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NEWS RELEASE

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Five Hundred Child Care Centers Join the Early Learning Coalition's Quality Rating Improvement System

Miami, June 4, 2012 -- The **Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe** (ELC) has welcomed its 500th provider into **Quality Counts**, the county's **Quality Rating Improvement System** (QRIS).

Quality Counts is a voluntary five star-rating system launched in January 2008 that assesses early learning programs in diverse settings and assists in improving and maintaining high quality standards using a five-star method of evaluation, and offers incentives and resources to help early care and education centers reach their quality goals. It evaluates providers on factors such as an atmosphere that promotes learning; teacher certification; student/teacher ratios; and much more.

"Reaching the 500th mark demonstrates the dedication of these providers to provide high quality early education," said Evelio Torres, president and CEO of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe.

Quality Counts is a partnership between the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe, The Children's Trust and the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation. The program is administered in collaboration with Florida International University, Family Central Inc., Devereux Florida, the Children's Forum, the United Way Center for Excellence, the National Institute for Innovative Leadership, Miami-Dade Community Action Agency Head Start/Early Head Start, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, and Redlands Christian Migrant Association.

"The ultimate goal is to ensure children are getting the best care and education to prepare them for success in school and life," added Torres. "We are thankful for the 500 early care and education providers who have committed to a standard of high quality while helping us build and grow this program. We look forward to adding additional providers who are eager to enter the program in the near future."

Among the 500 early care and education providers that have joined the Quality Counts program: Miami-Dade Community Action Agency Head Start/Early Head Start, the Redlands Christian Migrant Association, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, and numerous private, faith-based and family home-based centers.

For participating in Quality Counts, the ELC offers its early care and education providers - based on their eligibility - with classroom and instructional materials, financial incentives, training, WAGE\$®, specialized technical assistance, educational career advising and other marketing resources.

"Making a difference in the community through early childhood education has been the most important mission of Quality Counts," said Torres. "This is beneficial to parents because it gives them the information to make informed choices about the best care and education for their children."

For more information about the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe and the Quality Counts initiative, visit www.elcmdm.org; or contact Tarnell Carroll at 305.646.7720, ext. 236 or email tcarroll@elcmdm.org.

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