# Florida's Gold Seal Program: Is It Working?

Phyllis Kalifeh, Ed.D

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# **Background**



- Gold Seal program created in 1996 in statutes

- Purpose was to improve the quality of care for working poor families

- Bill attached to the welfare reform statutes under Governor Lawton Chiles

- The Gold Seal symbol was envisioned to be synonymous with the "good housekeeping" seal of approval

# Research Questions

- Do child care programs that possess a Gold Seal Quality Care certificate demonstrate better scores on observed quality as measured by the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) than non-Gold Seal programs?

- Are there significant differences in observed quality between programs accredited by the Gold Seal accrediting associations as measured by scores on the ERS?

# Data Collection

- Eight early learning coalitions (ELCs) representing 11 counties were included
  - Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Broward, Hillsborough, Orange, Brevard, Sarasota and Southwest Florida
  - Only coalitions whose assessors followed the administration protocol for reliability were included in the study
  - The Gold Seal list was obtained for matching GS status with programs having ERS scores

# Measures

- Three ERS assessment measures:
  - Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised (Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 2003)
  - Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 2005)
  - Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale – Revised (Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 2007)

# ERS

- Organized around seven subscales for each instrument.
  - 43 items in the ITERS-R
  - 39 items in the ECERS-R
  - 38 items in the FCCERS-R
- ERS have been tested for reliability and validity and align with indicators of program quality (Clifford, Reska & Rossbach, 2010)

# ERS

- Only six of the seven subscales were used as coalitions do not collect data on subscale 7 which assesses parent and staff variables

- Scoring the ERS:  What do they mean?
  - ➢ <3       = inadequate quality
  - ➢ 3 - <5 = minimal to adequate quality
  - ➢ 5 – 7   = good to excellent

# Strengths and Limitations

- Strengths
  - Reliable data to analyze
  - Objective
- Weaknesses
  - Selection bias
  - Not intended to infer causality

# Descriptive Analyses



- 3,506 individual classroom assessments between 2010 - 2012

- 1,760 centers/homes in 11 counties

- 38.73%  were Gold Seal (1,358)

- 61.27% non-Gold Seal (2,148)

- Infant-Toddler ITERS-R (34.4%)

- Preschool ECERS-R (55.99%)

- Family Child Care FCCERS-R (9.61%)

# Gold Seal Accrediting Associations

| ABBR | Name | (N=) | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| ACSI | Association for Christian Schools International | 7 | 0.52% |
| ACTS | Association of Christian Teachers and Schools | 4 | 0.29% |
| APPLE | Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment | 683 | 50.29% |
| COA | Council on Accreditation | 15 | 1.10% |
| NAC | National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs | 214 | 15.76% |
| NAEYC | National Association for the Education of Young Children | 203 | 14.95% |
| NAFCC | National Association for Family Child Care | 89 | 6.55% |
| NCPSA | National Council for Private School Accreditation | 15 | 1.10% |
| NECPA | National Early Childhood Program Accreditation | 56 | 4.12% |
| SACS | AdvanceED SACS of Florida | 45 | 3.31% |
| UMAP | United Methodist Association of Preschools | 27 | 1.99% |
| | **TOTAL** | **1,358** | 100% |

# ERS Overall and Subscale Mean Scores

Table 3. ERS Overall and Subscale Mean Scores

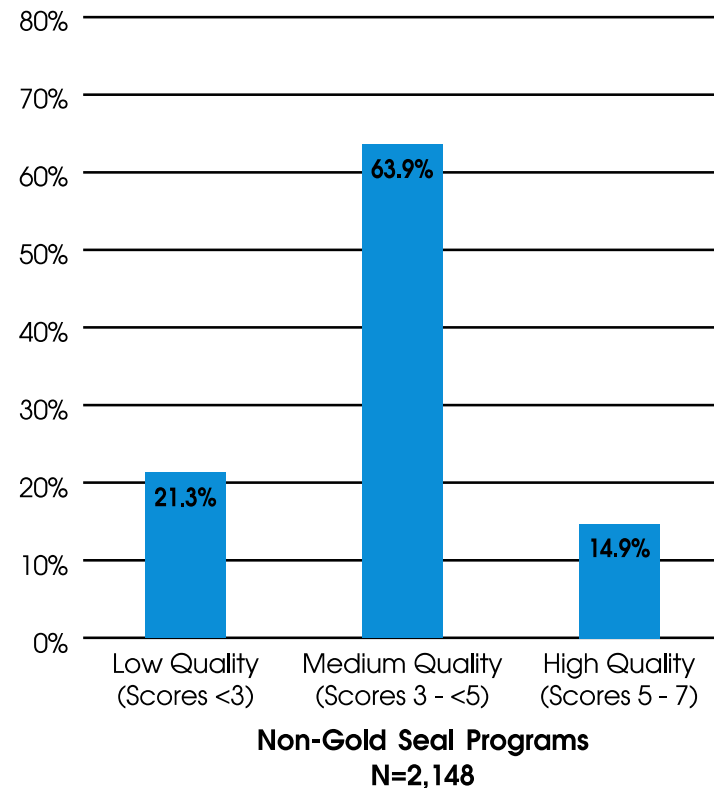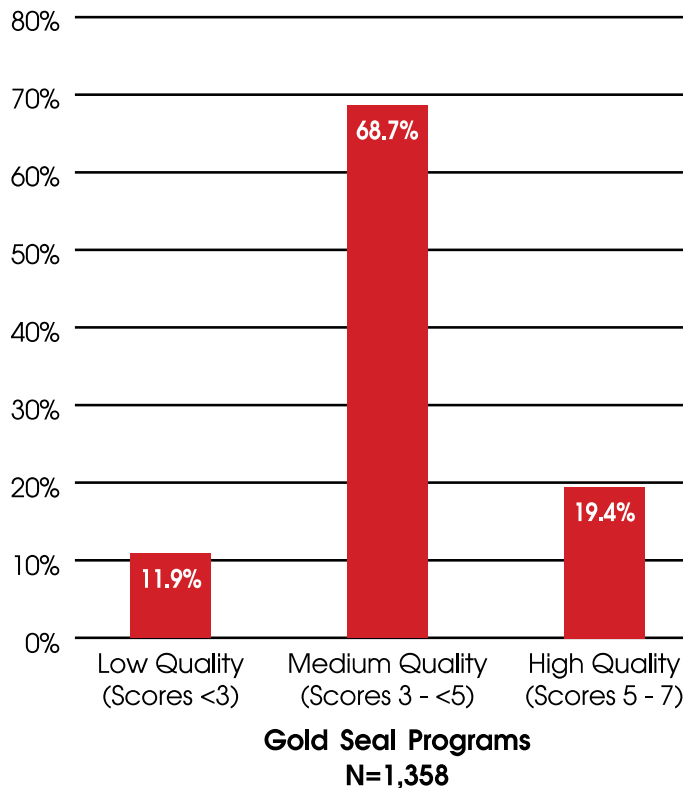| Variable | All | Gold Seal | Non-Gold Seal |
|---|---|---|---|
| ERS Overall Scores | 3.96 | 4.14* | 3.85 |
| Subscale 1: Space/ Furnishings | 3.76 | 3.95* | 3.64 |
| Subscale 2: Personal Care Routines | 2.50 | 2.52 | 2.49 |
| Subscale 3: Listening & Talking | 4.51 | 4.68* | 4.40 |
| Subscale 4: Activities | 4.29 | 4.52* | 4.15 |
| Subscale 5: Interactions | 4.66 | 4.81* | 4.57 |
| Subscale 6: Program Structure | 4.40 | 4.67* | 4.23 |

*Indicates significance at the p<.05 level
Note:  Scores <3 are considered inadequate, scores of 3 - <5 are considered minimal to adequate and scores of 5 – 7 are considered good to excellent, according to ERS.

# Distribution of ERS Scores 2010-2012



Figure 1. Distribution of ERS Scores 2010-2012 (N=3,506)

**Gold Seal Programs**
N=1,358

| Low Quality (Scores <3) | Medium Quality (Scores 3 - <5) | High Quality (Scores 5 - 7) |
|---|---|---|
| 11.9% | 68.7% | 19.4% |

**Non-Gold Seal Programs**
N=2,148

| Low Quality (Scores <3) | Medium Quality (Scores 3 - <5) | High Quality (Scores 5 - 7) |
|---|---|---|
| 21.3% | 63.9% | 14.9% |

# Regression of ERS Scores and Subscale Scores by Accrediting Association

**Table 4. Regression Analyses of ERS Scores and Subscale Scores by Accrediting Association**

| | N= | ERS Total | Space & Furnishings | Personal Care Routines | Listening & Talking | Activities | Interaction | Program Structure |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Subscale 1 | Subscale 2 | Subscale 3 | Subscale 4 | Subscale 5 | Subscale 6 |
| | | M(SD) | M(SD) | M(SD) | M(SD) | M(SD) | M(SD) | M(SD) |
| Non Gold Seal | 2,148 | 3.85 | 3.64 | 2.49 | 4.40 | 4.15 | 4.57 | 4.23 |
| | | (1.0720) | (0.9507) | (0.8653) | (1.4210) | (1.3440) | (1.5440) | (1.6110) |
| **Gold Seal Accrediting Associations** | N= | ERS Total | Space & Furnishings | Personal Care Routines | Listening & Talking | Activities | Interaction | Program Structure |
| | | | Subscale 1 | Subscale 2 | Subscale 3 | Subscale 4 | Subscale 5 | Subscale 6 |
| | | M(SD) | M(SD) | M(SD) | M(SD) | M(SD) | M(SD) | M(SD) |
| ACSI | 7 | 3.83 | 3.32 | 2.81 | 4.19 | 3.72 | 5.30 | 4.26 |
| | | (0.4502) | (0.2153) | (0.8298) | (0.7655) | (0.4305) | (1.1530) | (1.2110) |
| ACTS | 4 | 3.98 | 3.99 | 2.59 | 4.77 | 3.80 | 5.03 | 4.68 |
| | | (0.5712) | (0.8610) | (0.8340) | (1.9850) | (0.5477) | (1.5300) | (1.5330) |
| APPLE | 683 | 4.10* | 3.87* | 2.40 | 4.69* | 4.56* | 4.63 | 4.68* |
| | | (0.9125) | (0.8610) | (0.7721) | (1.2900) | (1.2980) | (1.4200) | (1.5330) |
| COA | 15 | 4.33 | 4.09 | 2.42 | 5.02 | 5.20* | 4.59 | 4.52 |
| | | (0.7538) | (1.0870) | (0.5385) | (0.7505) | (0.8835) | (1.1200) | (1.3730) |
| NAC | 214 | 4.39* | 4.20* | 2.87* | 4.81* | 4.77* | 5.30* | 4.88* |
| | | (0.8428) | (0.8663) | (1.0160) | (1.1430) | (1.1320) | (1.2870) | (1.4820) |
| NAEYC | 203 | 4.31* | 4.11* | 2.48 | 4.94* | 4.60* | 5.11* | 4.98* |
| | | (.8554) | (.8752) | (.8631) | (1.2040) | (1.1060) | (1.4220) | (1.4740) |
| NAFCC | 89 | 3.76 | 3.80 | 2.67* | 4.11 | 3.83 | 4.36 | 3.97 |
| | | (1.0270) | (1.0840) | (.7806) | (1.4480) | (1.1730) | (1.6070) | (1.5320) |
| NCPSA | 15 | 3.70 | 3.45 | 2.16 | 4.37 | 4.13 | 4.53 | 4.11 |
| | | (1.0550) | (.9120) | (1.2940) | (1.2770) | (1.3000) | (1.5940) | (1.7580) |
| NECPA | 56 | 3.84 | 3.91* | 2.55 | 4.17 | 4.19 | 4.30 | 4.06 |
| | | (.9271) | (.8567) | (.7785) | (1.2930) | (1.1530) | (1.6500) | (1.6060) |
| SACS | 45 | 3.96 | 3.89 | 2.34 | 4.49 | 4.22 | 4.78 | 4.50 |
| | | (1.0460) | (1.0790) | (.7014) | (1.4720) | (1.4610) | (1.7140) | (1.5480) |
| UMAP | 27 | 4.41* | 3.99 | 2.92* | 4.94* | 4.56 | 5.92* | 4.79 |
| | | (.6749) | (.8553) | (.9193) | (1.4830) | (.7298) | (1.0480) | (1.1640) |

SD = Standard Deviation
*Indicates significance with p-value <.05

# ERS Types by Gold Seal Status

Table 5.  ERS Types by Gold Seal Status

| Type | Infant-Toddler ITERS-R | | Preschool ECERS-R | | Family Child Care Homes FCCERS-R | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Status | (n) | Mean | (n) | Mean | (n) | Mean |
| GS | 738 | 3.84* | 801 | 4.36* | 89 | 3.76 |
| Non-GS | 468 | 3.46 | 1,162 | 4.10 | 248 | 3.80 |

*Indicates significance at the p<.05 level

# Research Question #1

- Do child care programs that possess a Gold Seal Quality Care certificate demonstrate better scores on observed quality as measured by the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) than non-Gold Seal programs?
  - Gold Seal (M=4.14, SD .91635)
  - Non-Gold Seal (M=3.85, SD 1.01722)
  - Less than a third of a point overall difference

# Subscales

- Differences were significant on all subscales with the exception of Subscale 2:  Personal Care Routines.

# ERS Types

- Scores for Infant-Toddler classrooms are likely to be lower than any other setting

- Family child care homes are slightly higher than infant-toddler classrooms

- Preschool classrooms score higher on the ERS than any other setting

# Settings

- Differences were statistically significant between Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal programs for Infant-Toddler settings and Preschool settings

- There were not statistically significant differences between Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal for Family Child Care Homes.

# Overall Quality



- Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study (1995)
  - Conducted ERS in 401 centers in four states
  - Yielded 802 assessments
  - 11% scored below 3 (inadequate)
  - 24% scored 5 or above (good to excellent)
- Florida Gold Seal Study (2013) After 16 Years of Intervention Comparatively
  - 11.9% of GS scored below 3 (inadequate)
  - 19.4% of GS scored 5 or above (good to excellent)

# Research Question #2

- Are there significant differences in observed quality between programs accredited by the different accrediting associations as measured by scores on the ERS?
  - ERS scores for four accrediting associations were significant different from non-Gold Seal programs:
    - NAC
    - NAEYC
    - APPLE
    - UMAP

# Accrediting Associations

- Subscales
  - NAC was significantly different from non-GS on all subscales
  - NAEYC significantly different from non-GS on all subscales except #2: Personal Care Routines
  - APPLE significantly different from non-GS on all subscales except #2: Personal Care Routines and #5: Interactions
  - UMAP significantly different from non-GS on three of six subscales

# **Caution**

- Three Gold Seal accrediting associations are named in the GS statute:  NAEYC, NAFCC and NECPA.  Others must meet or exceed the standards of these three; however, only NAEYC was significantly different from non-GS

- Caution is to be taken in interpreting these results as some accrediting associations had very low numbers

# Implications for Policy and Practice

- Any strategy to improve quality must consider the ECE workforce as central to the policy conversation
  - Turnover
  - Salaries and Wages
  - Education and Professional Development

# Implications for Policy and Practice

- State spends approximately $33 million annually in supplemental GS payments

- Approximately $200,000 annually in sales tax exemptions

- Property tax abatements for GS programs represent another significant benefit for GS providers

# State Considerations

- Consider policies for removing school readiness funding from providers providing poor /inadequate care more quickly to reduce negative consequences for vulnerable children

- Consider policies to incentivize the workforce to reduce turnover, increase education and improve the salaries and wages (e.g. Georgia parity strategies, Child Care WAGE$, etc.)

# State Policy Considerations

- Consider not only comparing the standards of accrediting associations but practices as well, e.g. onsite review of each program seeking accreditation vs. attestation of programs

- Consider QRIS type strategies to continually improve overall quality

# Implications for Accrediting Associations

- Can use these results to examine standards, policies and practices
  - Review preparatory materials to ensure they align with expectations
  - Review opportunities for training and technical assistance to prepare programs for accreditation
  - Share results with membership to acknowledge successes or gain support for revising standards and practices to improve overall quality

# Implications for Early Learning Coalitions

- Consider strategies to provide limits to funding for GS programs providing poor quality

- Compare these results with CLASS results to determine whether results align

- Use the results to educate board members and providers

# Implications for ECE Programs

- Self-evaluate to determine the level of quality provided and make efforts to improve

- Request help in understanding ERS scores and areas how improvements can be made

- Use good reports as a marketing strategy and share results with parents and the community

- If a GS program, examine results of the accrediting association to determine how it fared in the overall comparison

# Future Studies

- Studies that examine teacher variables in the context of GS vs. non-GS programs

- Experimental studies on GS and non-GS programs controlling for other variables such as or SES, location, workplace supports, demographics, language proficiency, etc.

- Better data systems are needed to link child characteristics, ECE program characteristics and subsequent child outcomes.

- QRIS inputs and outcomes to determine most efficient system drivers to improve child outcomes

# For questions, contact:

**Phyllis Kalifeh, Ed.D.**
President & CEO
Children's Forum, Inc.
2807 Remington Green Circle
Tallahassee, FL  32308
(850) 681-7002
Website:
http://www.thechildrensforum.com
Email:
pkalifeh@thechildrensforum.com