



# 2015 Quality Improvement Policy Summit Proceedings Executive Summary



## INTRODUCTION

On April 21, 2015, county, state, and national program implementers, researchers, and policymakers came together for a Policy Summit in Sacramento. It was a day of shared learning and priority setting with a common goal of improving child outcomes through aligned quality improvement efforts. During the Summit, presenters and respondents shared their experiences with and knowledge of effective and efficient approaches to quality improvement, focusing on a few key themes:

- What work effectively supports quality?
- How do the unique needs at a local level impact quality?
- How will the Policy Summit move the needle forward for children and families?
- How can we align efforts between national, state, and local partners?
- What is needed at a systems level in terms of governance, partnerships, and data infrastructure?

## OVERARCHING THEMES ACROSS SUMMIT PRESENTATIONS

Camille Maben, Executive Director, First 5 California, set the stage for the day by asking participants to think about “how our work at First 5 California aligns with what is happening at the local level, and how that work aligns with what is happening nationally.”

Shannon Rudisill, Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development, Administration for Children and Families, opened with the purpose that unites us: “All children need and deserve high-quality early learning experiences that put them on a path to success in school and life.” Sharing what we know and have learned from research and program implementation and among local, state, and national leaders is what moves us all on the path to quality. During the day, researchers, respondents, panelists, and participants reflected on the practices, approaches, and policies that guide our work with and on behalf of children and families.

Out of those reflections, five key themes emerged:

1. A common vision, data-informed goals, and evaluation supported by research provide the blueprint for quality improvement.
2. Partnerships and collaboration are essential to effective, efficient, consistent, scalable, and sustainable quality improvement efforts.
3. The knowledge and skills of the early childhood workforce are critical to attaining and sustaining effective practices that foster positive child outcomes.
4. Infrastructure is the vehicle by which quality improvements are implemented and is the most costly element of quality improvement systems.
5. Comprehensive services, developmental screenings, and attention to culture are essential elements of quality improvement efforts.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The key themes and comments from presenters and participants led to the following policy recommendations to encourage consistent and continuous quality improvement in programs serving young children across the state of California.

**Ensure accountability to a common vision** through coordination of data collection and evaluation systems among state, regional, and local efforts. Provide leadership, training, and technical assistance to achieve:

- A common set of data elements used across programs and the state.
- A shared and agreed-upon plan for evaluation.
- A uniform research agenda to answer the question —“How much of what works, for whom, and under what conditions?”— while allowing for local variation.
- Achieve program monitor and assessor consistency and reliability on standard measures of quality as defined by Quality Rating and Improvement Systems.

**Enhance and align standards** among early learning programs and between state, regional, and local efforts so all policy levers are moving programs in the same direction.

**Develop a strong workforce** to drive continuous quality improvement.

**Finance strategically** to build infrastructure, especially in support of workforce development, to ensure accountability and increase coordination of services.

**Take a comprehensive** approach to quality improvement efforts by incorporating physical and mental health services, family engagement, and family support.

**Ensure diverse representation of programs and providers** participating in quality improvement efforts.