

Capital Quality Offers Individualized Coaching to Support Quality Improvement

Insights from Child Care Providers in the District of Columbia

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KEY FINDINGS

Most child care providers in our study reported that [a key benefit of participating in Capital Quality is access to individualized coaching](#).

Most participating providers [described positive, trusting relationships with their quality coaches](#).

Many providers shared that their [quality facilitators give them guidance and support tailored to their needs](#).

Participating providers described varying engagement with their coaches but generally reported specific benefits such as [more confidence in their leadership, an increased sense of professionalism, and a deeper understanding of how to improve instructional and care practices](#).

About two-thirds of providers reported that it is equitable and fair for Capital Quality to [tailor the coaching it offers based on provider rating](#).

Child care quality matters for young children's learning and development and for parents engaged in work and school activities. Families depend on finding safe, stable, and stimulating care that can meet their needs. To increase the quality of its licensed child care programs, the District of Columbia implemented a new quality-rating and quality-improvement system, Capital Quality, District wide in 2018.

Capital Quality offers individualized coaching supports to leaders of participating facilities through coaches called "quality facilitators." To understand providers' perspectives on Capital Quality, a research team at the Urban Institute conducted qualitative phone interviews with 36 child care providers and collected survey data from a subsample of these study participants. These child care providers shared their perspectives on different aspects of Capital Quality, including their thoughts about the individualized coaching they had received.

In this summary, we begin with a short description of the individualized coaching Capital Quality provides. We then present findings from our interviews with providers about the benefits they gained from quality coaching. We conclude with providers' recommendations for improving Capital Quality coaching.

WHAT SUPPORTS DO CAPITAL QUALITY COACHES OFFER CHILD CARE PROVIDERS?

Capital Quality's quality facilitators meet regularly with child care providers to support providers' quality-improvement efforts. They help providers prepare for observations, create continuous quality-improvement plans, and identify quality-improvement activities. They also deliver professional development for facility staff to enhance their care practices and the quality of their care environments, and they support the business practices of both center-based and family child care providers.

WHAT DO CHILD CARE PROVIDERS SAY ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF RECEIVING QUALITY COACHING?

Providers reported various benefits of receiving individual coaching from their quality facilitators, including the following:

- **An ongoing relationship with a trusted adviser.** Quality facilitators meet individually with providers to focus on the issues and concerns providers identify. Providers appreciated having an expert to call on to support their own learning and professional development and who can help improve the overall quality of their programs.
- **Responsive and routine feedback to help set and work toward goals.** Regularly scheduled meetings and accessibility outside scheduled times make quality facilitators a comprehensive support that can help providers continuously work toward their quality goals.
- **Access to a knowledgeable coach with child development expertise.** Participating providers appreciated their quality facilitators' deep expertise on a range of topics. Several study participants described learning how to implement evidence-based curriculum and tailor lesson plans to support children's growth and development.
- **Having someone with whom they can share quality-improvement ideas and who can provide feedback.** During recurring meetings with quality facilitators, providers have dedicated time to reflect and strategize. Several described learning ways to effectively support their teaching staff. Providers either directly trained their staff, applying the new knowledge they had gained, or asked the quality facilitator to visit and offer professional development to their staff.
- **Pertinent and timely information.** Providers said their quality facilitators shared important information about available trainings, upcoming observations, changes in child care regulations, COVID-19 developments, and more. The timeliness of this information is valuable, as many of these topics affect providers' quality-improvement efforts and overall program operations.
- **Hands-on, tailored support and guidance.** Many providers reported that their quality facilitator tailors supports to meet their unique needs and, as a result, programs are seeing improvements. Quality facilitators offer supports on numerous topics, including computer literacy, how to navigate online systems, curriculum, instruction, and how to complete Capital Quality requirements.
- **Access to information and materials that can be passed on to staff and families.** Some study participants reported learning from their quality facilitators about community resources they can share with staff and families. In turn, this information benefits the children and families in their programs.
- **Support preparing for quality observations.** Multiple providers discussed how quality facilitators explain the rating scales used in observations so they can better understand what a quality program should have, their

DC CHILD CARE PROVIDERS PRAISE CAPITAL QUALITY COACHING

Strong, trusting relationship. *"The most positive experience I had with Capital Quality was actually meeting my quality facilitator. She is absolutely excellent. We have forged this great relationship. She allows for a level of transparency that allows me to be vulnerable; therefore, I can get the help I really need....I can tell her straight up, 'This is where we need help. This is our concern.' She is very valuable in helping us to address those needs."*

Responsive and routine feedback. *"I know that if I email her, she will get right back to me. If I have questions, she'll get right back to me. Before our last observations with ITERS [Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale], I asked her if she could come more frequently, and she did. That's never been an issue. I do get the attention that I need...She is a plethora of information. I can ask her anything, and if she doesn't know, she will go out and find out for me."*

Hands-on, tailored supports and guidance. *"My quality facilitator asked me, 'How much of my time do you need? When do you need it? When is the best time of the day? What do you need me to focus on?' She was very flexible in offering solutions to areas where we struggle."*

Access to a child development expert. *"My quality facilitator has really also encouraged not only myself but also the teachers, talking to them and sharing information about intentional teaching and classroom management as well. The biggest thing that we really improved on was our materials in the classroom...certain things that myself and my current director were so used to our routine that a different set of eyes really helped us also materialize and realize what [support] children need in the classroom."*

facilities' current quality levels, and areas to work on. Providers reflected that their quality facilitators gave great advice to better align their programs with quality indicators, especially regarding how to set up their physical space and organize age-appropriate materials for each child age group.

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HOW DO PROVIDERS PERCEIVE COACHING DIFFERENTIATED BY QUALITY RATING?

Capital Quality differentiates the coaching available to providers based on their quality ratings. This gives lower-rated programs the opportunity to get more intensive support from their quality facilitators. When asked, about two-thirds of providers said this practice is equitable and fair and noted that struggling programs may need more support to improve quality and should be able to access it. However, several providers ineligible for intensive support believed all programs should receive the same supports to continue improving their quality.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE, AND RESEARCH

Based on an analysis of data collected from the child care providers in our study, we recommend the following ways to continuously improve Capital Quality coaching:

- **Continue to promote individualized, supportive coaching.** This type of support helps child care providers identify areas for ongoing quality improvement and associated resources. To be most effective, coaching should be tailored to each provider's needs, and quality facilitators must have the necessary expertise and training.
- **Maintain an emphasis on quality facilitators' role in translating Capital Quality's rating scales and quality indicators.** This helps providers better understand quality expectations and where their programs sit on the quality continuum, which helps them set and work toward quality-improvement goals.
- **Conduct follow-up research to learn if the gains reported by study participants persist and lead to higher Capital Quality ratings.** Future research for the larger study will include interviews with quality facilitators to capture their perspectives on Capital Quality. This research may inform future policies and practices so quality-improvement efforts have the greatest reach and impact.

ADDITIONAL READING

Child Care Providers' Reflections on Quality Improvement (full report)

Diane Schilder, Heather Sandstrom, Eleanor Lauderback, Catherine Kuhns, Natalie Spievack, Erica Greenberg, and Peter Willenborg <https://urbn.is/3O3MB6k>

Capital Quality Offers Opportunities for Professional Development and Peer Learning (summary)

Diane Schilder, Eleanor Lauderback, Heather Sandstrom, and Catherine Kuhns <https://urbn.is/3QpIKCK>

Reflections on Capital Quality during the COVID-19 Pandemic (summary)

Catherine Kuhns, Diane Schilder, Heather Sandstrom, and Eleanor Lauderback <https://urbn.is/3QpIPq2>

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