

Providing Information on Child Care to Parents: Preliminary Findings from Oregon

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Preliminary Findings from Research in Oregon:

- Quality Indicators Project Evaluation
(State-wide)
- Community Child Care Initiative Evaluation
(City of Portland)
- Oregon Population Survey
- Market Rate Survey

Oregon Quality Indicators (QI)

- 7 structural indicators of quality.
- Measured on all certified centers and family providers in Oregon.
- Currently building website for parents, others.
 - Definitions and importance
 - National standards
 - State licensing minimums
 - Community averages
 - Individual Provider levels

Community Childcare Initiative (CCI)

- Quality Enhancement Services
 - Centers with need for improvement on Quality Indicators (QI)
 - Receive \$ and support for improvement on QI
- Affordability Services
 - Subsidies for low-income families using “quality” providers (above standards on QI, FCCERS)

Parents Care about Quality

- CCI evaluation: 69 low-income parents using “quality” providers.
- Parents rate quality as significantly more important to them and their families than cost ($t(68) = 3.91, p < .01$).
- Parents rate the 7 QI as “very important” (3.95 out of 4.0).

Parents Want Information

- Parent focus group (QI process evaluation)
 - Want information about quality:
 - General guidelines of what to look for.
 - Specific, verified information on providers.
 - Prefer to interpret information on their own.
 - Requested information on each indicator.
 - Each family/child has different priorities/needs.
 - Do not want information aggregated into 1 score.

What is the impact of information on choices?

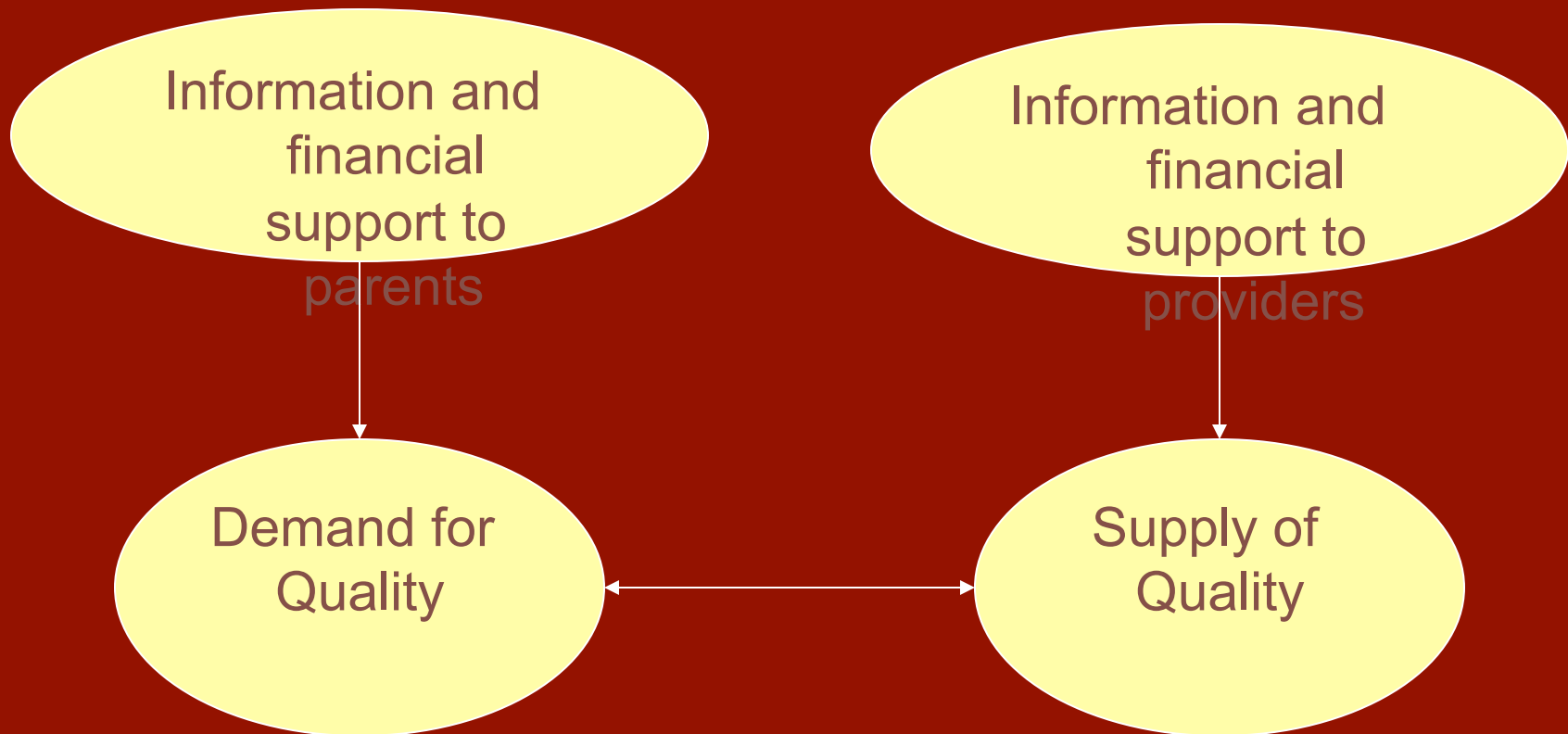
- Parents were skeptical about impact of QI information on their own decision-making.
 - Parents state that high quality care is expensive, unavailable, and inflexible.
- Choosing high quality care may require:
 - Generous subsidies for low-income families.
 - Parents reported that the CCI subsidy allowed them to stay with “quality” provider when income decreased.
 - Without CCI 55% were “likely” or “very likely” to leave (quality) child care provider for a less expensive one, or to miss work to take care of their children themselves.
 - Increased supply of higher quality care of all types.

Supply & Demand: Market Failure?

- Insufficient supply?
 - QI Parent focus group: demand for quality care won't be sufficient to increase supply of quality care in their communities.
 - Waiting lists for marginal quality providers.
- Are costs prohibitive?
 - Demand: Families in QI focus group reported that they were unable to pay for higher quality care.
 - Supply: Providers cannot afford to increase quality.

Logic Models

(See handout for full Quality Indicators logic model)



What if the market succeeds?

- Increasing demand coupled with increasing supply of quality care → prices skyrocket?
 - Would a successful market further price low-income families out of high quality paid care?
- Oregon data shows similar pattern for paid care overall 2000-2008 (Weber, 2009):
 - Increased demand for paid care from 27 to 33% (Oregon Population Survey; Weber, 2009)
 - Increased price of care (Oregon Market Rate Survey; Grobe & Weber, 2009)
 - Low-income families are dropping out of the market (Oregon Population Survey; Weber, 2009)
 - As a proportion of all families using paid care low-income families decreased from 26% to 16%.

Future Research Questions

- Utilization of information on child care quality:
 - To what extent do parents access the information?
 - To what extent does it impact their decision-making?
 - Does this vary depending on the type of information and the ways in which it is available?
 - Do parents who utilize information end up more satisfied with their providers? Do they stay with their providers longer?
- Market forces:
 - Does increased demand for quality care stimulate sufficient pressure to increase supply of quality care?
 - Are costs of increasing quality prohibitive?
 - If demand does increase supply, to what extent do the costs associated with improving quality increase the price of quality care?
 - What impact might this have on lower income families' access to high quality care?

References

- Grobe, D. & Weber, R. B. (2009) *2008 Oregon Child Care Market Price Study*. Downloaded from http://www.hhs.oregonstate.edu/hdfs/sites/default/files/2008_Child_Care_Market_Price_Study.pdf
- Weber, R. B. (2009) Unpublished findings from analysis of Oregon Population Survey, 2000 – 2008.
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