

# Using Administrative Data to Understand Local Variation in Policy Implementation

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## **Maryland-Minnesota Research Partnership: Early Care and Education Choices, Quality and Continuity for Low-Income Families**

Child Trends and University of Minnesota  
Maryland State Department of Education and  
Minnesota Department of Human Services  
RESI (Towson University), Wilder Research

# Acknowledgements

## Principal Investigators:

- Kathryn Tout, Nicole Forry & Tamara Halle, Child Trends
- Liz Davis, Amy Susman-Stillman & Caroline Carlin, University of Minnesota

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# CCDBG Act of 2014

- Includes a provision that states set a minimum eligibility period for CCDF subsidies of 12 months.
- About half of states had 12-month eligibility periods prior to reauthorization, based on the CCDF Policies Database. (Minton, et al. 2013)
- Maryland was one of the states with a 12-month eligibility policy prior to 2014.
  - Maryland's CCDF lead agency is the Maryland State Department of Education, which sets statewide policy.
  - Local DSS offices provided services related to eligibility determination and payments to providers.



# What do we know about subsidy stability and eligibility redetermination?

- Families typically receive subsidies for a short period of time, and many return for another spell. In a study of 35 states, half of families had left subsidy at six months.

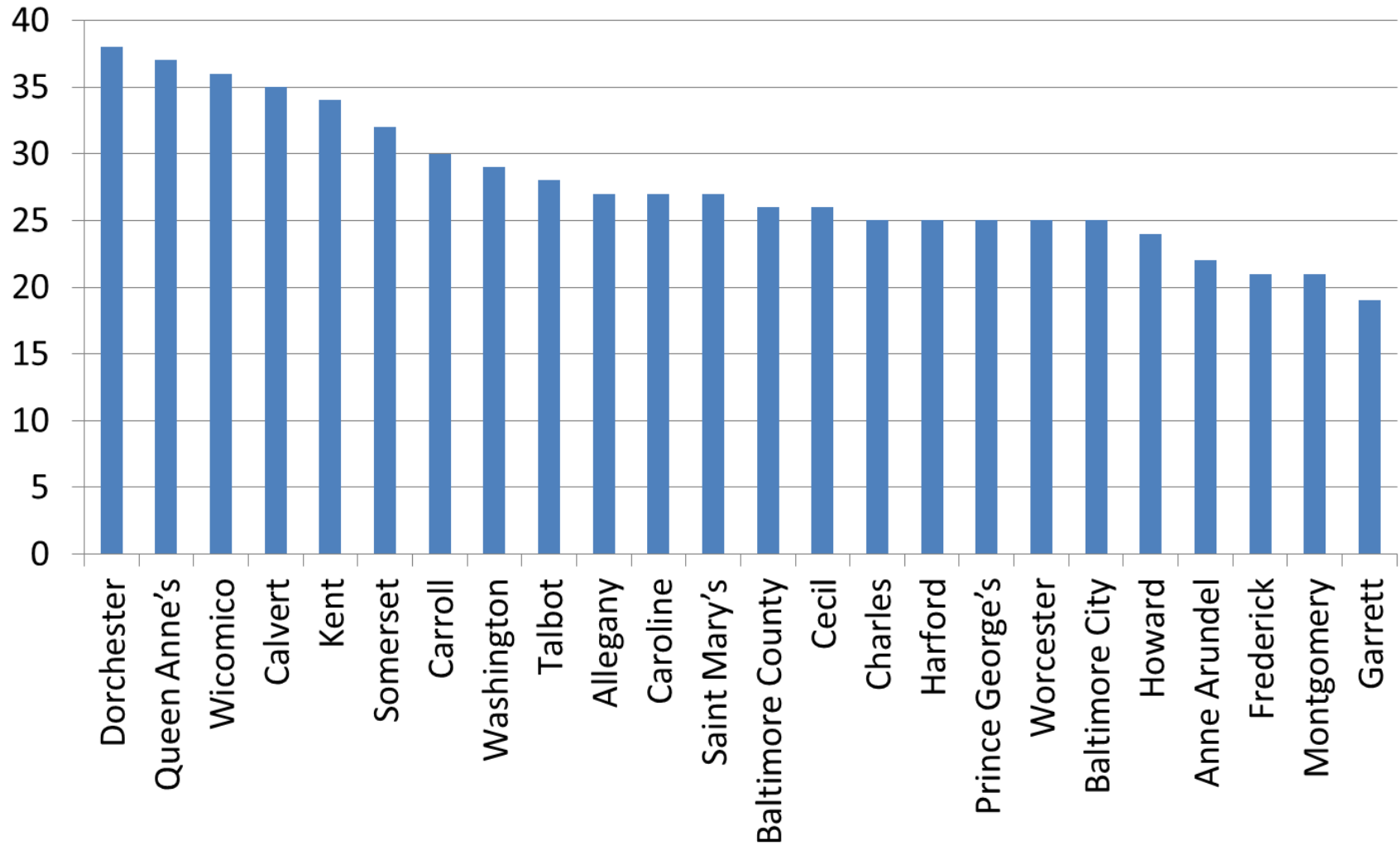
(Swenson 2014; Grobe, et al 2008; Meyers, et al 2002).

- Families are more likely to exit the subsidy program when it is time for redetermination of eligibility or with shorter eligibility periods.

(Grobe, et al 2008; Michalopoulos, et al 2010; Weber, et al 2014).



# Median Subsidy Spell Length by County in Maryland (in weeks)



# The Administrative Process of Receiving a Child Care Subsidy in Maryland

- Eligible families receive a voucher to take to the provider of their choice, either a regulated (licensed center or home) or informal (self arranged) provider.
- A voucher is issued ***for a specific period of time*** with a specific provider. Maryland regulations state the voucher is to be “*related to the schedule and duration of the applicant’s activity*”. The voucher is valid for a maximum of 12 months from the effective date. The end date on the voucher is no later than the date of eligibility redetermination.



# What determines the length of a voucher or of an eligibility period in Maryland?

- Maryland's policy is to review a family's eligibility ***at least every 12 months*** or "when there are significant changes in the family situation." When the family's eligibility period ends, the family must recertify eligibility (complete application form and provide documentation).
- The 12-month eligibility period was, in effect, the maximum length of time before recertification.





# Research Questions

1. How long are eligibility periods and voucher authorizations in practice, and how often do these lengths align?
2. Are differences in eligibility period or voucher authorization lengths associated with family and child characteristics?
3. Do the lengths of eligibility periods and voucher authorizations vary across jurisdiction (i.e., county)?

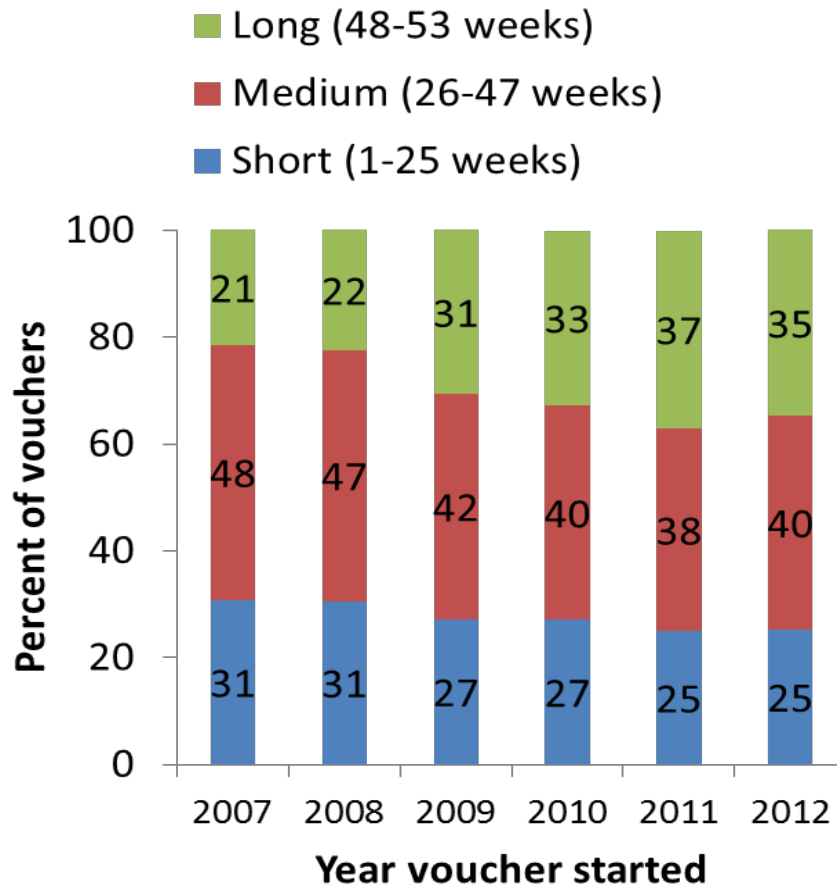


# Data and Methods Overview

- Five years of administrative data on subsidies in Maryland (2007-2012)
- Unit of analysis is a voucher
  - Voucher data include characteristics of the child and family at the time the voucher begins (e.g., child age, family receives Temporary Cash Assistance, etc.)
  - Dates on the voucher do not change. We analyzed the start and end dates of the voucher (voucher length) and the eligibility start and end dates (eligibility period) associated with that voucher.

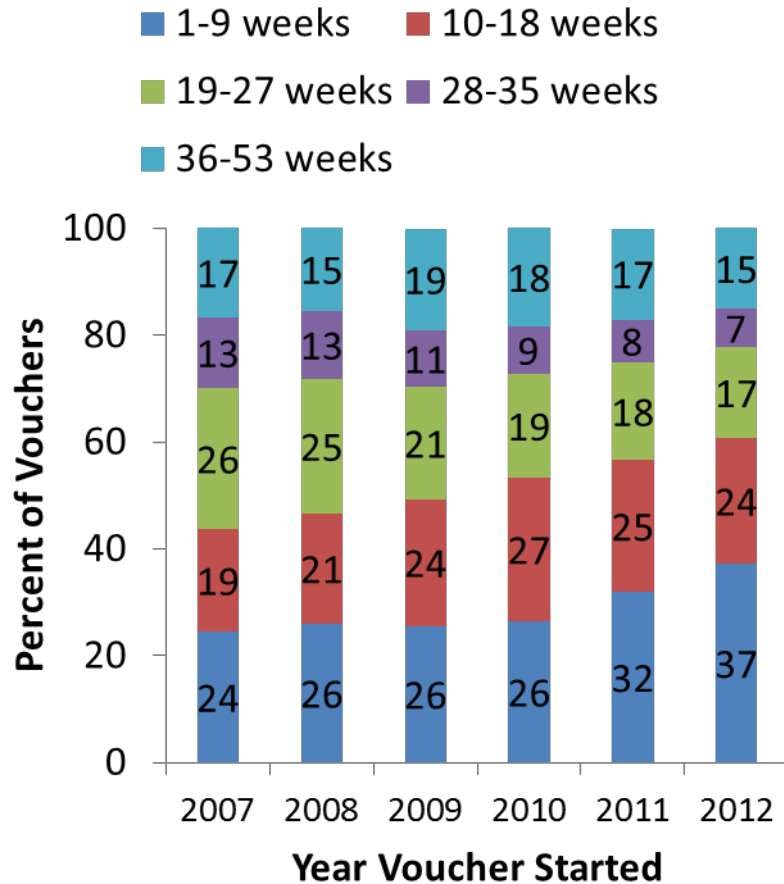


# How Long are Eligibility Periods?



- Most eligibility periods are shorter than 12 months.
- Eligibility periods have been getting longer over time in Maryland.

# How Long are Vouchers?



- Vouchers range from very short (1 to 9 weeks) to a full 52 weeks.
- Half of vouchers are shorter than the associated eligibility period.
- In 2012, half of all vouchers were for 13 weeks or fewer.

# Which factors explain differences in length of eligibility or voucher?

We explored the relationship between eligibility and voucher length and:

- Child, family and provider characteristics
- Season (summer vs. school year)
- Jurisdiction (county)

Two multivariate regression (OLS) models:  
Dependent variables

- Length of voucher (in weeks)
- Length of eligibility (in weeks)



# Which variables are related to differences in the length of vouchers?

- Families on Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) had shorter vouchers.
- Families receiving subsidy for training or education had shorter vouchers than families receiving subsidy for employment.
- Vouchers starting in the summer were shorter than those starting at other times.
- Vouchers for formal care tended to be shorter than informal.



# Which variables were related to differences in the length of eligibility?

- Although there are a few statistically significant relationships, differences in the length of the eligibility period were mostly *not* explained by differences in family and child characteristics.
- There were, however, big differences in eligibility period lengths across counties.



# County Variation in Eligibility Periods 2007-2012

## Longer eligibility periods

(median > 40 weeks)

- Allegany (49)
- Baltimore County (48)
- Calvert (52)
- Carroll (51)
- Cecil (49)
- Howard (52)
- Kent (52)
- Queen Anne's (48)
- Washington (51)
- Wicomico (45)
- Baltimore City (49)

## Shorter eligibility periods

(median < 27 weeks)

- Anne Arundel (23)
- Charles (26)
- Frederick (26)
- Garrett (26)
- Harford (26)
- Montgomery (26)
- Prince George's (26)
- Talbot (26)

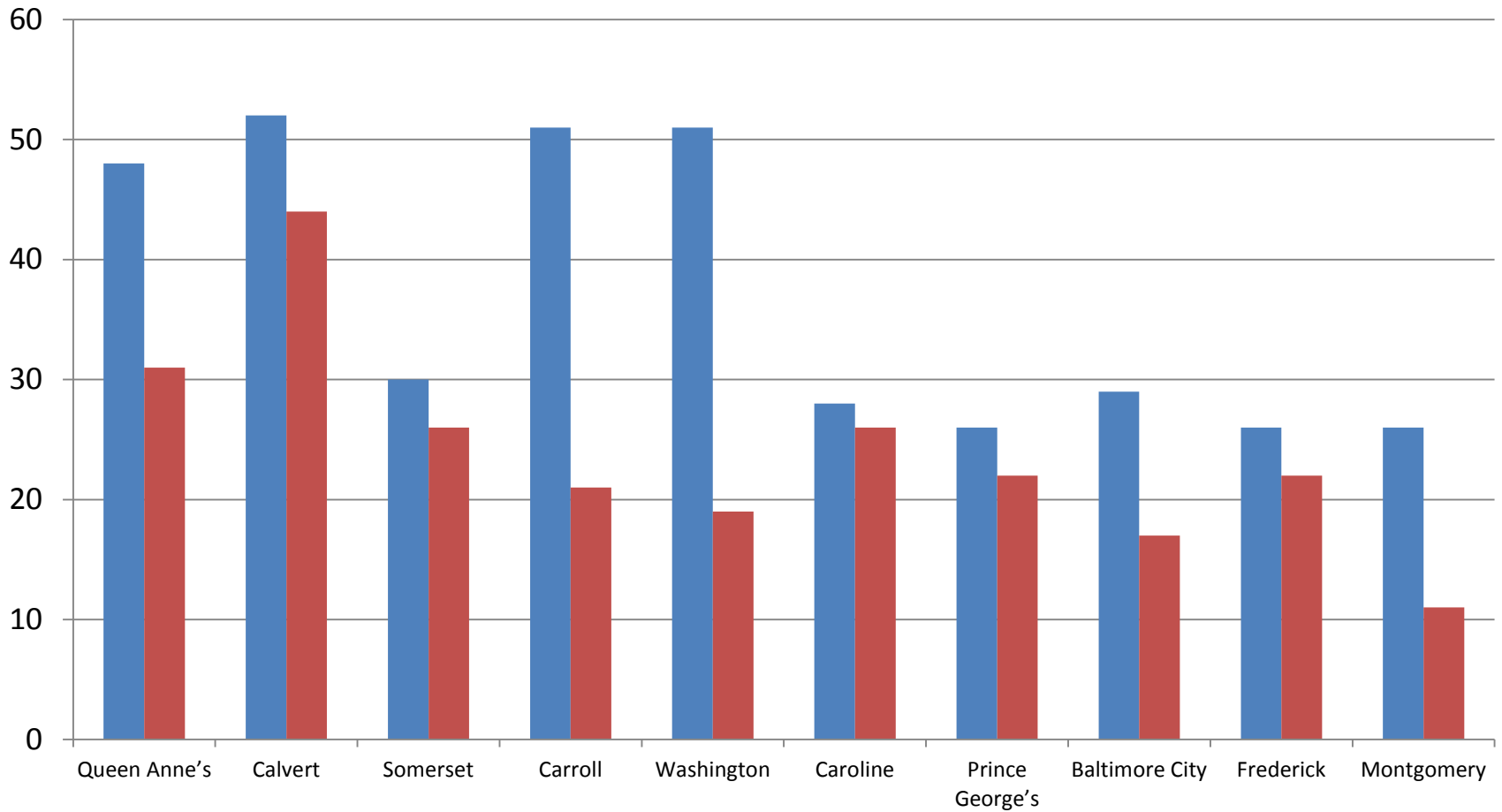


# OLS Models of Eligibility and Voucher Lengths

- Model 1 explained only 6 percent of the variation in length of eligibility periods. However, once we include dummy variables for jurisdictions in Model 2, 30% of the variation is explained.

Models	Length of Family Eligibility Period	Length of Voucher
	Percent of variation explained (R-sq)	
Model 1: Includes child, family, provider variables and time of year	<b>0.062</b>	0.176
Model 2: Also includes jurisdiction dummy variables	<b>0.296</b>	0.246

# Median **eligibility** period (blue) and median **voucher** (red) length for selected counties

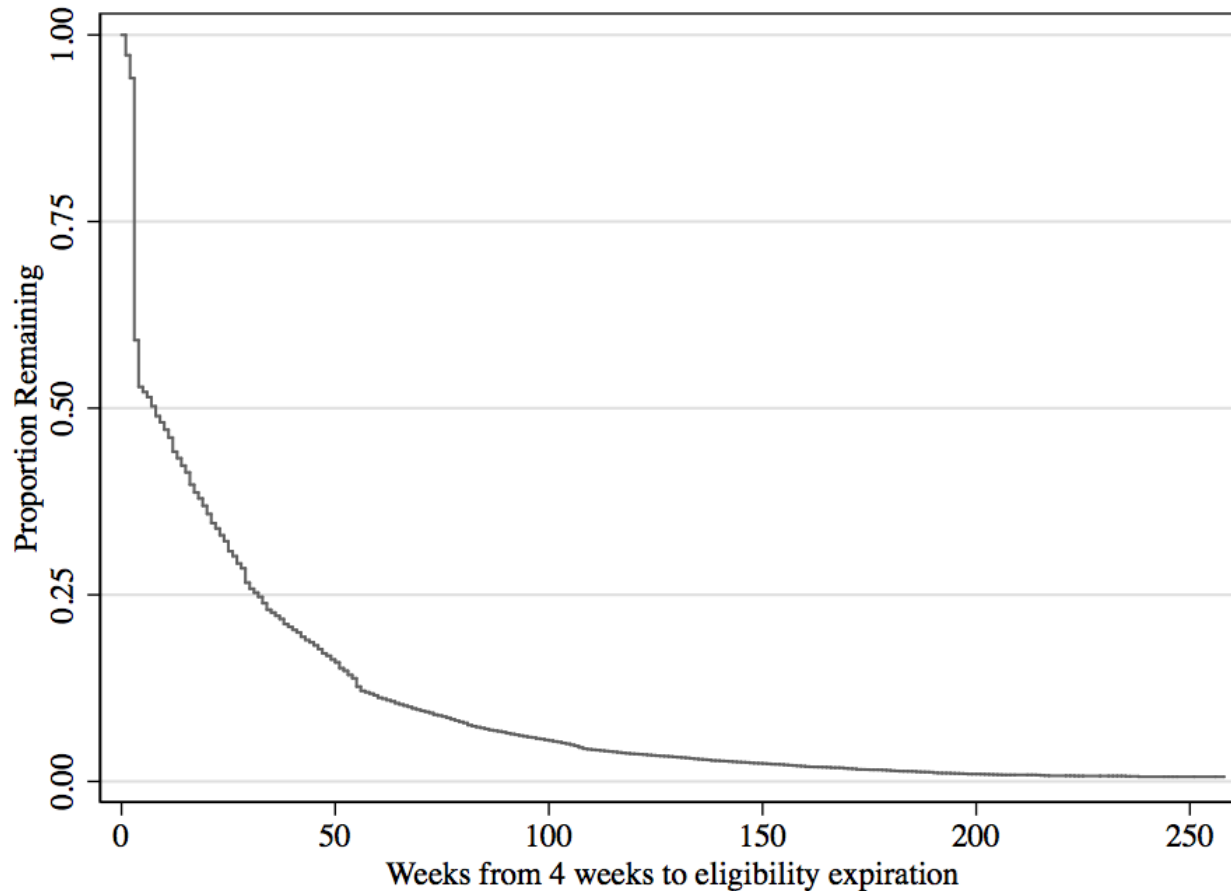


# Summary of results

- Many families were given eligibility periods shorter than 12 months in the period 2007-2012.
  - The length of eligibility periods did not vary much by child, family, or provider characteristics.
  - Median length of eligibility varied widely across counties.
- Vouchers were shorter than eligibility periods for half of all vouchers.
  - While characteristics explain some of the differences in voucher lengths, there remained some differences across counties.
- The results suggest that local offices have different practices with regards to how caseworkers set eligibility redetermination dates and voucher end dates.



# Proportion of Children Remaining on Subsidy As Eligibility Redetermination Deadline Approaches



# Change in the probability of exiting subsidy associated with voucher ending or eligibility redetermination

Change in hazard ratio	Voucher authorization ends but eligibility continues	Both voucher authorization and eligibility end
Ends this week	4.4	6.1
Ends in one week	26.4	29.2
Ends in two weeks	1.2	1.7
Ends in three weeks	1.0	1.4



# Implementation of 12-month eligibility periods under new CCDBG

- Once a child has been determined eligible for CCDBG assistance, ***the state must consider the child eligible for 12 months, regardless of temporary changes*** in the parent's work, education or training status or income (as long as the family income does not exceed 85 percent of state median income).
- ***However, states may choose to discontinue assistance*** to families in cases in which there is an extended break in work, education or training activities as long as assistance continues for at least three months to allow for job search or other work-related activities.  
*(U.S. Senate Committee on Health Education Labor and Pensions 2015)*



# Questions about implementation of 12-month eligibility periods

- How will the policy be implemented “on the ground”? States vary in terms they use -- authorization and eligibility may mean different things in different states.
- Will caseworkers or local managers have discretion in who is required to recertify in less than 12 months?
- What other policies trigger need for parents to take action in order to keep receiving subsidy? (voucher reauthorization, interim reporting)



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# Median eligibility and voucher adding including **subsidy** participation spell (median) in green for some counties

