



New Mexico FOCUS: Evaluation Study Overview 2016-2017



About Child Trends

Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that improves the lives and prospects of children and youth by **conducting high-quality research** and **sharing the resulting knowledge** with practitioners and policymakers.

We . . .

1. take a whole child approach
2. study children in the real world
3. want children to flourish
4. value objectivity and rigor
5. pursue knowledge development *and* knowledge transfer

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Child Trends Evaluation Team

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- New Mexico-based data Collection Team

Evaluation Partners

- New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department
- New Mexico Public Education Department
- University of New Mexico – Center for Education Policy Research

Research Support:
Wilder Research
Creative Arc

Goals of our Evaluation Partnership

To support the continuous improvement of FOCUS by examining how FOCUS is implemented and determining if the rating criteria and process are meaningful, fair, and accurate for all programs.

Research Questions

1. What is the evidence base for the FOCUS criteria and underlying key concepts?
2. Are the tools and strategies for rating programs performing as expected?
3. How are FOCUS quality components implemented in practice?
4. To what extent are children's developmental gains related and observed program quality related to the components assessed in FOCUS?
5. What are programs' and consultants' perceptions of FOCUS?

1. What is the evidence base for the FOCUS criteria and underlying key concepts?

Purpose:

Addresses the design of the FOCUS system and the potential for FOCUS to support desired outcomes for children and programs.

Approach:

Our team examined the research basis for the quality components included in FOCUS to identify potential gaps and opportunities.

2. Are the tools and strategies for rating programs performing as expected?

Purpose:

To examine if the process for rating programs is fair and accurate, and to explore the potential for an alternative rating process through a “virtual pilot” of new and revised criteria.

Approach:

Our team has reviewed documentation of recently rated programs, conducted interviews with staff who assign FOCUS ratings, and will be surveying FOCUS program providers for additional feedback on the criteria.

3. How are FOCUS quality components implemented in practice?

Purpose:

To understand how programs are engaging with and responding to the criteria related to: (1) the Full Participation of Each Child; (2) the Foundations of Quality; (3) Intentional Teaching; and (4) Intentional Leadership requirements.

Approach:

Our team will use a multi-method approach that includes classroom observations, and surveys and interviews with program directors, classroom teachers, and consultants.

4. To what extent can children's growth and learning be related to the quality components included in FOCUS?

Purpose:

To examine whether there is a relationship between programs that are successful at implementing components of FOCUS and children's developmental gains across the school year.

Approach:

Our Child Trends team of data collectors will visit participating programs in the fall and spring of the 2016-17 school year to measure language, early math skills, and thinking skills using game-like activities with 4-8 children in selected classrooms.

5. What are programs' and consultants' perceptions of FOCUS? ?

Purpose:

The perspectives of multiple roles involved in FOCUS can help guide how FOCUS can best support programs in implementing the components of FOCUS.

Approach:

Program directors and staff will be surveyed and/or interviewed to learn what components of FOCUS are working best for them and what components are most challenging.

What will programs be asked to do?

All FOCUS program directors will be asked to participate in a short online survey. Three respondents will win a \$100 gift card.

A subgroup of FOCUS programs will be recruited to participate in the following activities, \$100 gift cards will be given to each participating classroom:

- Participate in one on-site observation
- Allow our team to conduct a brief set of activities with 4-8 children in your class
- Complete a brief survey on the 4-8 selected children's social/emotional development.
- For an additional \$100 selected classrooms may also be recruited to participate in on additional on-site observation and interview.

How will the results be used?

- The results will support continuous quality improvement of FOCUS.
- The research team will offer recommendations based on the findings and on experience conducting QRIS evaluations in other states.
- Findings and recommendations from the evaluation will be designed to help program developers and policymakers make decisions about FOCUS and to set goals for improvement.

**To participate or for more information
please contact:**

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