

BC QAS Frequently Asked Questions

1. BC already has the child care licensing regulations. Why do we need a quality assessment standard?

Currently, BC licensed child care is regulated by the Ministry of Health, through child care licensing officers. The BC Child Care Licensing Regulations (CCLR) ensures basic standards for health and safety regulation - from group sizes, educator qualifications, physical facility requirements, health standards and a requirement to have a program that offers cognitive, language, physical and social learning.¹ It does not regulate curriculum, quality of administration, or quality of Educator interactions. It does not require that a licensed child care program comply with the provincial Early Learning Framework. Essentially, it does not measure for quality.

Research has found that in regions that use an accreditation / quality assessment standard, not only environmental and administrative quality improves, but Educator turnover - one of the biggest factors in quality - decreases significantly.²

BCCCOA's research in using the BCQAS in BC has shown:

- Educators report a preference for the BC QAS over the other standards, as rubrics allow for teacher autonomy, individual pedagogical philosophies while still providing a framework for quality
- 6 months after initial implementation, Educators and Administrators report measurable improvements in teaching skills, program quality, and program environment
- Parents report a belief that the quality of the child care program has increased when comparing pre vs post use of the BCQAS.

2. Why does the BCQAS include assessment areas beyond what tools such as ECERS cover?

Peer-reviewed research states that quality programs are ones that will typically feature:

- "A workforce that is appropriately skilled, trained, and compensated with ongoing investment in workforce skills and professional development
- Rigorous program standards, ongoing training and technical assistance, and continual quality assessment and improvement"³
- "Small group sizes and high adult-child ratios
- Language-rich environment
- Developmentally appropriate curriculum
- Safe physical setting"⁴
- "Warm and responsive adult-child interactions"⁵

¹ Community Care and Assisted Living Act, Child Care licensing Regulation, Schedule G. (2018)
http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/332_2007

² Bukutu, C., & Tara Hanson, X. C. Caregiver turnover in Alberta accredited day care programs. T6C 4E3, 42.

³ Center on the Developing Child (2007). *Early Childhood Program Effectiveness* (InBrief). Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.

⁴ Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2007). *A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy: Using Evidence to Improve Outcomes in Learning, Behavior, and Health for Vulnerable Children*. <http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu>

⁵ Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2007). *A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy: Using Evidence to Improve Outcomes in Learning, Behavior, and Health for Vulnerable Children*. <http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu>

As a child care operator, you know that your child care program is not simply the environment it occurs in. This is only one small factor of a child care program, and of quality in child care programs. Outcome-based quality standards, such as Alberta's child care accreditation standards⁶, Australia's⁷ National Quality Standard and NAEYC's Early Learning Program Accreditation Standards look at more than just the environment - they understand how Educator qualifications, Educator in-service training and mentorship, service organization, administrative support, family involvement, policy and financial practices, curriculum, as well as the environment and materials combine to create a learning environment. Looking at only one portion of this does not create a clear picture of quality, nor does it explain how to address improve quality.

*For example, if a program has a reading area in disrepair - is it because the program isn't adequately funded to purchase materials? Is it because the Educators need professional development to improve inclusive practice for children with additional support needs? Is it because the service has no established procedures for maintaining the classroom learning materials? Is it because there is no regular community literacy programming that works together with the library, putting additional pressure on existing classroom learning materials? Is it because the Educators do not get administration release time and so are expected to clean and maintain the environment outside of work hours? Is it because the service has inadequate cleaning services? Is it because there is no monthly maintenance review that includes classroom materials? Is there no parent-involvement expectation, so Educators are taking on more work than what might be expected in a program with parent involvement expectations? In child care, things are interconnected, and looking at only one part of child care service delivery in isolation does not provide an accurate understanding of quality or **why** quality levels are where they are.*

3. Some of these elements are very prescriptive while others are very open-ended. Why?

More prescriptive standards such as what is found in ECERS,⁸ ITERS, Toronto's Assessment for Quality Index⁹ and NAEYC's Early Learning Program Accreditation Standards¹⁰ do not allow for diversity in philosophy and do not reflect the BC Child Care Licensing Regulations (CCLR). They also do not allow program Educators the opportunity to engage in critical reflection about best practice, why certain practices are implemented within a particular setting, and the possibility of responding to contextual community needs, goals and interests. However, prescriptive standards provide a clear pathway towards how to attain quality and many areas of child care service provision do have very clear cut expectations of what quality is. Prescriptive standards also lead to improved "inter-rater reliability" - meaning that when assessed, the outcome tends to be the same, regardless of who is doing the assessment.

Open-ended, outcome based standards reflect the BC CCLR and the BC ELF. These respect the diverse ways that child care quality can be achieved, the unique and contextual needs of various child care settings, and the autonomy required for competent, capable, well-supported and trained Educators to do their jobs. Outcome based standards leave a lot of space for interpretation based on

⁶ Alberta Child Care Accreditation standards. https://www.aelcs.ca/accreditationstandards/Documents/S_ACAS_Booklet_WS_1.3_Oct-26-17.pdf

⁷ Australia Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2018) National Quality Standard Assessment and Rating Instrument https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-01/NQS_AssessmentAndRatingInstrument.pdf

⁸ Harms, T., Clifford, R. M., & Cryer, D. (2014). *Early childhood environment rating scale*. Teachers College Press.

⁹ Toronto Children's Services (2017) Early Learning and Care Assessment for Quality Improvements https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/968a-aqi_preschool_guidelines.pdf

¹⁰ https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/accreditation/early-learning/standards_and_assessment_web_0.pdf

who is completing the assessment - as anyone who has experienced frequent licensing officer turn over in BC will know!

The BC QAS works to blend the two approaches - providing enough prescriptive standards that are grounded in research and provincial regulations and frameworks and best-practice standards so that child care services have guidance towards what steps to take to reach a high quality rating but offering enough outcome based standards to allow for teacher autonomy, service philosophy and community need.