

2012 CCPRC Annual Meeting
Workshop Session C-3
October 25, 2012, 10:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Using the CCDF Policies Database in Child Care Research

Description

To what extent do differences in Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) policies across States affect which families receive subsidies? How many children are eligible for subsidies? Do subsidy policies affect child care choices? Answering these and other child care research questions requires detailed information on variations in CCDF policies across States and Territories and over time—information that can now be obtained from the CCDF Policies Database. This session began with an overview of the policy information in the database and the processes used to enter and validate the information, and will focused on using the data in research.

Session participants learned how to access the detailed database information from the Child Care & Early Education *Research Connections* Web site and how to download it in formats appropriate for linking with survey or administrative data. Academic and government researchers discussed examples of projects that have used the information in the database, including a statistical analysis involving database information linked with survey data and a project using database information in microsimulation modeling. Session participants were encouraged to discuss other research and policy questions that might be addressed by linking the detailed policy information in the CCDF Policies Database with other existing datasets.

Facilitator

Kathleen Dwyer, OPRE

Presenters

Linda Giannarelli, Urban Institute
Sarah Minton, Urban Institute
Christin Durham, Urban Institute
Shannon Lipscomb, Oregon State University-Cascades
Kendall Swenson, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Scribe

Ladia Albertson-Junkans, Child Trends

1. **Documents in Session Folder** (Please list, and save to the thumb drive, any electronic documents used during the session.)
 - “Using the CCDF Policies Database in Child Care Research;” October 25, 2012
 - “Linking State Childcare and Child Welfare Policies and Outcomes;” Shannon Lipscomb, Mary Elizabeth Meloy and Jenna Finch

2. Brief Summary of Presentations

- **Summary of Presentation #1: Linda Giannarelli**
 - Linda started by talking about the kinds of research that might use the CCDF Policies Database including projects that need very detailed information, information across time, and information across states AND territories
 - This includes both child care research questions and questions in related fields, such as questions about how State policies affect labor force participation.
 - Rather than capturing snapshots, which is how most longitudinal databases capture change, the information included in the database is accurate to the date events happened. This is important because policy changes occur on different dates across States.
 - The database process is iterative and includes collecting materials, coding materials, preparing tables, verifying data (a very important step) and releasing data.
 - The database contains information such as eligibility requirements, application and reporting information, copayments, reimbursement rates, and priority and waiting list policies. Eligibility policies include age limits for subsidized children, approved activities, the definition of family unit, etc. The database does not include licensing requirements because these are well-covered by other projects.

- **Summary of Presentation #2: Christin Durham**
 - Christin discussed slides that provided examples of information yielded by the database.
 - The first example showed that most States allow children to receive subsidized care through age 12 (with a few exceptions) and have higher age limits for children with special needs
 - Among other examples were: variation across States in allowing “job search” as an eligible activity for subsidy receipt; how income is counted across States; how government assistance is counted; income eligibility--related to cost of living by State; verification requirements; and priority and waiting list policies for various groups

- **Summary of Presentation #3: Kendall Swenson**
 - Kendall provided an example of how the database can be used for research.
 - An HHS project, conducted by the Urban Institute, uses a microsimulation model (TRIM) to approximate how many children are eligible for CCDF. Followup questions include examining the characteristics of those who are eligible and not taking up the program.

- **Summary of Presentation #4: Shannon Lipscomb**
 - Shannon described research that is examining CCDF policies and children and families in child welfare.
 - This study looks at how subsidy policy (receipt and stability) influences child welfare/foster care placements, and vice versa.
 - The 2009 CCDF Policy Database and Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) were used to identify policies associated with the characteristics of child welfare populations.

- Predictor variables were policy variables, including work hour requirements, activity requirements, copayments and priority policies. These were linked to child demographics and child welfare placements.
- Latent class analysis was completed with State as the unit of analysis.
- Are there groups of States that are similar in terms of policies? Are there relationships between subsidy policies and child welfare variations across States?
- Benefits and challenges of using the CCDF database: benefits include comprehensive, systematic data across States; challenges include that data are not continuously updated as policies shift and missing data (small amounts of missing data can have big implications).
- **Summary of Presentation #4: Sarah Minton**
 - Sarah provided a tutorial about getting into the database and navigating around it.
 - The tables are organized by State, and by family characteristics such as income, child age, etc.
 - The “Detailed Data files” have all variables and are available in most formats (e.g., excel and SAS).
 - The “Book of Tables” is also an important resource--what’s included is information that the Urban Institute felt would be most useful to researchers and includes 40 tables.
 - The database is completely available to the public through *Research Connections*.
 - Multiple records occur when: policy changes have been made, there are different policies in sub-state areas, policies differ across types of providers or groups of families, and policies differ across programs.

3. Brief Summary of Discussion

- Rick Brandon: Are there plans to capture or add preK into this database?
 - Kathleen: Linda would like to include preK, but this project had to draw a boundary, so the focus is just on CCDF. PreK would be almost an entirely different project, with a whole different set of policies.
- Did Shannon have an opportunity to examine different patterns of State policies – prior to conducting latent class analysis? There were lots of decisions around coding and recoding before LCA could be conducted; the LCA will likely include 8-9 State policy variables.
- Who verifies the data? Kathleen: the names of those verifying data are not made available.
- Linda: Tables can be added to respond to needs of researchers and suggestions for additional tables are welcomed.

4. Summary of Key issues raised

- The CCDF Policies Database can be useful for research projects that require very detailed information, information across time, and information across states AND territories. The data can be linked to other sources of data for a wide variety of research questions and analysis. This includes both child care research questions and questions in related fields, such as questions about how State policies affect labor force participation.

- Benefits of the CCDF Policies Database include the availability of comprehensive, systematic data across States; challenges include missing data and data that are not continuously updated as policies shift.
- One participant suggested the possibility of including preK in the database.