**Child Care Policy Research Consortium**
**2012 Annual Meeting Report**

The Child Care Policy Research Consortium (CCPRC) consists of researchers, policymakers and practitioners associated with child care research projects sponsored by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). CCPRC provides a forum for the exploration of the latest in research findings, questions and methods; problem-solving around challenging issues and questions; and identification of future research and funding needs.

The 2012 CCPRC Annual Meeting (CCPRC 2012) was held October 23-25, 2012 at the Hyatt Regency Bethesda in Bethesda, Maryland. The regular CCPRC meeting was preceded by a meeting of the Early Care and Education Research Scholar grantees and a Methodology Workshop on Propensity Score Methods.

The meeting was planned by the CCPRC Steering Committee, with guidance from OPRE and support from Child Trends, Child Care & Early Education *Research Connections*, and BLH Technologies, Inc. Members of the Steering Committee (and its planning groups) spent countless hours formulating the critical issues to be addressed, shaping plenary sessions and workshops, and identifying facilitators and presenters to lead sessions.

- The focus was on cross-cutting subsidy and quality issues and what we know from research that can help promote access to quality care for low-income families and their children. Among topics that were explored included strategies for encouraging the use of high-quality programs, a conceptual framework for quality systems and outcomes, patterns of quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) participation and movement, and what we know and need to know from child care subsidy research.
- Recognizing the importance of maximizing resources for research and evaluation, the meeting paid special attention to innovative research methodologies, especially methodologies that involve the use of existing data to help researchers and policymakers better understand the relationship between alternative policies and outcomes for families, children and providers.
- Meeting attendees included 71 current or former ACF research contractors or grantees, 27 invited presenters, 39 Federal employees, 19 technical assistance partners (CCTAN), and 12 State representatives (among others). The meeting consisted of eight plenary sessions and eleven concurrent workshop sessions in three breakout segments. In addition, many smaller formal and informal meetings of attendees were held throughout the week of the meeting.
- The products developed for this meeting including the agenda, participant list, detailed session summaries and associated documents are posted under Federally Funded Research and Meetings at: www.researchconnections.org.

**Overview of Plenary and Workshop Sessions**

*Wednesday, October 24, 2012, 8:30-9:15 a.m.*
Plenary Session 1: Opening and Welcome from ACF Leadership/Policy Context and Priorities
Ivelisse Martinez-Beck welcomed attendees and introduced Linda Smith and Shannon Rudisill. Among the issues and questions raised by ACF leadership were:

- The importance of thinking about child care in the context of other investments and initiatives. We need to use consistent language in communicating across child care, Head Start, home visiting and preK and consider the alignment of monitoring and research across programs.
- The need to move forward simultaneously on systems change and interventions. What are we doing to make changes in the classroom to impact children's learning? How are we improving the quality of care for the children who need quality most?
- What is the minimum amount of training the entry level workforce needs? What matters in the management of programs? What do we know and what is working in the area of professional development?
- What does it cost to make a difference in quality from the perspective of children, families and teachers? What makes the biggest difference? How would we measure effectiveness?
- When can we use administrative data and partnerships to get timely answers to pressing policy issues?

*Wednesday, October 24, 2012, 9:15-10:30 a.m.*
Plenary Session 2: Overview of Conceptual Issues, Policy Levers and Administrative Practices to Promote the Use of High Quality Programs
This session focused on strategies and policies States can use to promote use of high quality programs including tiered reimbursement, scholarships, contracts and marketing of QRIS. Nikki Forry facilitated, Shannon Rudisill provided opening remarks, and Liz Davis, Nadine Dechausay and Josh Wright served as presenters. Key issues included:
- *Policy and Practices:* We need to know not just the number of children served through CCDF, but also the quality of services those children receive.
  o The Office of Child Care (OCC) is interested in strategies States are implementing to encourage parents to choose higher quality care and also research that assesses the effectiveness and implications of those strategies.
  o OCC is taking steps to rebalance quality and access within CCDF through new data collection elements, visits to subsidy eligibility offices, and attention to consumer education for low-income parents.
  o We need to know more about what providers earn and parents (subsidized and non-subsidized) actually pay for services.
- *Research:* What guidance can researchers give States about how to promote use of high quality programs and what research is needed to support States? Questions include the incremental costs of improving quality, how parents and providers respond to incentives, which regulations and/or program changes are linked to improvements, where low-income children are going if their parents are not using a subsidy, and ultimately, which families and children actually receive services.
- *Behavioral Economics*: By providing a framework for carefully defining problems, diagnosing what is going on (including actionable bottlenecks) and designing interventions, behavioral economics may be helpful in identifying barriers and developing strategies within the context of how parents make choices in the real world. The problems addressed need to be appropriate given the tools available.

*October 24, 2012, 10:45-12:15 pm*
Workshop Session A-1: Child Care Subsidies, Access and Choice: Emerging Insights and Unanswered Questions

Based on existing literature and an examination of the information needs of States, participants in this session began identifying research questions that need to be addressed pertaining to subsidy access and choice. Presenters included Colleen Vesely and Lee Kreader; small groups were facilitated by Patti Banghart, Rick Brandon, Wendy Wagner Robeson and Yoonsook Ha. The session started with brief presentations on: 1) what we know from research about child care subsidy use including who accesses subsidies and associations between subsidies and the use of high quality care; and 2) questions about these issues from the State perspective. These presentations were followed by facilitated small group discussions. Among the key issues raised were:

- Existing research includes many conflicting findings. These may relate to peer-mediated and gatekeeper effects which raises the possibility of hidden variables that are not entering into the studies. Can we use synthetic controls to improve the rigor of our research? What can we do with existing data and cross-State analyses?
- Findings differ (and are limited) about infants and toddlers as compared to preschool children. We need to pay more attention to issues such as number of children in families, child age, teacher salaries, etc.
- We seem to know with confidence that subsidy use is associated with the use of more formal, regulated care and that price matters to parents. We need to know more about why eligible families don't use subsidies. To what extent are subsidies a work-support versus early education program?
- Do we know as much about quality as we think? Perceptions about quality are changing. What makes for quality effects and how much must be spent to achieve quality?
- Behavioral economics may help in thinking about the influences on parents and streamlining decision-making for them.

Workshop Session A-2: Learning Together about the Provider Perspective on Child Care Subsidies

This session dealt with providers and their willingness to serve subsidized families and children and the policy-relevant questions that need to be addressed by researchers. Presenters included Gina Adams and Liz Kelley and small groups were facilitated by Isabel Bradburn, Toni Porter, Carol Pearson, and Sue Wilson. The session started with short presentations on: 1) what we know from research about how providers view subsidies and how policies influence their willingness to serve subsidized families and children; and 2) the questions States are dealing with that relate to how providers view subsidies. Among the questions raised were:

- What do we know about providers and how policies and context affect providers? What is the level of involvement of providers with subsidies and why? What are the pathways between subsidies and regulated care (including use of centers)?
- What are the incentives and disincentives to provider participation including level of involvement in the subsidy program? Is this influenced by program size and infrastructure? Are there tipping points in provider willingness to serve subsidized children including number and ages of children served? What do we know about the fit (and trust) between providers and families?
- We need more information about provider perceptions and knowledge. What do providers understand about subsidy programs? What are common misconceptions? What actually happens in practice, e.g., in terms of parent co-pays? How does subsidy policy implementation affect providers' mental health?

- Questions remain about issues such as rates, reimbursement policies, payment approaches, and costs incurred by providers in working with subsidies. What is the relationship between the cost of care and revenues?
- Given CCDF design, do we expect CCDF to encourage quality? If not, how would we design it? When examining the quality of subsidized care, what is the appropriate comparison group? What is the biggest driver of access to quality care? Is it the provider? How do QRIS policies impact providers' participation?
- Among the types of research that are needed: descriptive data about providers in general and in subsidy systems (the National Survey of Early Care and Education should help with this); and qualitative as well as quantitative research.

Workshop Session A-3: Strengthening the Workforce through Professional Development and Quality Improvement Systems

The goal of this session was to discuss research about the effectiveness of strategies to support the early childhood and school-age workforce. Sarah LeMoine facilitated the session and presenters included Shannon Lipscomb, Eboni Howard and Anne Douglass. The presenters described projects that examined different facets of professional development (PD) and the State policy context.

- Policymakers want to know what the best investments are in terms of PD and coaching. We don't have the research we need to answer these questions and need to think intentionally about how research and data can be used to help policymakers in determining policies and cost-effective investments.
- Other issues and questions raised included:
  - Dosage (need to consider definitions, context and individuals)
  - Density (encouraging multiple educators from a program to attend the same training/course; is there a level where critical mass is reached?)
  - How scholarship dollars should be targeted and effectiveness measured, e.g., educational attainment versus retention
  - The intersection between facility-level and provider-level interventions to improve quality
  - The role these efforts can play in increasing professionalism and training for providers from under-represented groups
  - Regional characteristics and needs (need to improve data systems so that information is available in a timely, ongoing and sustainable way)
  - Research should inform the design of data collection and management systems.

Workshop Summary A-4: Building a Research Agenda on Effective Monitoring and Quality Assurance in Early Childhood Systems

The goal of this session was to develop key research questions and strategies to examine monitoring in early childhood systems. Recommendations for building a research agenda were discussed. Nancy Margie facilitated the session and Bentley Ponder, Beth Rous, Bridget Hatfield and Kyle Snow served as presenters. The presenters offered reflections on key elements of monitoring and quality assurance such as data collection strategies (observation, documentation, and verification), training and reliability procedures for raters and licensors, and options/incentives for improving compliance. Key issues and questions discussed were:

- Given different sources of evidence used, how valid and reliable are the processes for obtaining these sources of evidence? (These researchers found bias in licensing and CLASS observations, but there are steps that can be taken to minimize bias.)
- What can be learned from the NAEYC accreditation process and data sources to apply to quality determination and monitoring? NAEYC has a long history with accreditation and data that could be mined. While some States recognize accreditation in their QRIS systems, there can be issues around costs and the fact that some accreditation mechanisms are more rigorous than others.
- With different types of programs (child care, Head Start, preK, etc.), how can we improve efficiency in quality assurance and monitoring?
- We need to do more analyses of the costs associated with quality. Should we be shifting the country away from a market-based system to a cost-based system? We don't currently have enough data about costs to improve finance and pay teachers better.
- Research questions included: what is the optimal number of classrooms to sample within programs to ensure equitability and cost effectiveness and how much of a boost in reliability is achieved from adding each observer, day, etc?
- Studies that might be conducted include: piloting in school-age care; enhanced resources for self-study; and a streamlined, transparent assessment tool.

*October 24, 2013, 1:45-2:30 p.m.*
Plenary Session 3: Post-Data Collection Updates from the National Survey of Early Care and Education
This session provided an update on the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE), which includes surveys of a nationally representative sample of households, providers (center-based, home-based and informal home-based care), and staff assigned to center classrooms across the country. Ivelisse Martinez-Beck facilitated the session and Robert Goerge and Lisa Gennetian presented. The project is documenting current use and availability of early care and education (ECE) to permit better understanding of how well families' needs and preferences coordinate with providers' offerings and constraints. Key points included:
- This is the first nationally-representative study of all sectors of the ECE workforce. (Many data sources exclude home-based providers and almost all exclude informal providers.)
  - These data will be useful in thinking about professional development, reducing staff turnover, and understanding challenges to increasing supply of high quality programs.
  - The study will also provide a first opportunity to look nationally at spectrum of child care use across siblings, age-spacing, and socio-economic status and will help us answer questions about where and to whom our programs are targeted.
- Core workforce data items include: qualifications and PD, attitudes toward child development and caregiving, and activities with children. Individuals in the ECE workforce were surveyed across types of care on aspects such as attitudes and stress.
- While the study does not include quality observations, it does include predictors of quality based on a review of the literature. These include training, family-provider relations, curricula and special needs.
- The study breaks new ground in survey methodologies including the use of quality predictors and multiple items to estimate subsidy use through probabilistic methods.
- With nationally-representative data about households and ECE (both programs and individual staff), the study data will afford tremendous opportunities for secondary data

analysis including studies involving linkages with administrative data including census, CCDF, and licensing.

*October 24, 2012, 2:30-3:15 p.m.*
Plenary Session 4: Building the Conceptual Framework for Quality Improvement (QI) Initiatives: Child Outcomes Supported by System Outcomes
The goal of this session was to expand existing frameworks for quality improvement initiatives by articulating expected outcomes for families, practitioners, programs and systems in addition to child outcomes. The session was facilitated by Ann Rivera. Marty Zaslow presented a conceptual model for QI/QRIS initiatives that links current QRIS standards with intended outcomes. The framework includes standards that are expected to relate to child outcomes, and articulates how other QRIS standards relate to critical system outcomes for families, programs and practitioners. These may not always map directly to child outcomes. Deb Cassidy presented from the State administrator's perspective and reflected on the value of a conceptual model that places child outcomes in a broader framework. Key points included:

- In the evolution of the ECE field, efforts to analyze predictive validity, and emphasis on child outcomes, we need to review our conceptualization of QRIS and to do so in the context of policy agendas. It is important to view indicators in context and re-examine indictors, standards, and outcomes in light of new conceptualizations.
- We need to make our conceptual models explicit and consider including other key outcomes (ghost outcomes) such as professionalization of the ECE workforce, improving ECE as a system, and enhancing family outcomes.
- Can we develop a common core of quality indicators across QRIS (as is being proposed by INQUIRE)? Seek agreement on areas where evidence in promising but limited?
- Similar to what is happening in the field of Home Visitation, can we intentionally reserve resources to build the evidence base (while simultaneously implementing)?
- We need to take into account measurement characteristics (some things happen infrequently such as health and safety violations), review assumptions about linear relationships between quality and child outcomes, and recognize the QRIS may give little weight to the components with the strongest relationship to child outcomes.
- Collaborating with Kentucky, Delaware and Illinois, North Carolina is developing a new measure of overall quality with RTT-ELC funds.
- It's important to remember that States are under pressure to justify investments in ECE with data about child outcomes.

*October 24, 2012, 3:30-5:00 p.m.*
Workshop Session B-1: Supporting Successful Participation of Home-Based Providers within QRIS
The purpose of this session was to describe the current quality status of family child care (FCC) and Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) care and linkage of these settings with broader State quality initiatives. The session was facilitated by Toni Porter; presenters included Lisa McCabe, Carolyn Langill, and Rebecca Swartz. Presentations focused on data related to coaching strategies used in QRIS and provider engagement in State PD systems. Presenters and participants identified a number of research questions that need to be answered:

- What might QI strategies look like that take into account context and identities from the perspectives of family child care providers (both regulated family child care and FFN)? Depending on how providers view themselves, QI strategies may be grounded in increasing

professionalization or in the use of family strengthening models. What can we learn from other fields, e.g., eldercare and child welfare?

- o What can we learn from States such as Indiana that have been successful in engaging family child care providers in QRIS?
- o There are some QI strategies with demonstrated results in FCC. How do we build the funding and infrastructure to expand and evaluate these models further?
- o How do we tailor PD to the needs to home-based providers including providers who are immigrants (and serving immigrant families)?
- o What are the impacts of additional training requirements for FFN caregivers?
- o Can we demonstrate that programs such as the food and nutrition program can help provide a holistic way to improve quality in FFN?
- Given the differences between center-based care and family child care, does it make sense to have common QRIS indicators across types of care? How do outcomes differ across care types? Are ratings a useful strategy in improving quality in FFN care?
- Need to understand more about unpacking coaching and mentoring including workload, activities, and targeting of efforts. What is the impact of coaching, which providers benefit most, and what specific coaching activities are related to advancement?
- What strategies and incentives are effective in encouraging continued participation, advancement, and maintenance of high levels of care? What factors predict advancement to a higher QRIS level?
- The National Survey of Early Childhood Education includes FFN care and should provide a baseline of data about these providers and the families that use them. What questions should we be prepared to ask from this data?

Workshop Session B-2: Subsidies and Continuity: Fostering Consistency through Policies and Practice

Using a review of existing literature and a summary of the information needs of States, this session was intended to develop a list of needed research based on what we know and don't know about the duration of subsidy receipt and subsidized child care arrangements. Presenters included Liz Davis and Minh Le; small group discussions were facilitated by Amy Claessens, Bobbie Weber, Lee Kreader and Ann Rivera. The session included short presentations on: 1) what we know from research about the continuity of subsidies and subsidized child care arrangements; and 2) questions States are asking about continuity and child care subsidies. These presentations were followed by facilitated small group discussions.

- Liz noted four key findings from the literature on subsidies and continuity: median spells of subsidy receipt are relatively short (about 6 months); many families have more than one spell of subsidy receipt; exiting the subsidy program is sometimes related to policy, e.g., redetermination month; and exiting the subsidy program is often related to events, most particularly, employment changes. There may be a link between instability of subsidy use and instability of care arrangements, but the causal relationships are difficult to untangle.
- Minh noted several questions the Office of Child Care hears from States: What are the reasons that families leave the child care system? What are the main economic drivers within CCDF that affect continuity? How much overlap is there between CCDF and other Federal programs? What are the major differences between the subsidy system and the private child care market? Which of these impact the subsidy system and the provider working with families?
- Highlights from the discussion included:

- We need to understand why changes and discontinuity are happening. Are changes good or bad or equal? This depends on who we are talking about and may differ in terms of child outcomes and parental outcomes; sometimes these don't move in the same direction; was the change planned versus unplanned?
- Methodological issues and possible approaches:
  - The data is difficult to disentangle, such as employment and care.
  - Identifying pieces related to administrative policy is important; combine administrative data analysis with qualitative research.
  - Need to work with other systems to examine them for lessons learned.
- There is a subset of families that experience a lot of changes. If we could identify these families and what is going on with them, it is likely they are the same families that experience poor outcomes for children.
- As CCDF has shifted to include more focus on ECE, has the research lens also shifted or are we looking at things through an outdated lens? Are we still looking at the right unit of analysis? Do we need to be thinking about other ones?

Workshop Session B-3: Methodological Lessons from Implementation of the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE)

The researchers participating in the NSECE discussed three key provider-related components of the NSECE: 1) capturing the full spectrum of home-based providers, 2) representing all center-based providers of early care and education, and 3) constructing a nationally-representative sample of the ECE workforce. For each component, team members discussed motivations for including the component, operational lessons learned in conducting data collection, and implications for data analyses. Bob Goerge facilitated the session and presenters included: Rick Brandon, Ann Witte, Marietta Bowman, Jill Connelly and Lekha Venkataraman. Among the issues discussed were:

- Variations in licensing regulations across States and counties made developing a nationally representative sample of home-based providers challenging. A dual-frame approach was used to identify providers starting with State lists and then through household questionnaires in which individuals could self-identify as providing care for children who are not their own.
- Determining how to parse home-based providers into two groups, "formal" home-based and "informal" home-based providers, was challenging. More work is needed in this area.
- In constructing the sample frame for centers, State and national lists were supplemented by other lists such as from NAEYC accreditation, the Department of Defense, and the Boys and Girls Clubs.
- The NSECE workforce data will provide the first complete nationally representative sample of the entire ECE workforce and caregiving population. For the first time, we will be able to have an accurate estimate of the ECE workforce by age of child and type of setting and will be able to distinguish between paid and unpaid home-based providers.
- The richness of the NSECE data set was heavily emphasized throughout the session. Once these data are available to the field, there will be significant interest in analyzing them by looking at different subgroups within the sample.

Workshop Session B-4: Challenges and Options for Studying Child Outcomes in the Context of Quality Improvement Initiatives and QRIS

This session provided an overview of recent findings that relate to child outcomes in the context of quality improvement (QI) initiatives and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS).

The session was facilitated by Louisa Tarullo and presenters included Jim Elicker, Kathryn Tout and Tamara Halle. Critical challenges in research on child outcomes were identified as were implications for QRIS validation studies. Among the issues raised were:

- Studies are finding small or no associations between QRIS and child outcomes although Indiana has some evidence of interactions being associated with outcomes.
  - How do we incorporate measures of process quality into QRIS and use those measures for validation?
  - How careful are we being about identifying and tracking standards changes, policy changes, and financial incentive changes in relation to child outcomes?
  - What about tracking outcomes for specific populations (i.e., vulnerable populations). How do things like density of subsidy and poverty affect outcomes? Are appropriate measures available?
  - There may be potential in using HLM to partition variance from child and program and by quality indicators, etc.
- So far there is little rigorous data concerning validation. A single outcome measure is not sufficient to evaluate a whole system. There may be other outcomes that can help validate the system (workforce, family, and system outcomes).
- There are many considerations in using child assessments for validation of QRIS systems. The purpose must be very intentional. We need to make sure we are using reliable/valid assessments that are appropriate for the age and population of interest. We also need to consider the burden and costs of conducting child outcome assessments. Other challenges include the modest association between quality and child outcomes and the need to be cautious about using this data in isolation to validate systems.
- For the next generation of QRIS outcome evaluations:
  - Think about alignment between research questions, logic models, assumptions, and expected outcomes. What designs do we need to be able to look at these things?
  - Begin evaluation at an early stage of QRIS implementation.
  - Include child and teacher-level attendance and continuity data.
  - Revisit implementation and quality dimensions.
  - Establish partnerships with States to address their questions.

*October 24, 2013, 5:10-5:40 p.m.*
Plenary Session 5: Sharing of Cross-Cutting Insights across Sessions and Topics
This plenary, facilitated by Karen Tvedt, encouraged cross-cutting sharing of key insights by participants and provided an update on proposed activities under OPRE's new contract with BLH Technologies, Inc.; sign-up sheets were available so that participants could choose to continue informal discussions over dinner. Based on the sessions attended throughout the first day of the CCPRC meeting, participants highlighted the following as important:

- Qualitative research and mixed methodologies to bridge the gap between theory and practice.
- More work on the issue of child outcomes including honing our conceptual models and resources to build the evidence.
- Resources to support evaluation work based on administrative data as well as the collection of new data.
- Further exploration of the application of behavioral economics.
- Development of a compendium of best practices.

- Work with State administrators around a broader set of correlates and quality outcomes (characterized by Marty Zaslow as ghost outcomes).
- Support to research partnerships among States and universities. Possibility of partnership grants and post-doc fellowships funded through ACF.
- Technical assistance around calculating return on investment related to QRIS evaluation and integrated data systems.
- Mental health issues in families' uptake of services and child outcomes.

*October 25, 2013, 9:00-10:30 a.m.*
Plenary Session 6: QRIS Participation and Movement Patterns and Innovative Methodologies for Tracking Movement in QRIS
This session focused on what we can we learn from longitudinal QRIS data patterns about participation and movement in QRIS. Kathryn Tout facilitated the session and presenters included: Michel Lahti, Amber Moodie-Dyer and Rena Hallam. The presenters used data from three States to show QRIS patterns of participation and program change. Trends and commonalities across States, including Maine, Ohio and Delaware were highlighted. Among the key issues discussed were:
- Better administrative data will enable us to do more meaningful analyses including analyzing where there may be bias in QRIS, where stalls are occurring, and the extent to which our highest-risk children are being served. However, the time and resources it takes to prepare administrative data for analyses is challenging. We need to make sure we are collecting the right data (i.e., collecting information on all standards programs are meeting in a building block system).
- Detailed conversations around movement can help us figure out what is preventing programs from moving up. Requirements that are not feasible, e.g., high levels of PD, can keep programs stuck at lower QRIS levels. Messages sent to programs also need to be examined, i.e., to what extent are providers getting the message that it is acceptable to stay at level 1? Qualitative methods can help us understand these issues better.
- Engaging FCC participation is an important issue. Lessons can be learned from subsidy researchers because many of these programs are reticent to participate in ANY program, not just in QRIS. To what extent are resources available to help providers move from one level to the next?
- We need to pay attention to the costs associated with providing higher quality as measured by QRIS.
- It is also important to look at movement on the parent side—this requires a critical mass of programs participating in QRIS and reaching higher levels on QRIS.

*October 25, 2013, 10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.*
Workshop Session C-1: Linking and Using Data to Support Quality Improvement Initiatives/QRIS Policy Decisions
The goal of this session was to describe recent State-level and cross-State efforts using existing data to inform QRIS policy decisions and identify new research questions and strategies for using integrated data. Dawn Ramsburg facilitated the session. Presenters included Laura Rothenberg, Meg Soli, Liza Malone, Herman Knopf, Rena Hallam, Tabitha Isner and Elizabeth Groginsky. Presenters discussed examples of questions that can be addressed using State-level data and lessons learned from efforts to link and use data to support quality initiatives.

- Specific examples included: the QRS Assessment Project; development of models in Kentucky to examine how alternative structures would impact program distribution across levels; linkages between QRIS and subsidy data in Tennessee; and plans to use the integrated data system in South Carolina to examine child care quality, vouchers and licensing across programs.
- Federal reporting is moving toward requiring States to link program quality to subsidy data. With provider IDs, basic analyses about stability and continuity of care will be possible.
- A challenging issue in developing common data elements is balancing how we would collect information for research purposes versus how it would be collected for reporting/compliance purposes. How can we use integrated data systems to replace what is there rather than adding onto what's there. The goal is to reduce burden, improve accuracy, and improve reliability and access.
- There is interest in linkages with Head Start (HS) but HS programs are currently facing challenges in meeting HS data and accountability requirements. The State Longitudinal Data System project in the Department of Education involves 10 States and includes efforts to include HS data.
- Lessons learned about data linkages:
  - It is easier to plan ahead than go back and make linkages retroactively.
  - However long you think it will take, it will take longer than you think.
  - It is important to do use a collaborative process with ongoing discussions about data.
  - Think about policy changes that may impact the data, e.g., subsidy policy changes will affect the data but may not be explicit in the data system; small changes can make a big difference.
  - Make sure you address key issues including identifiers, storage issues, coverage of the data, data definitions and measures, entering and accessing the data and how data will be reported.
  - As demonstrated in Kentucky, models can be more cost-effective than conducting a pilot in planning for QRIS redesign or revision.
- INQUIRE is developing two products: a data management practices guide and a resource document to guide and support administrators in building a data system.

Workshop Session C-2: Child Care in the Lives of Low-Income Families: Findings from the Child Care Policy Research Partnership Grants
The goal of this session was to describe emerging findings from the Maryland/Minnesota and Illinois/New York Child Care Policy Research Partnerships. This session provided the first opportunity for CCPRC members to hear the details and emerging findings from these Partnerships which are a vehicle to encourage collaboration and involve State agencies and researchers. Susan Jekielek facilitated the session and presenters included: Amy Claessens, Liz Davis, Nikki Forry, Tamara Halle, Heather Sandstrom, and Kathryn Tout.
- Presenters provided an overview of the studies in progress along with preliminary findings.
  - The Illinois (IL)/New York (NY) Partnership is focused on subsidy stability and child care continuity and the linkages between the two. It includes three components: a survey of child care subsidy participants; in-depth interviews with a subset of survey respondents; and longitudinal linked records of survey respondents in both States.
  - The Minnesota (MN)-Maryland (MD) study builds on previous studies in each State and is focused on choices and decision-making, perspectives on quality, and stability and continuity. Using profile analysis, Substudy 1 has identified two patterns in parent

decision-making, quick deciders (82% of the sample) and time takers. Substudy 2 has identified four constructs of quality: developmentally appropriate practice, social-emotional development, family sensitive caregiving and cultural sensitivity. Substudy 3 is examining continuity and stability; preliminary results indicate that more than half of children had a provider change in 6 months and only 19% had no provider changes in 1.5 years. Changes in arrangements were correlated with family composition and circumstances changes, e.g., losing a job.

- Lessons Learned:
  o *Let's be friends with State leaders*; even so, it takes persistence to get data sharing agreements signed.
  o *How to Get Permission to Play in the Sandbox;* requires persistence, ongoing relationship-building, and understanding of lines of authority and IRB requirements.
  o *Hello? Is Anyone Out There? Lessons Learned in Recruiting Low-Income Families.* It is important in designing your survey to know what permissions are needed to access families; experiences varied across States in these studies.
  o *Building Bridges between Experiences and Statistics.* A third party organization can be helpful in linking administrative and survey data (MD).


Workshop Session C-3: Using the CCDF Policies Database in Child Care Research
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 was facilitated by Kathleen Dwyer; presenters included Linda Giannarelli, Sarah Minton, Christin Durham, Shannon Lipscomb, and Kendall Swenson. Key points included:

- 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.
- Examples of projects that are using the database were described including:
  o Kendall described an HHS project, conducted by the Urban Institute, which uses a microsimulation model (TRIM) to approximate how many children are eligible for CCDF. Follow-up questions include examining the characteristics of those who are eligible and not taking up the program.
  o 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 and foster care placements. The 2009 CCDF Policy Database and Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) were used to identify policies associated with characteristics of child welfare populations.
- The detailed database information can be accessed from the Child Care & Early Education *Research Connections* Web site and can be downloaded in formats appropriate for linking with survey or administrative data.
- Tables can be added to respond to needs of researchers; suggestions for additional tables are welcomed.

*October 25, 2012, 1:30-3:00 p.m.*

Plenary Session 7: A Framework for Future Child Care Subsidy Research

This session was facilitated by Gina Adams; presenters included Isabel Bradburn, Yoonsook Ha and Bobbie Weber. Presenters summarized what was learned during the subsidy work sessions and proposed a framework for future child care subsidy research that identifies the policy relevant questions that need to be addressed next.

- What do we know from research?
  - *We know that subsidy take-up rates are low*; families on subsidies are more likely to use center-based care; and results related to quality vary across studies. Findings are inconsistent overall and differ by study samples related to variables that may be omitted, policy context and varying comparison groups.
  - *Providers are gatekeepers of subsidy access*, because they decide whether or not they will accept families using subsidies. Little information exists about subsidies from the provider perspective, however we know that stress, hassles and economic instability decrease subsidy acceptance.
  - *Regarding continuity,* we know that subsidy spells are short; that cycling in and out of subsidies is common; that exits tend to relate to authorization (and reauthorization) and employment changes. We know less about arrangements and whether changes are good or bad. Predictable changes do appear to be less disruptive for children and families than unpredicted changes.
  - *Studies suggest that subsidies do not impact earnings and employment* but we know very little about other outcomes; we need to be more careful and expansive about the outcomes we measure.
- The NSECE will provide more information on children's care experiences as well as the perspectives of providers.
- *Research and Methodological Issues*
  - Relevant terms need to be clarified to allow for synthesis of existing findings and future research (and hopefully avoid the inconsistency that characterizes current findings across studies and samples).
  - More needs to be known about subpopulations, targeting of subsidies (which families receive subsidies versus which families would benefit most from subsidies), mediators linking subsidy receipt and child outcomes, collaboration among publicly-funded ECE programs, ghost outcomes, constellations of policies and practices, e.g., contracts vs. vouchers, measures of quality, cross-State comparisons, and consumer education/effective outreach (BIAS).
  - More information is needed about providers using qualitative data, mixed methods, and multi-method approaches. This includes characteristics, motivations, context and factors influencing their decisions (including about subsidies).
  - Are we seeing longer subsidy spells in States that are implementing policies designed to support continuity? How do exits and return affect care arrangements?
  - How much is paid out of pocket by low-income parents, including parents receiving and not receiving subsidies? What are the effects of parental employment on duration of subsidies; characteristics of families with multiple changes; effects of care quality on duration of use; and duration in rated facilities?
  - We need to think through what types of questions can be answered with existing national and State administrative data and current methods to determine how to design the next

wave of studies. These questions might be addressed through the subsidy research agenda proposed by the Subsidy Workgroup/CCPRC 2012 Planning Group.

- *Future Directions*
  - o It is increasingly difficult to separate quality and subsidies including across groups in CCPRC; for example, continuity of subsidy receipt, continuity of care, and impact of the care on child wellbeing are clearly related.
  - o Should we be thinking in terms of "best fits" for families and children (including the whole landscape of ECE)? Can we test whether families, children and providers are getting what they need with alternative models of blended funding streams?

*October 25, 2012, 3:15-4:30 p.m.*
Closing Plenary: Highlights Across Themes and Reflections for ACF Leadership
Representatives from the CCPRC Planning Groups reflected on the key research findings, questions and methodologies discussed during the meeting, including how efforts to increase access and quality are interrelated, and implications for future research. Ivelisse Martinez-Beck facilitated; presenters included Wendy Wagner Robeson, Kathryn Tout, and Shannon Lipscomb. Audience members joined in the discussion, offering their thoughts about key findings and new research directions. Ajay Chaudry responded from the perspective of HHS. Key issues included:

- Research questions are influenced by conceptual models, policy questions, analytic strategies, and design/data. Topics discussed that relate to research design and data include:
  - o Conceptual models including a framework for QRIS, behavioral economics, systems theory and implementation science.
  - o The need to match analytic strategies to conceptual models.
  - o The importance of paying attention to data quality; the weakest links often relate to the reliability and validity of data.
  - o The value of administrative data as an asset for answering questions in a timely way; we need to influence what gets collected to maximize its usefulness.
  - o Examples of innovative research strategies including propensity score matching, survival analysis, and latent transition analysis.
  - o The importance of the NSECE in offering innovations in sampling, data, and measurement; it also opens up the possibility of asking new questions.
  - o Qualitative data.
- In our ongoing work, we need to consider:
  - o *Access and quality:* Focus on access and quality simultaneously. How can we do this in a way that supports the most vulnerable children including infants and toddlers, the lowest income, and children from immigrant families? We need a path to quality and to help parents understand the options that are available.
  - o *Parents:* how do we help parents learn about the benefits of ECE programs? Should we require a minimum QRIS rating to receive subsidy?
  - o *QI, QRIS and PD*: push the boundaries in understanding QI and child development across ECE programs; explore issues of density; understand what is working in State PD systems including for groups of providers; continue work around predictors of QRIS entry and movement; should we be looking at different criteria for infant-toddler teachers?
  - o *Issues of Finance***:** analyze costs and incentives in QRIS; is there a tipping point in the use of "demand-based" versus "supply-based" strategies; to what extent are we investing in provider training and compensation and the physical environment of programs; does it

make sense to tie provider reimbursement rates to QRIS ratings; consider blending and meshing funds and connecting child care and Head Start research; incentives for quality built-into the federal child care tax credit?

- o *Research and Data:* share resources and data across projects; focus on reliability; pay attention to the conceptual and measurement framework for QRIS including intermediate outcomes
- o *Other:* continue these discussions throughout the year via the CCPRC topical workgroups; document and celebrate successes in ECE.