3 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan:

Note: The information displayed is from the most recent approved FFY2022-2024 CCDF Plan.
NA

Please include information on the outcomes and numerical targets achieved based on the measurable indicators of progress specified in section 7.6.3 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan: **Each licensed facility is inspected once per trimester. If there are compliance concerns, follow up visits are made more frequently. There were 8068 visits completed by licensing specialists during the reporting period. Of those, 6028 were routine monitor visits. The remaining 2040 visits were for complaints, technical assistance, new studies, corrective actions or informal conferences.**

The Office of Early Childhood offers free training and technical assistance for providers. All staff at licensed facilities are required to take AR New Staff training, which covers health and safety topics, before being left along with children and every three years thereafter. There are two courses in Arkansas that satisfy this training requirement. They are both provided free of charge. Arkansas has a contract with a university to conduct technical assistance and training for providers who have been referred by licensing staff due to compliance issues. In addition,

the licensing specialists provide “intent” training as needed for providers who need a better understanding of the Minimum Licensing Requirements.

8) Evaluating and assessing the quality of child care programs and services, including evaluating how programs positively impact children

Goal: Lead agency investment in effective quality improvement strategies using reliable data from evaluation and assessment

8.1 Evaluation and assessment of center-based programs

8.1.1 Evaluation and assessment of center-based programs:

What measure(s) or tool(s) were used to evaluate and assess the quality of and effective practice in center-based programs during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023?

☒ QRIS

☒ CLASS

☒ ERS

☒ FCCERS

☒ ITERS

☐ State evaluation tool. Describe

☒ Core Knowledge and Competency Framework

☐ Other. Describe

☐ Do not evaluate and assess quality and effective practice

8.1.2 Spending - Evaluation and assessment of center-based programs:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

☒ CCDF quality funds

☐ Non-CCDF funds

☐ CARES funds

☐ CRRSA Funds

☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary

☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside

☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

☐ No

8.2 Evaluation and assessment of family child care programs

8.2.1 Evaluation and assessment of family child care programs:

What measure(s) or tool(s) were used to evaluate and assess the quality of and effective practice in family child care programs during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023?

- ☒ QRIS
- ☐ CLASS
- ☐ ERS
- ☒ FCCERS
- ☐ ITERS
- ☐ State evaluation tool. Describe
- ☒ Core Knowledge and Competency Framework
- ☐ Other. Describe
- ☐ Do not evaluate and assess quality and effective practice

8.2.2 Spending - Evaluation and assessment of family child care programs:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

- ☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

- ☒ CCDF quality funds
- ☐ Non-CCDF funds
- ☐ CARES funds
- ☐ CRRSA Funds
- ☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary
- ☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside
- ☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

- ☐ No

8.3 Spending - Evaluation and assessment of child care programs

8.3.1 Spending - Evaluation and assessment of child care programs:

What is the total amount spent across all funding sources (i.e., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, and ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) on evaluating and assessing the quality of child care programs, practice, or child development during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023?
\$658800

[] Unable to report total amount spent. Indicate reason:

Optional: Use this space to tell us any additional information about how funds were spent that is not captured in the items already reported. **Arkansas contracts with educational agencies to conduct professional development, technical assistance, and quality assessments to support programs in achieving quality. In addition, the state contracts for the evaluation of its programs. The amount reported represents one research contract. The remainder spent in this area is reported as a part of the total in 2.5.1. A breakdown of expenditures by each individual category is not available.**

8.4 Progress Update

8.4.1 Progress Update - Evaluation and assessment of child care programs:

Evaluating and assessing the quality of child care programs and services, including evaluating how programs positively impact children.

Measurable indicators of progress the state/territory reported in section 7.7.2 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan:

Note: The information displayed is from the most recent approved FFY2022-2024 CCDF Plan. **Data indicating growth of QRIS by measuring percentage of provider participation and facility upward movement.**

Please include information on the outcomes and numerical targets achieved based on the measurable indicators of progress specified in section 7.7.2 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan: **There is currently a 73% participation rate in Better Beginnings. Due to the changes in Better Beginnings this year, providers have had the opportunity to move up to levels 4-6.**

October 1, 2022:

Level 1 = 532

Level 2 = 475

Level 3 = 725

Total = 1732

September 30, 2023:

Level 1 = 158

Level 2 = 495

Level 3 = 523

Level 4 = 135

Level 5 = 48

Level 6 = 58

Total = 1417

9) Supporting child care providers in the voluntary pursuit of accreditation

Goal: Support child care programs and FCCs in the voluntary pursuit of accreditation by a national accrediting body with demonstrated, valid, and reliable program standards of quality

9.1 Accreditation Support

9.1.1 Accreditation Support:

How many providers did the lead agency support in their pursuit of accreditation (e.g., financial incentives, technical assistance with the accreditation process, coaching/mentoring by accredited programs) during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023?

☒ Yes, providers were supported in their pursuit of accreditation

- a. Licensed center-based programs **0**
- b. License-exempt center-based programs **0**
- c. Licensed family child care homes **10**
- d. License-exempt family child care homes (care in providers' home) **0**
- e. Programs serving children who receive CCDF subsidy **10**

☐ No lead agency support given to providers in their pursuit of accreditation.

☐ N/A. Describe:

9.1.2 Spending – Accreditation Support:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

- ☒ CCDF quality funds
- ☐ Non-CCDF funds
- ☐ CARES funds
- ☐ CRRSA Funds
- ☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary
- ☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside
- ☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

What is the total amount spent across all funding sources (i.e., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, and ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) on accreditation during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023? **\$17398**

[] Unable to report total amount spent. Indicate reason:

Optional: Use this space to tell us any additional information about how funds were spent
The Office of Early Childhood provided funding for a cohort for family home providers seeking national accreditation. During the reporting timeframe ten child care family home providers have been in the cohort working towards national accreditation through the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC). They are expected to earn their accreditation in December 2023.

[] No

9.2 Progress Update

9.2.1 Progress Update – Accreditation Support:

Supporting providers in the voluntary pursuit of accreditation.

Measurable indicators of progress the state/territory reported in section 7.8.2 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan:

Note: The information displayed is from the most recent approved FFY2022-2024 CCDF Plan.
Data indicating growth of QRIS by measuring percentage of provider participation and facility upward movement.

Please include information on the outcomes and numerical targets achieved based on the measurable indicators of progress specified in section 7.8.2 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan:
The Office of Early Childhood contracts with a university to provide technical assistance and training for providers interested in pursuing state accreditation.

There is currently a 73% participation rate in the state QRIS, Better Beginnings.

September 30, 2023:

Level 1 = 158

Level 2 = 495

Level 3 = 523

Level 4 = 135

Level 5 = 48

Level 6 = 58

Total = 1417

The Office of Early Childhood provided funding for a cohort for family home providers seeking national accreditation. During the reporting timeframe ten child care family home providers

have been in the cohort working towards national accreditation through the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC). They are expected to earn their accreditation in December 2023. Total spending for this cohort was \$17,398.49.

10) Supporting providers in the development or adoption of high-quality program standards related to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development

Goal: Assist programs to meet high-quality comprehensive program standards relating to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development

10.1 High-Quality Program Standards

10.1.1 High-Quality Program Standards:

How did the state or territory help providers develop or adopt high quality program standards during October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023?

☒ QRIS, check which indicators the lead agency has established:

☒ Health, nutrition, and safety of child care settings

☒ Physical activity and physical development in child care settings

☐ Mental health of children

☒ Learning environment and curriculum

☒ Ratios and group size

☒ Staff/provider qualifications and professional development

☒ Teacher/provider-child relationships

☒ Teacher/provider instructional practices

☒ Family partnerships and family strengthening

☐ Other. Describe:

☒ Early Learning Guidelines

☐ State Framework. Describe

☒ Core Knowledge and Competencies

☐ Other. Describe

☐ N/A – did not help provider develop or adopt high quality program standards

10.1.2 Spending - High-Quality Program Standards:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

☒ CCDF quality funds

☐ Non-CCDF funds

- ☐ CARES funds
- ☐ CRRSA Funds
- ☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary
- ☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside
- ☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

What is the total amount spent across all funding sources (i.e., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, and ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) to **support providers in the development or adoption of high-quality program standards related to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development** during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023? \$

☒ Unable to report total amount spent. Indicate reason: **Professional development and technical assistance to support programs in achieving quality including the adoption of high-quality program standards is reported as a part of the total in 2.5.1**

Optional: Use this space to tell us any additional information about how funds were spent that is not captured in the items already reported.

☐ No

10.2 Progress Update

10.2.1 Progress Update - High-Quality Program Standards:

Supporting the development or adoption of high-quality program standards related to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development.

Measurable indicators of progress the state/territory reported in section 7.9.2 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan:

Note: The information displayed is from the most recent approved FFY2022-2024 CCDF Plan. **All CCDF participants are required to participate in Better Beginnings. DCCECE evaluates the process and monitors the number of participants, by star level, monthly. Contractors work closely with providers to assist them in achieving and maintaining higher quality.**

Please include information on the outcomes and numerical targets achieved based on the measurable indicators of progress specified in section 7.9.2 of the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan: **Both Minimum Licensing Requirements and Better Beginnings QRIS requirements support high quality program standards in the areas related to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity and physical development. All CCDF participating providers in Arkansas are required to be a level 2 or above Better Beginnings participant. There are currently 989 CCDF providers who are participating in Better Beginnings, with 53% of them achieving level 3 or above.**

Arkansas maintains contracts to provide TA and training for providers to assist them in achieving their quality goals. All licensed child care providers are eligible to receive TA and training at no cost to them. All licensed providers are required to have ERS and PAS/BAS trainings to introduce them to high quality program standards. Mental health support is available through the behavior help team in Arkansas. Behavioral help is provided free of charge to the providers on an as needed basis to assist them with providing service to children experiences behavioral challenges.

Level 2 = 462

Level 3 = 389

Level 4 = 71

Level 5 = 26

Level 6 = 41

11) Other activities to improve the quality of child care services

Goal: To improve the quality of child care programs and services related to outcomes measuring improved provider preparedness, child safety, child well-being, or kindergarten-entry

11.1 Sustainability funding to child care providers

11.1.1 Sustainability funding to child care providers:

Did the state or territory continue to provide stabilization grants to child care providers using funds other than the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Stabilization funds during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023?

☒ Yes. If yes, describe and check which types of providers were eligible and number served. **All licensed providers were eligible to receive CRRSA funds for expenses related to the operation of their child care program. A total of 1965 providers comprised of center-based and family child care home programs were awarded funds. We did not distinguish the provider type in our data.**

☒ Licensed center-based programs **1965**

☐ License-exempt center-based programs

☒ Licensed family child care homes **0**

☐ License-exempt family child care homes (care in providers' home)

☐ In-home (care in the child's own home)

☐ Other (explain)

☐ No.

☐ N/A. Describe:

11.1.2 Spending – Sustainability funding to child care providers:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

☐ CCDF quality funds

☐ Non-CCDF funds

☐ CARES funds

☒ CRRSA Funds

☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary

☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside

☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

☐ No

11.2 Data Systems Investment

11.2.1 Data Systems Investment:

Did the state/territory invest in data systems to support equitable access to child care (e.g., modernizing and maintaining systems; technology upgrades and data governance improvements to provide more transparent and updated information to parents; a workforce registry; updated QRIS systems; CCR&R updates; monitoring systems) from October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023?

☒ Yes. Describe: **The state continues to invest in maintaining and enhancing the Enterprise Licensing System and the Kid Care child voucher system as well as the Arkansas Professional Development Registry.**

☐ No

11.2.2 Spending - Data Systems Investment:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

☒ CCDF quality funds

☐ Non-CCDF funds

☐ CARES funds

☐ CRRSA Funds

☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary

☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside

☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

☐ No

11.3 Supply and Demand Analysis

11.3.1 Supply and Demand Analysis:

Did the state/territory conduct an analysis of supply and demand or other needs assessment to identify areas of focus to build supply or target funding from October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023?

☐ Yes. Describe findings:

☒ No

11.3.2 Spending - Supply and Demand Analysis:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

☐ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

☐ CCDF quality funds

☐ Non-CCDF funds

☐ CARES funds

☐ CRRSA Funds

☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary

☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside

☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

☒ No

11.4 Supply and Demand Initiatives

11.4.1 Supply and Demand Initiatives:

Did the state/territory implement initiatives designed to address supply and demand issues related to child care deserts and/or vulnerable populations (such as infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, English language learners, and children who need child care during non-traditional hours) during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023? Check all that apply.

☒ Child care deserts

☒ Infants/toddlers

☐ Children with disabilities

☐ English language learners

☒ Children who need child care during non-traditional hours

☐ Other. Describe:

11.4.2 Spending - Supply and Demand Initiatives:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

☒ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

- ☐ CCDF quality funds
- ☐ Non-CCDF funds
- ☐ CARES funds
- ☐ CRRSA Funds
- ☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary
- ☒ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside
- ☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

☐ No

11.5 Provider Compensation and Benefits

11.5.1 Spending - Provider Compensation and Benefits:

What compensation and benefits improvements did teachers/providers receive between October 1, 2022 and September 30, 2023 (check all that apply)? If indicated, how many providers received each type of support?

- ☐ Financial bonuses (not tied to education levels)
- ☐ Salary enhancements/wage supplements
- ☐ Health insurance coverage
- ☐ Dental insurance coverage
- ☐ Retirement benefits
- ☐ Loan Forgiveness programs
- ☐ Mental Health/Wellness programs
- ☐ Start up funds
- ☐ Other. Describe:
- ☒ N/A. Describe: **The benefits listed above were not provided by the State.**

11.5.2 Spending - Provider Compensation and Benefits:

Were funds from any sources (e.g., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, or ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) spent to support this activity?

☐ Yes, if so which funding source(s) were used?

- ☐ CCDF quality funds
- ☐ Non-CCDF funds
- ☐ CARES funds
- ☐ CRRSA Funds
- ☐ ARP Supplemental Discretionary
- ☐ ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside
- ☐ Unable to report. Indicate reason:

☒ No

11.6 Spending – Other Activities to Improve the Quality of Child Care Services

11.6.1 Spending – Other Activities to Improve the Quality of Child Care Services:

What is the total amount spent across all funding sources (i.e., CCDF quality set aside, non-CCDF funds, CARES, CRRSA, ARP Supplemental Discretionary, and ARP Stabilization 10% set-aside) on other activities to improve the quality of child care services during October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023? **\$12607381**

☐ Unable to report total amount spent. Indicate reason:

Optional: Use this space to tell us any additional information about how funds were spent that is not captured in the items already reported.

11.7 Progress Update

11.7.1 Progress Update – Other Activities to Improve the Quality of Child Care Services:

Other activities to improve the quality of child care services supported by outcome measures that improve provider preparedness, child safety, child well-being, or kindergarten-entry.

Measurable indicators of progress the state/territory reported in section 7.10.1 of the 2022-2024 CCDF Plan:

Note: The information displayed is from the most recent approved FFY2022-2024 CCDF Plan.

Communication and outreach to providers and families through public relations and media includes conferences, television appearances, online publications, radio interview, monthly newsletters, news releases, a proclamation, YouTube videos, social media, and blog posts. Family communication and outreach for families is in early childhood development in literacy, math, science, and value of quality learning environment. Provider communication and

outreach covers the importance of earning, maintaining, and increasing, QRIS status and highlighting best practices. Data indicating growth of QRIS by measuring percentage of provider participation and facility upward movement. Data is collected indicating provider and parent outreach and traffic growth to online resources and social media.

Please include information on the outcomes and numerical targets achieved based on the measurable indicators of progress specified in section 7.10.2 of the 2022-2024 CCDF Plan: **The Office of Early Childhood contracts with an agency to provide outreach and education for child care providers, families and the community and to promote high quality care. The goals of the statewide campaign are to:**

- ☐ Inform parents what quality early childhood education looks like
- ☐ Inform the public (including community leaders and business owners/management) of the benefit of having quality care in their communities
- ☐ Illustrate how enrollment in high quality early care and education programs prepares children for school and life
- ☐ Expand the use of subsidized child care (vouchers) in high quality settings
- ☐ Encourage and support provider participation in Better Beginnings

Outreach services provided:

- ☐ Better Beginnings has a presence on Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter)
 - o Facebook 3800 followers
 - o Instagram 326 followers
 - o X 343 followers
- ☐ The Communications Group created and posted three video messages and 30 days of content per month on Better Beginnings social media
- ☐ Two Buzz newsletters are sent out per month, one for providers and one for families
 - o Provider Buzz 1801 subscribers
 - o Family Buzz 7141 subscribers
- ☐ Print ads ☐ Better Beginnings ads are placed in local publications, reaching over 29,000 Arkansans.
- ☐ Better Beginnings website design
- ☐ Conference support ☐ The Communications Group provided on site conference support for two early childhood conferences attended by child care providers from all areas of the state.
- ☐ Press releases ☐ The Communications Group released quarterly press releases regarding relevant topics.
- ☐ TV appearances ☐ Press releases resulted in two TV appearances, one in October regarding Halloween safety and one in December regarding choosing appropriate toys for

children. Better Beginnings was featured in both appearances.

12) Annual Report

Lead agencies must submit an annual report, as required at 45 CFR § 98.53(f) (4), describing any changes to lead agency regulations, enforcement mechanisms, or other lead agency policies addressing health and safety based on an annual review and assessment of serious child injuries and any deaths occurring in child care programs receiving CCDF, and in other regulated and unregulated child care centers and family child care homes, to the extent possible.

12.1 Annual Report and Changes

12.1.1 Annual Report:

Describe the annual review and assessment of serious injuries and any deaths occurring in child care programs receiving CCDF, and in other regulated and unregulated child care centers and family child care homes, to the extent possible. **Data on serious injuries and deaths is collected in the Enterprise Licensing System throughout the year. Licensing managers and supervisors review the data to see if there are trends in the type of injuries occurring in the state. There were no deaths during this reporting period. No changes were made in lead agency regulations, enforcement mechanisms or policies due to the review of serious injuries during this timeframe.**

12.1.2 Annual Report Changes:

Describe any changes to lead agency regulations, enforcement mechanisms, or other lead agency policies addressing health and safety based on the annual review and assessment. **No changes have been made during this reporting period.**

13) American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Child Care Stabilization Grants

Goal: To ensure the lead agency implements an equitable stabilization grant program. The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act included approximately \$24 billion for child care stabilization grants, representing an important opportunity to stabilize the child care sector and do so in a way that builds back a stronger child care system that supports the developmental and learning needs of children, meets parents' needs and preferences with equal access to high-quality child care, and supports a professionalized workforce that is fairly and appropriately compensated for the essential skilled work that they do. Lead agencies must spend most stabilization funds as subgrants to qualified child care providers to support the stability of the child care sector during and after the COVID-19 public health emergency. Section 13 should be used to report on ARP Stabilization Grants ONLY.

13.1 Multiple Grant Programs

13.1.1 ARP Act Stabilization multiple grant programs:

Did you run more than one grant program? If so, list the number of separate grant programs and describe their uses.

☒ Yes. Describe: **Arkansas administered the following seven ARPA stabilization grants:**

Operational: To assist facilities in paying for expenses during and after the public health emergency. An operational grant could be used to pay for whatever was necessary to continue safely operating a child care business.

Quality Improvement: To assist providers in improving the quality of their facility.

Expansion: For existing providers to open a class(es) or repurpose a preschool class to be an infant, toddler and/or school-age class in high-need areas.

Sustainability: To help providers sustain child care operations and continue quality improvement enhancements.

Start-up: To assist existing providers that did not receive previous grants to be used for operational and quality improvement expenses.

Maintenance: To preserve the condition and operation of qualifying programs.

Enrichment: To support program operations and quality.

The state distributed funding for all seven grant types during the report period.

☐ No

13.2 ARP Act Stabilization Grants workforce compensation

13.2.1 ARP Act Stabilization Grant strategies for workforce compensation:

Which of the following methods were used to support workforce compensation (e.g., bonuses, stipends, increased base wages, or employee benefits) with stabilization grants? (check all that apply)

☐ Targeted grants to support workforce compensation (no other allowable uses)

☐ Providing bonus funds to providers that increased child care staff compensation through stabilization grants

☐ Requiring a specific percentage or amount of stabilization grant funding go toward child care staff compensation increases. Percent or amount for staff compensation:

☒ Other (Describe): **The state did not require stabilization funds to be used to support workforce compensation. Providers had the option of using ARPA funds for salaries, bonuses, and employee benefits. The state discouraged providers from using the grants to give raises with the one-time funds.**