

Quality of Early Childhood Services Tool (QUEST)

The QUEST offers a checklist of key qualities to observe in early childhood service delivery. These qualities reflect important provider actions, linked to impactful service delivery in the literature. Use the QUEST to rate the quality of parenting program delivery, whether through home visits or group sessions.



Photo: UNICEF/Zambia

PROVIDER ACTIONS



Yes observed



If yes, how well?

(2) Adequate/
could be improved

(3)
Very good

How well did the Provider review **homework** from the previous session?

How well did the Provider address new ways to **play or talk** with a child? (show **new** age-appropriate games, use playthings, how to talk)

How well did the Provider demonstrate/ coach **responsivity** (e.g. how to follow child's lead, respond to child's talk)

How well did the Provider **demonstrate** the new practices or activity or have a parent practice new activity with a young child?

How well did the Provider provide one or more **opportunities** for parents to actually **do** the new play/talk practices with their child during the session?

How well did the Provider **coach parents** while they practiced with their child?

How well did the Provider explain the **benefits for children** or ask parents to comment on benefits they noticed?

How well did the Provider use the **visual illustrative material** (posters, play & talk cards, not playthings) for the given activities?

How well did the Provider encourage parents to disclose **problems** to enacting practices and discuss **solutions** (during homework review or practice)?

How well did the Provider **review** at the end the main messages and practices or ask parents to review them?

PARTICIPANT ACTIONS



Yes observed

Did parent(s) report playing/talking with their child since the previous session (ie do the homework)?

Did parent(s) practice activities with children during session?

Did parent(s) have their own play objects available during session?

Definitions of Key Terms



At the beginning, the Provider should ask if the family has been trying activities they discussed previously (**homework**), how it went, if there were problems enacting the new practices. The provider should ask parents to show what they tried, praise or provide clarifications, or do a demonstration, as needed.



Play and/or Talk should be central to at least one activity. If play, they should use materials available in the home. If talk, they should use pictures, objects or songs/rhymes – have a conversation with child. A new game or activity to do with the child should be taught to parents, and how to increase in complexity as children age. Low rating if the Provider brings store-bought playthings, teaches something already known by parents and easy/too-difficult for the child, making the child repeat names of things rather than having a conversation.



Responsivity refers to the parent noticing cues/signals made by the child and responding to their intended meaning. The Provider should model this, demonstrate it to the parent, coach parent on signals that were missed and how to respond to them in a better way.



Demonstration means that someone (Provider or parent) behaviorally enacts the practice with the child to show how it should be performed, e.g. play, talk, sing, read. Refers to a new practice being introduced to the family for the first time.



Opportunities refers to giving parents time to enact the new practice with their child while the Provider watches with interest. This rehearsal allows the parents to become more skilled at the new practice and to see how the child reacts.



Coach refers to helpful reactions when the parent enacts the new practice with the child. Praise about anything done well, and coach by providing helpful corrective and constructive feedback on how to improve.



Benefits for children should be an explanation of why parents are being asked to adopt the new practices. These should not be overblown promises of genius but rather that such practices help children learn, help their brain to grow. Practices should not be specific to just language or fine motor – they usually expand all aspects of mental development simultaneously.



Visual material is important both as a job aid for the Provider and as a clarification for the parent. These should be illustrations, with minimal text if any, used while talking with parents, and not simply left at home.



Problem solving is an important component of behaviour change. New practices are rarely adopted without problems. Providers should encourage parents to talk about problems encountered when trying the practices then or outside the session. Providers should help parents come up with solutions that suit them. It is not sufficient to tell parents to simply try it again.



Review usually entails going over the main points or practices addressed during the session. The purpose is to help parents recall what they learned and plan to continue those practices in the coming weeks.

References

Aboud, F., Choden, K., Hapunda, G., Sichimba, F., Chaluda, A., Contreras Gomez, R., Hatch, R., Dang, S., Dyenka, K., Banda, C., & Omoeva, C. (2024). Using Implementation Research to Inform Scaling of Parenting Programs: Independently Conducted Case Studies from Zambia and Bhutan. *Children*, 11(4), 477. <https://doi.org/10.3390/children11040477>

Aboud, F., Choden, K., Tusiime, M., Gomez, R. C., Hatch, R., Dang, S., Betancourt, T., Dyenka, K., Umulisa, G., & Omoeva, C. (2023). A Tale of Two Programs for Parents of Young Children: Independently-Conducted Case Studies of Workforce Contributions to Scale in Bhutan and Rwanda. *Children*, 10(8), 1413. <https://doi.org/10.3390/children10081413>

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Using QUEST in your work?
Here is how to cite the tool:
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