

Session # A-5

Title Policies that Support Continuity of Care

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#### SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

##### **Ann Collins**

What is the goal when we talk about continuity? We want stable relationships for children, but of course there are situations where we want to support a change in settings if setting is unsafe or if family situation requires change. In addition, we expect families may seek changes as their children age (i.e. more formal group setting for preschoolers).

Researchers have looked at many constructs for continuity. What are societal norms and how can policies and research support these norms? Handout describes continuity goals for subsidies, quality improvement efforts and provider policies and practice within context of parent/family influences and child characteristics.

Research:

- What is the experience of families using subsidies? 5 state study (MA, IL, MA, TX, OR) Average of 3-7 mo on subsidy. Characterized by short spells common as well as many families coming on and off.
- Current study looking at families in more depth. Asking about employment experiences, life events with goal of ending study by end of 2007. Hope to build a better understanding of the stories behind continuity/discontinuity.

##### **Ajay Chaudry**

Study of duration of care arrangements using in-depth longitudinal data. Followed a small sample of children from 42 families from birth to kindergarten entry described in book called *Putting Children First*.

Moms were ingenious and great learners over time. Some findings on continuity:

- Average of 5.2 primary arrangements
- Average of 12.5 total arrangements, including primary and secondary arrangements
- 60% of all arrangements lasted 6 months with longer spells being more common.
- Arrangements were shorter for younger children tied the use of informal caregivers (average of 4.9 mo)

- Families receiving subsidies had longer spells.

Exits from child care settings:

- Study had to define both voluntary (child aged out) and involuntary exits (provider ends care, conflict, housing changes)
- There are both child and care related reasons for exits
- Ave of 25 exits per family

Policy recommendations from Chaudry's experience in NYC to promote continuity:

- Simplified initial access and ease enrollment – apply for subsidy in contracted child care sites where parents receive child care; recertify by mail or fax. Developed measures to track impact of these policies.
- Increased exit level income requirements to allow parents to stay on longer
- Coordination of transitions when eligibility changes – transitioning to school age care, employment gaps

### **Michelle Thomas**

- In Indiana in 2003, new licensing rules promulgated to promote continuity of care. Require that centers make a “reasonable effort” to promote continuity of care for children at or under 30 mo. Continuity means that same staff should stay with child through age 30 months.
- State has had to develop supports and TA for providers, including mentoring.
- Purdue has conducted evaluation funded by Welborn Foundation – Program Assessment Rating Scale from WestEd and ITERS. Found that adult-child interactions and relationship-based care were positively impacted, but more research is needed.
- In early stages of determining how to regulate what “reasonable effort” is. Doesn't apply to continuity during a given day. Have also built into their new QRS pilot.

### **Reeva Murphy**

- Focus on continuity in subsidy policies to increase length of spells.
- Built on existing policies that eased access to subsidy. Researched differences in length of spells in different types of subsidy clients and seasonal changes.
- Important to approach policy-making with intentionality. Want to support both continuity where appropriate and change when that makes sense. Recognize that policies supporting continuity are just one part of the puzzle.
- Specific policies and programs:
  - ✓ Automated recertification via mail.
  - ✓ Considered 12 mo vs. 6 mo recertification. Decided against it.
  - ✓ Well-trained subsidy staff will more consistently follow policies, do their jobs quickly more effectively, better customer service
  - ✓ Pre-K subsidy program that allows a preschooler to stay in their program indefinitely even if parent loses eligibility

- ✓ RI is a Strengthening Families state and tries to support providers in best practices in working with families. So even when change occurs, transition will be smoother for families.

### **Strengthening Families overview**

- National initiative to build protective factors into early childhood settings to prevent child abuse and neglect.
- Developed a self assessment tool for early ed settings
- Have piloted with 7 states and now have 33 states with leadership teams.
- Most work done with center-based settings. Now starting to develop tools and pilots for family child care and family, friend and neighbor settings.
- Helping create links across early ed and child welfare systems. Recognizing importance of continuity of care for children who are or have experienced trauma
- Also exploring potential solutions for children expelled from child care settings. MA has a licensing regulation setting parameters re: expulsion.

### **SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**

Providers really hold the power when families in the market for child care where there is inadequate supply. Are there ways to give parents more control and education?

- As child gets older, parents become better consumers.
- Use CCR&R to more effectively reach families, especially low-income.
- In Chaudry's study, families would probably have responded best to good information via trusted family members and friends. Link consumer ed
- IN flags subsidy families who have changed providers more than 3 times in a year. They are given counseling on the possible ramifications of changing care so frequently.

Inadequate supply/capacity is a constraint in promoting continuity.

Does growing half-day pre-K movement negatively impact continuity goals?

- For higher income families that have a mix of settings, not a bad thing
- For lower income families or families in crises, need
- Some states have a pre-K program that is full-day, full-year.

### **KEY POINTS**

Session attempted to provide an understanding of what continuity is and the possible range of tools to address this policy goal. Tools include:

- Clear articulation of continuity is and why it is important
- Statutes and regulations
- Systems of support for child care providers
- Training for subsidy staff
- Administrative practices in subsidy
- Education for parents
- Special programs for highest risk children to maintain continuity