

Themes from Integrated Services focus groups, comments, surveys



Integrated licensing, monitoring and quality improvement

- 703 comments. Some comments address multiple issues.
- Top issues:
 - Monitoring approach
 - Too much paperwork
 - Inconsistency in monitoring standards/staff
 - Managing multiple visits
 - Communication
 - Inconsistency in standards
 - Career lattice/PD/training

Issue: Monitoring approach		(22%)
<p>“Preschool Specialists and the PRI process is perceived as a “coming from strengths” approach, in contrast (sometimes, not always) to Cert, STARS Designation.”</p> <p>“Providers want to be flexible – my wish is that the folks monitoring are equally flexible and exercise common sense.”</p> <p>“I want to have a collaborative relationship with my DHS inspector. I often feel like I'm in the dark as far as how regulations are interpreted. I have a copy of the regulations, but I feel like there is another book somewhere that gives secret information about how to interpret some of the regulations. Why can't I have access to that if I'm being expected to implement these regulations?”</p> <p>“Monitored in 2 county joinders....monitoring tool is the same but not shared between monitors.”</p>	<p>Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring is essential, but too burdensome. • More guidance on certification regulations for providers. • Give providers verification tools ahead of time. Be clear about the monitoring process before it begins. • Take the time to review the actions monitored and explain what is needed to show quality onsite. More constructive feedback. Timely feedback. • Create one online portal where all monitors can review paperwork before the monitoring visit. • Monitoring visits should take 30 minutes. • Focus monitoring on observation, less on paperwork. • EI: Align with PDE and be audited every 5 years. • More flexibility in interpretation for ERS. • Reduce the number of people visiting at one time. 10 is too many. 	

Issue: Monitoring approach

(22%)

“If it were a more informative process and positive I would value it much more. Now it is mostly punitive!”

“The DHS and Keystone STAR's monitor's do not share the information. The paperwork is distinctly different between the two. Keystone STAR's does not share any information during ERS visits at the end, results are emailed to specialist then forward to us. There is no discussion with actual monitor on the subject at hand, either positive or negative. The DHS representative usually shares information at the end.”

“The current monitoring processes of "quality" are redundant and cumbersome. They do not reflect "true quality" early care and education.”

“Extensive time is needed for a program to prepare for a monitoring visit. This time is outside a normal complicated day. It does not fit into the current structure that a program must do to facilitate a quality program.”

“The paperwork changes made from year to year, in addition to regulatory changes, make it more difficult to complete all of the paperwork because we have to learn new systems.”

“I appreciate having all programs monitored. I point to my star four rating as a sign that we have a high quality program.”

“Our inspectors and STARS are so far apart-inspectors openly admit that they hate STARS.”

“I believe that providing progress monitoring for EI students twice a year will give as much information as it does every three months and will alleviate some of the burdening paperwork that is required of all the therapists.”

“Monitoring is good. It allows another eye so to speak to see what I may miss.”

“Regarding STARS, there seems to be limited flexibility or recognition given to programs who maintain the highest quality for many years. The attention, flexibility and assistance goes to programs trying to move forward or struggling to maintain their level.”

Issue: Too much paperwork		(21%)
<p>“Most of the programs I monitor have separate folders for each person that monitors their programs. That takes the focus away from the children and brings it to paperwork, which in my opinion does not measure the quality of the program.”</p> <p>“Several directors find it difficult to maintain the amount of paperwork required to complete a STAR 3 or 4 pre-designation visit. I generally spend on average of 5-10 hours at a site for a higher STAR level depending on the amount of staff.”</p> <p>“We work with 3 monitoring agencies and my staff just feel like they are always doing paperwork and that they can't pay as much attention to the children as they would like.”</p> <p>“The paperwork for the STARs program is a poor way to determine if a center is a quality STAR 4 program or STAR 1.”</p> <p>“I like the idea of the same form for state funded programs, I am just concerned to get everything needed for all it may become too unmanageable.”</p> <p>“Theoretically, it would be helpful to input info into ELN for review ahead of monitoring visits. However, the paperwork for licensing and STARS is already mountainous and so, more input time would reduce the monitoring agency workload, but increase the program workload exponentially.”</p>	<p>Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept same documentation across programs. • Allow online forms, electronic signatures. • Use common forms across programs. • Share information across program monitors. • Allowing monitors to see common program information in PELICAN, PD Registry. • Paperwork for STARS renewal could be streamlined so that information is not repeated on each page. • Allow providers to use their own paperwork for monitoring. • Use same forms from year to year. <p>“It would be helpful if there was acceptance of other inspector’s information.”</p> <p>“CCIS Staff report that it would be helpful if they could see the imaging from CIS on the TANF/FS clients to see verifications, for example- one time documents.”</p> <p>“It would be helpful if paperwork did not change all the time so it is easier to transfer info from previous year into a document for current year”</p> <p>“Due to working with multiple counties across systems, we are preparing similar documents except for specific child files as requested by each county entity. It would be great to have a central location to upload all the same documents, etc that is needed for each county/IU.”</p>	

Issue: Inconsistency in monitoring standards/staff		(16%)
<p>“I often ask my STARS specialist about something and she will say, “Oh, that’s an OCDEL regulation; I don’t know anything about that.” I would really appreciate if she could say, “I don’t know the answer but here is someone who could help you.”</p> <p>“Even across Keys sometimes we get different standards interpretations and it gets very confusing and frustrating.”</p> <p>“Most, but not all, certification representatives apply the regulations consistently.”</p> <p>“There is inconsistency in how ERS assessors interpret and apply standards.”</p> <p>“Monitoring tools change dramatically from year to year and do not appear to be well piloted.”</p> <p>“I feel at times that a lot of “monitoring” visits are all dependent on the person doing the visit. A lot of the format is open to interpretation such as for DHS.”</p> <p>“Again, in my experience, different STARS and Licensing personnel each have their own regulations/standards that they are particular about. These vary depending on the person/year.”</p>	<p>Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors have understanding of other programs and who a provider can contact for help. • Consistency in the paperwork and what they can look at before coming into the center would be extremely beneficial. • Revise the career lattice. • Re-assess consistency among Regional Keys. • Improve consistency among assessors. • One monitoring review for all programs. • Better training for new monitoring staff. • Need more monitoring staff to cover caseload. • Train monitors to interpret information in a consistent uniform manner. • Ongoing reliability testing for certification and other representatives to test their knowledge and understanding of regulations and how they can look in different environments. <p>“Sometimes, we are praised in one county and the very same therapist is criticized in another...conflicting feedback and information. We just come up with a company-wide expectation and go with that...otherwise providers go insane trying to keep up.”</p> <p>For Compliance monitoring, each year it seems that the representatives pick ONE thing that is super important that year.</p>	

Issue: Managing multiple visits

(14%)

“Even providers who have good track records can fail to meet requirements, so allowing them to have fewer monitoring visits isn’t the answer.”

“The timing of monitoring visits can be challenging especially if visits take place at the beginning of the school year or in the summer when teachers want to take vacation.”

“Paper wise everything may look good, but often at visits, underlying issues are identified.”

“I understand the need for everything (to ensure quality services), sometimes it just seems to overtake everything because all anyone does is worry.”

“The program gets confused on what program they are trying to meet the expectations for. The more the programs they are involved in, the more confused they get. Especially lower tiered staff. Directors sometimes understand all the programs and expectations but the staff do not.”

Suggestions:

- Eliminate unannounced visits for STARS.
- Coordinate renewal dates/ training year between Certification and STARS.
- Once Certification has documented that PD hours have been met, they can communicate to STARS who accepts this item as complete.
- Check some information remotely before the monitoring visit.
- For programs with multiple sites, conduct monitoring visits on same day.
- Stagger unannounced visits between programs.
- Develop checklists for monitoring visits.
- Cross-train monitors (Certification, STARS, ERS).
- If STARS program is in good standing, they should have fewer monitoring visits.
- Maintain same number of monitoring visits.
- Implement blackout dates for monitoring visits.
- Make it easier for teachers and staff to understand the different program requirements.
- Home county or county with the most “business” should monitor a program, rather than all counties that the program serves.

“I feel that designators and certification reps could work closely together. We could help each other manage the work and make it much easier on the provider.”

Issue: Managing multiple visits

(14%)

“I wish the STARS and DHS could agree to use the same dates for renewal. Having one in July and one in December makes keeping track of trainings more difficult.”

“Programs who participate in Keystones STARS obviously are meeting the DHS regulations. To help eliminate some work load for the DHS representatives I wonder if the STARS annual designation visit could also be the annual licensing visit.”

“This spring will have an ERS visit as well as certificate visit from DHS and then a STARS visit in the summer. It would be great if they could be streamlined into fewer visits or communication would happen between agencies. So if STARS looks at staff files then DHS doesn't need to. If ERS assesses the playground then DHS doesn't need to.”

Issue: Communication		(10%)
<p>“In my regional key, designators supervise the STARS Managers so they share a lot of details with each other on sites strengths and weaknesses.”</p> <p>“Some corporate providers do not relay information to the actual site, which makes it difficult for the sites to have accurate information.”</p> <p>“Correspondence is often sent to the site as opposed to the lead agency. This can causes confusion in the communication loop.”</p> <p>“Directors sometimes understand all the programs and expectations but the staff do not.”</p> <p>“Providers that have multiple funding sources may not be sure which program or office to call with questions.”</p> <p>““Many ECE programs are trying to navigate Head Start, STARS, and certification requirements. Having a universal language or understanding as it relates to degree requirements (ECE or Human Services related degrees) will help programs make better hiring decisions that could directly impact the program.”</p> <p>“Terminology does not cross over. Daycare licensing uses "Group Supervisor" and "Teacher". A college graduate in a</p>	<p>Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites should be able to determine where their correspondence goes. • Provide an “empowered point of contact” that can answer questions and make decisions across programs. • Universal language between programs. • Consistent messaging across all programs and partners. • Re-fund resource and referral through CCISs. • A survey to families and childcare providers pertaining to specific EI providers. • Clear overview for OCDEL staff and partners (esp. new staff) on each OCDEL program. • Obtain more feedback from out in the field than just providers and stakeholders. • Receive monitoring reports in a timely manner following a visit. • Electronic communications. • Communicate changes in a timely manner so providers can prepare before visits. • Better communications to the legislature about OCDEL successes. <p>“So we need to make sure we have good descriptions of these programs that are “universal, state funded program” that can be used at an office level. Then, of course, local info is individually determined.”</p>	

Issue: Communication		(10%)
<p>non-education or social service field cannot count as a "Group Supervisor" even when that employee is taking the continuing education classes as required by the state. It is a frustrating situation."</p> <p>"There is no coordination between agencies. We would participate in more programs if there was more coordination."</p> <p>We also do not appreciate the way changes to ERS/STARS standards are not communicated timely and efficiently for us to prepare for visits.</p> <p>Getting answers to questions concerning standards and allowable practices is almost impossible.</p>	<p>"It would be helpful to have electronic communications so that communications can be easily forwarded to the staff that need to see it."</p> <p>A broad overview of what programs are available under OCDEL should be required for new staff in the field.</p>	

Issue: Inconsistency in standards		(10%)
<p>“Even though my center scored 100+ in most areas for our NAEYC Accreditation renewal last March, DHS found numerous unnecessary details to cite.”</p> <p>“It seems that the programs follow different rules for each person that comes in to monitor their program, which is very ineffective.”</p> <p>“County EI programs are really struggling with all expectations and inconsistencies.”</p> <p>“Something as basic as the Child Abuse Clearances is a perfect example of people who should work together, but who, instead, make life more difficult. For the FBI fingerprinting, DHS wants one format and the DPE wants another. This means that someone who has their FBI clearance from DPE must get another one for DHS if they wish to work in a DHS licensed center. This is a waste of money and resources.”</p> <p>“In addition, the regulations/standards are very open for interpretation. What is good for one, is not good for another.”</p> <p>“There are some requirement differences for DHS and Keystone Stars. For instance Keystone Stars requires meds to be high and locked and the DHS requirement is locked.”</p>	<p>Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better align program standards to address inconsistencies. • Streamline Keystone STARS standards to focus more on children and interactions, less on paperwork. • Promote collaboration between early childhood programs and early intervention. • Embrace PDE special education regulations. • Make STAR 3 or 4 equivalent to NAEYC accreditation • Make state standards more specific in how county agencies interpret them. • One rating system for all OCDEL programs. • Be consistent in child abuse clearance requirements across all OCDEL programs. • Make standards consistent with local requirements. <p>“Our health and safety, program compliance, quality improvement standards should be an integrated and progressive set.”</p> <p>“DHS requires 6 credit hours but Keystone STARS requires 24 hours. Would it be possible for someone to review only the STARS information and could that count for DHS?”</p> <p>“It would be great for state standards to be more specific in regards to how county agencies interpret them. It is often difficult as a provider in multiple counties to maintain understanding of each individual county interpretation to maintain compliance.”</p>	

Issue: Career lattice/PD/training		(5%)
<p>“Administrative access to PA Key (Registry?) has been helpful.”</p> <p>“Education Retention Awards help staff to feel valued.”</p> <p>“Staff qualifications for STARS have changed frequently in recent years. Some of the changes make it challenging to produce verification for aging teachers.”</p> <p>“The PD Registry does not work as great as it should and the BKC takes too long to show up.”</p> <p>“Depending on the date of training, someone cannot be in compliance with either Keystone STARS or Certification.”</p> <p>“What is considered a “related degree” may differ depending on the program.”</p> <p>“I have actually had to meet providers (with my computer on hand) to assist the provider in registering for PD events.”</p> <p>“Career Lattice is such a critical measure of quality, yet DHS, PDE, and Regional Keys have not found a way to align the way credentials are reviewed.”</p> <p>“The new PD registry was supposed to eliminate some paperwork; it only changed the paperwork.”</p>	<p>Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align renewal dates for certification and Keystone STARS so providers can better manage training requirements. • Consistent interpretation of career lattice across all OCDEL programs. • More training available for programs onsite. • Making staff PDR/training available online for monitoring visits. • More opportunities for local collaborations like the STARS Inquiry virtual meetings. • More PD for family child care and those speaking Spanish as their first language. • More flexibility for education requirements for Pre-K Counts lead teachers. <p>“It would be exciting to have more available on site for programs in terms of training.”</p> <p>“So, local interaction could be promoted as could training opportunities or “conference” opportunities that brings all of these parties together to have real discussions.”</p> <p>“The practice of always having to have the full amount of training hours at any given point/day of the year forces us to do training that is available instead of taking ones we need or want to take when they are available. Setting up a statewide system for training to be completed between September-August sounds like a good system to adopt.”</p>	