

**New Mexico IDEA Part C – Early Intervention  
Family Infant Toddler (FIT) Program  
Race To the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant  
Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS)**

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**Background:**

- AIM HIGH Star Rating System for child care and Pre-K since 1999
- 5 star levels with differential reimbursement for child care subsidies
- The Children Youth & Families Department has designed the FOCUS TQRIS process for NM

**RTT-ELC application:**

- NM's application included of all Early childhood programs in the TQRIS:
  - Child care
  - Pre-K
  - Head Start / Early Head Start
  - IDEA Part B – 619 Preschool Special Education
  - Home visiting
  - IDEA Part C Early Intervention
- No real thinking about what that would entail – just that ALL programs should be included!

**Essential Elements of Quality:**

- NM's commitment is to have a common set of quality elements that would be assessed by each early childhood program
- Within each Essential Element of Quality the measures and the tools utilized will vary
- Current NM Essential Elements of Quality in FOCUS TQRIS:
  - Licensing Compliance
  - Health Promotion Practices
  - Staff Qualifications and Professional Development
  - Physical and Social / Emotional Environment
  - Program Administration
  - Continuous Improvement
  - Assessment & Curriculum
  - Cultural Competence
  - Staff – child ratios
  - Family involvement / Family Engagement

**Part C Early Intervention – NM Family Infant Toddler (FIT) Program:**

What does it mean for the FIT Program Part C?

- Moving beyond compliance to focusing on quality – moving from just the Annual Performance Report and the Community Based Assessment (monitoring) to assessment of quality practices
- Self Assessment & Continuous Quality Improvement process - FIT Providers to be trained to utilize tools to assess their internal quality and make changes to improve performance
- Support through coaching – Coaching in use of tools and how to make improvements
- Verification by the FIT Program – Periodic onsite verification of fidelity of implementation of tools and process
- Assignment of Star level - based on implementation of tools in each of the quality elements with fidelity and consistency.

- Incentives and support – Providers at the higher star levels may receive less frequent verification visits; providers at a lower star level will more frequent verification visits and ongoing coaching and support.

**TQRIS Quality Element - Sample:**

Measuring quality Early Intervention practices:

- Provider agency receives training and coaching in the use of an “observational tool\*” to assess implementation of quality practices by staff
- Provider agency utilizes videotaping of early intervention session to assess staff’s implementation of quality practices
- Provider agency utilizes results of tool to address staff’s need for professional development (mentorship, training etc)
- FIT Program verifies provider agencies use of tool and that they addressed concerns.

3 Star (sample rating)	4 Star (sample rating)	5 Star (sample rating)
Agency conducts observation tool with staff irregularly	Agency conducts observation tool with staff at least once a year	Agency conducts observation tool with staff at least twice a year
Agency conducts observational tool with poor level of fidelity	Agency conducts observational tool with some fidelity	Agency conducts observational tool with a high level fidelity
Agency conducts inconsistent professional development with staff identified as needing improvement	Agency conducts good professional development with staff identified as needing improvement	Agency conducts strong professional development with staff identified as needing improvement

\*Considering using the NECTAC 7 key Principles – and the practices listed OR the DEC Recommended Practices (currently being revised), as the basis for developing the quality practices observational tool.

**What’s ahead?:**

- Determining the measures for the essential elements of quality, to align as must as possible with Home visiting and Early Head Start.
- Determining and if necessary developing tools to measure quality, including:
  - Quality practices observational tool
  - Quality IFSP tool
  - Quality Evaluation / Assessment tool
- Validation of the tools, if needed.
- Training and TA on use of video – RTT-ELC budget includes some funds for hardware.
- Training and coaching of providers in the use of the tools.
- Piloting of the tools and self assessment.
- Validation of the FOCUS TQRIS rating process.