

2009 CCPRC Annual Meeting  
Plenary #6  
Friday, October 30, 2009, 2:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

## **Big Issues and Small Insights: A Discussion with ACF Leadership**

### **Description**

This session began with a summary by Martha Zaslow about the key issues and insights that emerged during the 2009 CCPRC Annual Meeting. This presentation took themes from the opening plenary by ACF leadership and identified how the presentations and discussions at the 2009 CCPRC Annual Meeting reflected on these themes. This presentation was followed by discussion with ACF Leaders during which they shared their thoughts about the issues and insights raised, how the Consortium might support key ACF priorities through policy-related research, and new areas where research is needed.

### **Moderator**

Ivelisse Martinez-Beck, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE)

### **Presenters**

Mark Greenberg, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Administration for Children and Families

Naomi Goldstein, Director, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation

Shannon Rudisill, Associate Director, Child Care Bureau

Martha Zaslow, Child Care Trends

### **Scribe**

Barbara Saunders, BLH Technologies, Inc.

## **1. Summary of Presentations**

- **Summary of Presentation #1: Martha Zaslow**
  - *How the presentations and discussions from the 2009 CCPRC Annual Meeting relate to the key themes raised by ACF Leadership at the opening plenary regarding policy and research issues. The headings note issues raised in the opening plenary by ACF Leadership, and the paragraph provides a summary of presentations and discussions from the meeting on each issue.*
    - *Subsidies and subsidy policy:* Presentations at the CCPRC 2009 Annual Meeting underscored that there is wide variation across States in subsidy levels and policies, and that there will be good documentation of the State variation in a new database. In addition, it is important to take into account that administrative data on subsidies include recipients but not non-recipients; this shapes what research can and cannot address with subsidy data.
    - *Economic self-sufficiency and reorganization of TANF:* Research presented at the CCPRC 2009 Annual Meeting points to close interrelations between child care and employment outcomes. An important study reported on at the meeting from Illinois shows a correlation between subsidy receipt and fewer reported problems

with employment. However this study did not report higher earnings or income with subsidy receipt.

- *Quality Rating Systems*: Research presented at the CCPRC 2009 Annual Meeting provides evidence from surveys indicating that parents want information on the quality of early childhood settings they have available to choose from, and they want to use this information to make choices. However we still know little about how parents want to receive this information, whether they have difficulty accessing it, and whether they actually use quality information in selecting care. It is unclear if the best format in which to present the information is in summary ratings (like number of stars) or if parents also want information on components of the overall rating. Implementation studies from a systems perspective will be forthcoming. In one such study, licensing staff initially showed resistance to the assignment of quality ratings, but there was change and greater acceptance over time. Evidence also shows that child care and employment decisions co-occur; this may affect parent use of quality rating information and needs to be better understood.
- *Early childhood systems*: In multiple presentations at the CCPRC 2009 Annual Meeting, it became clear that we are increasingly focusing on early childhood systems rather than separate initiatives or settings. For example, our work now focuses not only on professional development *initiatives*, but also considers what comprises a professional development *system*. We are also taking a systems approach in research on Quality Rating Systems (QRS). A similar transition is occurring in consideration of early childhood assessments, where the focus is increasingly on the systems that need to be in place for appropriate communication of the intent or purpose of the assessment to early childhood providers and parents, appropriate implementation of assessments throughout a system (e.g., there was discussion of system-wide training for particular assessments) and then appropriate interpretation and use of the information from assessments at a systems level.
- *Evidence based and evidence supported approaches*: There is growing emphasis on evidence as the basis for policy decisions. At the CCPRC 2009 Annual Meeting, the evidence available from the Educare implementation study, and the potential to move from an implementation study to a randomized controlled trial, helped to illustrate different levels of evidence that can be used to inform policy decisions. Participants at the meeting discussed the need to take into account evidence on implementation as well as on effects in informing policy decisions. Discussions also focused on the need to rely on data using multiple research methods.
- *Infants and toddlers*: Multiple presentations at the CCPRC 2009 Annual Meeting focused on infant and toddler care. National data presented at the meeting indicate that low-income children in this age range are often receiving poor quality of care. Findings presented at the meeting indicate the importance of considering the quality of care received by children birth to five years of age. For example, data from the Educare implementation study, involving a comprehensive and high quality EHS and HS programs from birth to five, indicate that children with more years of Educare have increasingly more positive scores on assessments of

cognitive and social development, with those participating longest approaching national norms e.g., on receptive vocabulary.

- *Dual language learners*: There was much discussion at the meeting about steps being taken to focus research on dual language learners in early childhood settings and how best to support their development. New measures are being developed to document the language environment for dual language learners in early childhood settings. In the Educare implementation study, findings indicate that children who participated longest during the birth to five period who were learning two languages scored at the national norms not only in Spanish but also in English.
- *Special needs children*: Presentations at the CCPRC 2009 Annual Meeting provided illustrations of ongoing State data collection efforts that provide excellent examples of how assessment data on children with special needs are being collected and used.
- *Happy, Healthy, Successful Children*: The theme of happy, healthy and successful children from the opening plenary was well reflected in presentations and discussions of school readiness at the CCPRC 2009 Annual meeting in which school readiness was viewed as involving multiple domains of development, including motivation and engagement, health, social relationships and emotional development, as well as cognitive development. A study just being launched by ASPE will look at whether across all these domains, there are thresholds or levels of development at school entry that are important for later achievement and school progress.
- *Continuity*: The opening plenary identified continuity as a key issue. At the CCPRC 2009 Annual meeting, findings were presented indicating that the duration of subsidy receipt is related to stability and continuity of child care. Presentations at the meeting also took a different approach to the issue of continuity, noting that continuity of caregivers can be intentionally built into programs and the effects of such intentional structuring of programs can be evaluated.
- Other session summary comments from the group:
  - From the session on family engagement and family sensitivity: QRS was a new idea several years ago. The emerging concept of considering families as part of our definition of quality is very important. States are now asking for measures of family engagement for their QRS models.
  - The Early Learning Challenge Fund (ELCF): Not just family education, rather a support system for young children and families, particularly for at-risk families.
  - Tracking the effects of the recession in terms of family child care versus center care. Impacts of the recession are likely to vary by geographic context and other dynamics in areas across the country. We need to look at the impact of the recession on child care. The recession gives us a short-term and long-term opportunity to understand if suppliers are cutting back or opening up as employment and finances change.
  - Unionization: Need to document this issue and its impact on the child care system as it evolves.
  - The role of higher education in professional development. Alignment in professional development across Head Start and child care.

- **Summary of Presentation #2: Shannon Rudisill**
  - Continuity of care: There is an extremely complex set of dynamics related to continuity of care. Would like to see OPRE do a roundtable of ideas, expectations, and results around this topic.
  - How do we balance the work goal and child development goal in the subsidy system? What would it look like if the children and families had better outcomes because of CCDF? States are asking the Child Care Bureau to analyze these implications with them.
  - Living up to the promise: What is reasonable to expect from various interventions; what is a reasonable amount of time to see these results; what will we have in the interim; how will we sustain those investments? How will we develop policy in the interim?
  - Dosage: We make assumptions that people are receiving what we have available and we need to reference attendance records.
  - Policy variation in Minnesota around school readiness: They are liberalizing the subsidy rules to help the families continue in care as long as they enroll their children in a high quality center. What would it take to design a combination of CCDF funds and assistance for working families?
  
- **Summary of Presentation #3: Naomi Goldstein**
  - *Everything about child care research is complicated:* Child care has two main goals: work assistance and child development outcomes. Exchanges are market and non-market; we need to study child outcomes and caregiver outcomes. We need to start to think about these issues from a systems perspective,
  - *Evidence-based research:* This needs to be viewed in context because it depends on available evidence; the more evidence you have, the higher standard you are held to. There are different standards, program areas, and nature of outcomes. Scale of impact also determines how evidence-based research is defined.
  
- **Summary of Presentation #4: Mark Greenberg**
  - The Obama Administration is deeply committed to the role of research and evaluation in advancing social programs and social policy. We are having this reinforced from the White House. We're talking about budget and policy and there is an emphasis on learning which programs have an evidence base to justify our investments. There is clearly an evolutionary process involved in determining evidence base, but what's important is that this Administration wants to understand research. *The more you can translate your research, and interpret how it can be used on a long-term basis, the better chance you will have to receive the funding you need.*
    - This Administration has a strong focus on early childhood development across Head Start, child care, pre-K, and other settings that provide care and education for children. It is important to look more broadly at how we are improving child outcomes in localities and how we can bring this about in more areas. This Administration is also committed to addressing the debt and the deficit, and what the debt means for future generations. Again, if you want funds, you need to make an excellent case since dollars are very scarce.

- CCDF reauthorization is scheduled for next year. As we proceed in this process, many people involved may not know key issues to consider in funding CCDF. What are the things we know with such confidence that we should be encouraging all States to do it? What are the promising practices? How do we help States replicate these practices? How should we be thinking about research priorities?
- Currently, there are questions about CCDF as a work support versus child development program. We know it is both. We have a strong concern and focus on the child development component; however, what is the contribution that child care can make in addressing healthy development of families and self-sufficiency? Different committees in Congress are involved in reauthorization. They want to know the role of child care in helping children and in helping families thrive in work and self sufficiency.
- Mark Greenburg asked, “As we look ahead to reauthorization are there things you want to focus on that are not currently in the block grant and you think that they should be? He encouraged researchers in attendance to let ACF know their thoughts and questions.