

D3: Accounting for Disasters in Efforts to Improve Quality and Access in Early Care and Education

Thursday, April 18, 2019

10:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. | Burnham

1. Descriptive Information

D3: Accounting for Disasters in Efforts to Improve Quality and Access in Early Care and Education

Disasters have routinely disrupted the ability of ECE systems to care for children and to improve services in certain U.S. state, territory and tribal locations. Sometimes the world sees these disasters unfold, and sometimes only small communities feel the pain. CCDF reauthorization focused new attention on the vital role that early care and education systems can play in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters. In 2017, the Office of Child Care issued an Information Memorandum (IM) clarifying expectations, and CCDF administrators have recently submitted their first required State/Territory CCDF plan. In 2019, the Office of Head Start issued an IM clarifying flexibilities for service delivery post-disasters. Round table panelists will discuss the policy and research implications of disasters, including implications for improving quality and access, data constraints in identifying and tracking to account for disasters, challenges around defining success of preparation and rebuilding efforts, and examining the extent to which rebuilding leads to more or less equitable access to high quality care.

Facilitators

Teresa Derrick-Mills, Urban Institute
and **Erin Bumgarner**, Abt Associates

Presenters

Gail Kelso, ICF State Capacity Building Center (SCBC), State Systems Specialist Network | *Technical Assistance to CCDF lead agencies in development of Child Care Disaster Plans*

Holly Nett, Child Care Aware of America | *Supporting CCR&R Organizations in Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery*

I-Fang Cheng, Abt Associates, Project Manager of the Evaluation of Save the Children's Child Care Recovery Program | *Disaster Recovery and ECE – The Research Perspective*

Maribel D. Loste, CCDF Administrator for the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) | *CCDF Systems Perspective in a Typhoon-Prone Area*

Scribe

Ryan Laychak, ICF

2. Documents Available on Website

[Derrick-Mills Accounting for Disaster](#)

3. Summary of Presentations – 6 discussion questions, not individual presentations

4. Brief Summary of Discussion:

The session started by giving an overview on what is a disaster. The FEMA definition is: any natural event that caused damage of such severity that it is beyond the combined capabilities of state and local governments to respond. In 2018, there were 59 major disasters declared by FEMA in 38 states and 3 territories. Those looking at the slide may be wondering why Puerto Rico isn't on here, but that is because while they were still recovering in 2018, their disaster occurred in an earlier year. Some FEMA-declared disasters make the national news, but there are other – low attention disasters – that are devastating to particular communities but are not widely discussed. Research about the intersection of early care and education efforts and disasters is at an exploratory stage. As the panel prepared for the session, we identified the need to know more about: how ECE systems and providers can better prepare for disasters, how ECE systems and providers can better respond to disasters, ways of understanding and measuring outcomes, determining success after recovery, and accounting for disasters in efforts to improve quality and access.

The majority of the presentation revolved around the following Discussion Questions to help in understanding where research might focus and considerations for research:

What flexibilities and supports to CCDF and Head Start offer to prepare and respond to disasters?

Head Start recently released an IM clarifying flexibilities for service delivery post-disasters. The IM was written to remove barriers and empower grantees to respond to disasters. It includes flexibility around serving Head Start eligible children whether they are in your own district or if they are coming to you from other areas across the country. It also addressed eligibility, recruitment, enrollment, mental health services, fiscal management and more. The IM gives the flexibility to use other operational funds to respond to clean up from disasters. It also describes the 5 data points to be collected and reported to the regional Head Start office. CCDF released an IM in 2017 with 4 elements to be addressed in disaster planning. These included coordinating and collaborating with key partners, guidelines for continuation of childcare subsidies and services, and requirements providers are to have in place for future events. This IM was important because when a super typhoon hit the Northern Mariana Islands, the CCDF administrators on the islands had a plan in place to execute and follow post disaster. They knew what they needed to do immediately and a chain of events to follow. The CCDF administrator stressed the importance to make sure Child Care is part of disaster priority along with FEMA and Red Cross when addressing post disaster recovery.

What have you learned about readiness for disaster and what affects the ability to recover from disasters? What kind of research is needed to support readiness?

Building relationships with non-traditional early care and education partners is key (e.g emergency management, public safety, power companies, etc.). It is critical to build these relationships on “blue sky days”. Once you start to create these relationships it is important to share information about child care resources with these partners, including stressing the numbers and breadth of child care programs in states and communities (to understand how they may help support in times of crisis, but also how they may need help). One thing to consider is that having a written plan doesn’t always equate to what takes place, and that there is a need to put these written plans in to practice through Technical Assistance. There is more research needed around effective coaching strategies for preparedness. Additionally, states, CCR&Rs, and child care providers should account for the social-emotional needs of children and caregivers when preparing for and recovering from disasters. There is a need for more research on the effectiveness of child and caregiver resilience interventions over a longer period of time.

What factors may affect equity and access to child care in the shorter-term following disasters?

Access to financial supports is a big factor effecting equity and access. Private, for-profit providers are ineligible for FEMA recovery assistance. Child care providers may fail to qualify for a Small Business Administration (SBA) disaster loan or may be unable to access lines of credit or insurance to rebuild their child care programs. Another factor is lack of awareness of what supports are out there and not understanding rules and regulations for accessing recovery. Disasters exacerbate child care shortages that are already in place for many communities across the country. One important consideration is for child care representatives to be present at multi-agency resource centers (MARC) for post-disaster recovery so they can be a resource for families seeking child care and resources to help children cope. The readiness of CCDF systems, especially licensing systems, to provide post-disaster assessments and have guidance about temporary operating conditions affects availability of care in the short-term; decisions about how to prioritize have equity implications.

What factors may affect equity and access to child care in the longer-term following disasters?

In the short term there are many more resources, but in the long term there arises disenfranchised groups of people whose needs were not met following a disaster. There needs to be a greater focus at community based responses when there are gaps at federal/state level response and barriers for the federal/state response. Research needs to look at the different ways that states can respond to disasters so that information and strategies may be shared.

In what ways do disasters affect quality improvement efforts and the ability to measure the effectiveness of strategies to improve quality?

There is an opportunity following a disaster to help child care centers and homes to “build back better”, for example, by connecting supports, including technical assistance and financial supports, to quality improvement. Technical assistance provided to child care providers during the recovery period can provide guidance to providers on the types

of materials and equipment to purchase that contributes to program quality. In a post disaster environment, there needs to be a re-focus of priorities of quality improvements. For example, in the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) trauma became a part of the quality improvement approach that was not on the forefront of quality improvement pre-disaster. Some challenges communities face is that there are often exemptions to health and safety policies made in the short-term post disaster, that need to be phased-out in the longer term post-disaster. In addition, as the slides showed, sometimes CCDF agencies may be actively implementing policy-improvement projects (for example, CNMI was piloting a new QRIS for all their child care programs when Super Typhoon Yutu hit; they had provided materials and equipment grants and just done their quality rating assessments; most of the materials were ruined and whole programs were destroyed). Research and evaluation of these activities needs to account for the disaster event when assessing the effectiveness of the quality improvement activities. It is not clear what flags to look for if examining administrative data, for example, to know that a disaster had interrupted the progress.

Open Group Discussion:

Some of the audience members were from TA Centers that manage CCDF data. They indicated that although some data are collected about disaster impact, these data are often on long delays because the groups that need to report it are coping with the disaster recovery. This delays the ability of others to use and learn from the data that could help others learn and better prepare. Another challenge in administrative data is that there may not be flags for researchers to know that particular times periods in the data are occurring during disasters or post-disasters. While the flexibility afforded by CCDF for families to continue receiving subsidies or subsidies to be paid to child care operators, for example, can mask the actual circumstances (for example, what counts as “work” during disaster recovery may be different or programs that are not operating may continue to receive subsidy payments so they don’t go out of business while trying to reopen). One key consideration that was brought up is what are we doing to support the providers? In post-disaster areas, providers often feel totally overlooked. They feel pressure to reopen child care programs while their own family members may still be in crisis or they don’t even know the post-disaster status of their own loved ones. The group stressed that there needs to be a way to approach how we start with those caregivers and give them support to do what they need to do; and obtaining the research needed to know what the most effective and appropriate supports are. There was also discussion around consideration on what is an essential employee and sharing that with providers, so they are prepared to respond in their disaster plans. Another question arose around how can we also consider the psychological elements of trauma in disaster management plans? Furthermore, the question of how do we balance the well-being of child care professionals to be able to administer and carry out these disaster plans? One way proposed is to use existing quality improvement staff to assist with supporting providers since they are already embedded into the child care system and have those existing relationships. Another was to possibly consider an interstate compact of bringing outside state staff to assist in child care post disaster, along the lines of other professions that bring in outside help (e.g. power companies and fire crews). Research to understand what constitutes effective plans for and supports is needed.

5. Summary of Key Issues Raised

- More research is needed to help CCDF administrators and early care and education providers to:
 - Understand the importance of creating and setting a disaster plan BEFORE an event takes place, and the most important elements of the plan, including how to account for the social-emotional needs of children and caregivers following a disaster
 - Document the use of existing supports from CCDF and Head Start to plan and prepare for disasters
 - Provide information on how to build relationships with non-traditional early care and education partners, including who those partners might be
 - Consider how agencies can to support the providers who are responding to disasters
 - Consider ways in which technical assistance, particularly coaching strategies, can be offered to child care programs to ensure that written plans can be carried out effectively
 - Help reduce barriers to accessing to financial supports for providers post disaster
 - Account for disasters in administrative data in ways that enable researchers to consider the impact of disasters when using those data to evaluate quality improvement activities or to study subsidy receipt

- Evaluate the success of post-disaster build-back and consider issues of equity in developing their post-disaster rebuilding plans – how do you measure “success” in post-disaster recovery in the short-term and the long-term?