

Child Care Research Partnerships: 2019 Grantee Abstracts

State: Arkansas

Grantee: SRI International

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Implementation of Arkansas CCDF Policies to Prevent Expulsion and Promote Children's Social-Emotional Growth

This collaborative research project is a partnership between the Arkansas Department of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (AR DCCECE) and two research organizations: SRI International and National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP). AR DCCECE is implementing a set of policies and initiatives intended to support young children's social-emotional development, reduce the use of exclusionary practices such as suspension and expulsion in their Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) funded programs, and promote overall child care program quality. There is a growing body of research on the prevalence of exclusionary practices in early childhood programs and their negative implications for children's development (Adamu & Hogan, 2015; US Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2016). In response, new regulations included in the 2014 reauthorization of the Child Care Development Block Grant require states to develop policies to prevent the use of exclusionary practices in early childhood programs. AR DCCECE and CCDF administrators across the United States need additional information on how to support child care providers to address this issue.

This study will examine three implementation factors that prior research indicates may limit or enhance the success of these initiatives. The first implementation factor is that state and local CCDF administrators have sufficient data and tools to monitor and provide targeted support to programs implementing these initiatives. The second implementation factor is CCDF providers' awareness and positive view of the state's expulsion prevention policy and the available supports. The third factor is CCDF providers' access to high-quality professional development and early childhood mental health consultation. We will use a mixed methods research study that includes: (a) analysis of extant state administrative data, (b) state-wide online surveys of providers of CCDF-funded programs (center-based program directors and providers and home-based child care providers), and (c) regionally-based case studies of CCDF providers and professional development specialists in six regions of the state.

The three partners—AR DCCECE, SRI, and NCCP—have designed a set of study activities that produce and disseminate policy-relevant findings for a range of local state and national stakeholders during each of the project's four years. The team will also engage in a set of structured activities to build the capacity of AR DCCECE to conduct rigorous policy-relevant research.