



Implications of Precarious Employment for Child Care Subsidy Use and Parental Well-being

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Key Findings from IL-NY CCRP Phase 1

Precarious employment affects:

- subsidy access
- subsidy stability
- parenting stress
- work-caregiving conflict

What is precarious employment?

- Within-job instability
- Employment that is “*uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker*” - Kalleberg, p.2, 2009
- Work schedules characterized by:
 - **Nonstandard timing:** Work outside of 9-5, weekday hours
 - **Unpredictability:** Limited advance notice of work schedule
 - **Variability in hours:** Fluctuations in work hours by week, time of day, and length of shift
 - **Limited schedule control:** Limited flexibility or input into the number and timing of work hours

Why do we care about precarious employment?

Research shows link to children's development

- Nonstandard hours → Poor cognitive and language development (Han 2005); behavioral problems (Johnson, Kalil, and Dunifon 2012; Joshi and Bogen 2007)
- Fluctuating hours → Behavior problems; increase in school absenteeism, grade repetition, special education placement (Johnson, Kalil, and Dunifon 2012)
- Potential mechanisms: *Limited use of center-based care and greater parenting stress*
- When schedules vary children may experience:
 - different care settings
 - different caregivers
 - different meal and sleep schedules
- Instability stressful for parents and children

Overview of the IL-NY Child Care Research Partnership Study

CCRP: Empirical Strategy

- 4 targeted regions
 - New York: Nassau and Westchester Counties
 - Illinois: Service Delivery Areas 6 (Cook County) and 14 (7 counties southwestern Illinois)
- Sampled “new entrants” in subsidy program
- Three data sources:
 - State administrative data; subsidy payment records during 18-month period from subsidy start date (N=7,712)
 - Telephone survey ~14 months after subsidy entrance (N=612)
 - In-person qualitative interviews (N=85)

Employment Characteristics of Survey Sample

Variable	Total (N=612)
Early job loss	15%
Paid hourly	79%
Mean number of hours worked weekly	33.1
<u>Precarious Work Schedule Variables</u>	
Any nonstandard hours	64%
Weekend hours	54%
Evening hours after 6pm	51%
Overnight hours	17%
Day/shifts vary sometimes/ a lot	35%
Hours vary sometimes/ a lot	33%
No input into schedule	31%
Works unexpectedly/stays more hours sometimes/a lot	33%
Limited advance notice (1 week or less)	38%

What factors contribute to subsidy instability?

Analytic Method

- Data
 - Telephone survey data linked with monthly administrative payment records across an 18-month period (N=558)
- Survival methods
 - *Cox proportional hazards model*: estimate the relationship between hypothesized predictors and the risk of exiting the program
 - *Dependent variable*: the month in which the respondent exited the program during the 18-month observation window

Predictors

- **Employment characteristics**
 - *Employment conditions*: held the same job before entering the subsidy program, job loss within first six months of subsidy receipt, number of weekly work hours
 - *Work schedule characteristics*: nonstandard work schedules, variability in shifts, schedule flexibility, schedule control
- **Subsidy program experiences**
 - *Subsidy complications*: difficulty finding a provider, application difficulties, application delay, payment problems
 - *Subsidy characteristics*: all child care hours covered by subsidy
- **Child care characteristics (of subsidized providers)**
 - *Provider characteristics*: type of care at subsidy start, whether provider was primary arrangement, whether provider was used before subsidy start; provider safety
 - *Provider schedule*: provider flexibility, uses provider for nonstandard hours
- **Covariates include demographic characteristics and site**

Significant Factors Associated with Subsidy Exits

Variable	Hazard Ratio
<u>Employment</u>	
Early job loss	1.46**
Unexpected work	1.22*
Limited input into work schedule	1.24***
Had a job before the subsidy	1.12*
<u>Subsidy</u>	
Difficulty finding a provider	1.10+
Difficulty with application process	1.12**
Delay in application approval	1.09*
Subsidy covers all care hours	0.78**
<u>Child care</u>	
FCC (vs. center)	0.87**
Feels child is safe	0.70**

Hazard ratio indicates the risk of exiting the program

> 1 = higher risk of exit
 < 1 = lower risk of exit

**Do precarious work schedules
contribute to work-caregiving conflict
and parenting stress?**

Dependent Variables

	% Rating Somewhat /Strongly
Work-Caregiving Conflict (alpha=.74, Mean=2.0)	
Difficulty coordinating work with child care schedule	29%
Work schedule causes extra stress for you and children	35%
Difficult to deal with child care problems during working hours	38%
Work schedule has flexibility to handle family needs	22%
Parenting Stress (alpha=.59, Mean=3.5)	
Being a parent is harder than I thought it would be.	58%
I feel trapped by my responsibilities as a parent.	17%
I find that taking care of my child(ren) is much more work than pleasure.	18%
I often feel tired, worn out, or exhausted from raising a family.	52%

OLS Regressions for Work-Caregiving Conflict (controls not shown)

Evening	0.26*** (0.06)							
Overnight		0.18+ (0.09)						
Weekend			0.16* (0.06)					
Number Nonstandard				0.12*** (0.03)			0.07* (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
Variable Hours					0.23*** (0.06)		0.12* (0.06)	0.10 (0.06)
Unexpected Work						0.14*** (0.03)	0.10** (0.03)	0.10** (0.03)
Number of Providers								0.11** (0.04)
Provider Flexibility								-0.20*** (0.05)
Backup Care								-0.14*** (0.03)
Observations	589	589	589	589	589	589	589	589
R-squared	0.12	0.11	0.11	0.12	0.13	0.13	0.15	0.25

Includes all controls; Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, +p<0.1.

OLS Regressions for Parenting Stress (controls not shown)

Evening	0.066							
	(0.06)							
Overnight		-0.07						
		(0.08)						
Weekend			-0.06					
			(0.06)					
Number Nonstandard				-0.01			-0.01	-0.03
				(0.03)			(0.03)	(0.03)
Variable Hours					-0.01		-0.04	-0.05
					(0.05)		(0.06)	(0.06)
Unexpected Work						0.05+	0.06+	0.06*
						(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Number of Providers								0.09*
								(0.04)
Provider Flexibility								-0.03
								(0.05)
Backup Care								-0.07**
								(0.02)
Observations	589	589	589	589	589	589	589	589
R-squared	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.09	0.12

Includes all controls; Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, +p<0.1.

Summary

- Precarious employment makes it challenging for families to verify work for subsidy eligibility
 - Paperwork turns some families away from program
- Unexpected work in particular creates stress and conflicts with caregiving demands
 - Limits child care options, especially formal center care
- Having a single (stable) provider and back-up care may lower work-caregiving conflict and stress
- Child care subsidies are an important work support
 - But requirements do not fit well with the realities of the low-income labor market

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