

# *Parental Choice: A Review of Research*

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# Factors Influencing Timing of Entry, Amount, and Type of Non-Parental Care

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- Family and Child Characteristics
- Characteristics of the Child Care Market
- Convenience
- Work Schedule
- Parent Preferences
- Public Policies (e.g., subsidies)

# Child Care Subsidies and Parental Choice

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- The overall availability of subsidy funding may affect the local child care market
- Subsidies can expand the range of child care options available to low-income families
- Many subsidized families use center-based care, although subsidies are also used for family, friend and neighbor care

# Findings from the National Study of Child Care for Low-income Families (Sub-study of Family Child Care)

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- Many parents felt there were alternatives to the arrangement they currently had
- 10% would prefer a different arrangement
- Primary reasons for choice of care arrangement:
  - Safety of the home – 24%
  - Convenience (hours, location, transportation) – 22%
  - Relationship with provider – 20%
- Starting or stopping subsidies was not related to choice of arrangement

# Quality Information and Parental Choice

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- Online Consumer Information
  - Information about child care posted on the Internet in one state was widely accessed after media coverage about its availability
  - However, it is unclear whether the information influenced parental choice
- Quality Rating Systems
  - New research is needed to examine the effect of QRS on consumer demand and provider response
  - State-level research will be available in the near future

# Possible Next Steps

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- Continue to move beyond patterns of child care *utilization* to examine the *underlying reasons* for child care choice
- More research on how public policies and administrative practices affect parental choice
  - Subsidies
  - Quality Rating Systems
- For example, regularly track over time at the state or local level:
  - Patterns of child care utilization
  - Patterns of reasons for choice
  - Link to patterns of subsidy administration and QRS
- Further articulate the theoretical model of Parental Choice



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