

2008 CCPRC Meeting
Session 16 (Breakout C-3)
Friday, August 1, 10:45-12:00 noon

Multiple Programs, Services, and Funding Streams: Implications for Families, Policymakers, and Researchers

Description

States and local providers are increasingly supporting and promoting cross-sector program coordination, with the goal of improving access and quality of services to meet the needs of low-income working families and young children. At the same time, programs' eligibility requirements, funding and goals can impede efforts to create a seamless system of service delivery. This session described research on coordination across Head Start, prekindergarten, IDEA/special education services, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and a range of child care settings. Presenters described current issues confronting researchers and policymakers in coordinating and analyzing specific early care and education and related programs targeted at populations of interest including children with disabilities; infants and toddlers; English Language Learners; and children in poverty including those whose families receive TANF services.

Moderator

Diane Schilder, Education Development Center, Inc.

Panel Members

Stephanie Curenton, Rutgers University
Monica Rohacek, Urban Institute
Helen Ward, University of Southern Maine

Scribe

Pia Divine, Consultant

Documents in Session Folder

Discussion Notes

Helen Ward

Helen Ward discussed studies looking at the distinctions among various types of collaborations to improve the services for children with special needs. She presented a model of systemic relationships and discussed studies that examined systematic impacts on children and families. The discussion explored collaborations within a system (e.g., Head Start, prekindergarten [preK]) and collaborations among multiple systems (e.g., the early intervention and preschool special education aspects of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) that promote the school readiness of children with special needs. The primary focus of the studies concerned how families and children are affected versus how child care providers and programs are affected.

2008 CCPRC Meeting
Session 16 (Breakout C-3)
Friday, August 1, 10:45-12:00 noon

The challenges identified in the studies centered on the needs of children and families and the ability of programs to meet them.

- Differences between missions and the primary beneficiaries of the programs can affect the expectations of parents, eligibility for assistance, differing mindsets about child and family needs, mode of service delivery, amount and duration of services, and availability of funding.
- Issues that caused conflicts for parents and providers involved the stability of child care and parent satisfaction, the employment problems of parents, multiple transitions for children, difficulties with child care staff or programs, children having to go without early interventions, and problems with funding.

Monica Rohacek

Monica Rohacek reported on research conducted by the Urban Institute that focused on child care providers and the voucher system. Most preK programs are delivered, at least in part, through public school systems. However, many initiatives also include provisions that allow the services to be delivered through private, community-based child care centers or even homes. Regardless of how it is delivered, preK has the potential to affect those nonschool providers.

This study looked at the effects in three areas: (1) How often community-based child care providers are serving the children targeted by preK programs; (2) the extent to which the centers meet quality or other standards associated with preK; and (3) other considerations. Our research was conducted in five counties across four States among a representative sample of center directors and teachers in State-funded preK programs.

Key findings suggest that community-based centers:

- Are serving children targeted by preK initiatives (e.g., low-income families, 3- to 4-year-old children, English-language learners)
- Often have staff members who speak the languages of limited-English-proficient families
- Serve preK children in tandem with younger and older children
- Need extra support to fully meet and maintain the preK standards for the number of staff members with bachelor's degrees, in-service training, wages and benefits, proper teacher-to-child-ratios, and the funding of administrative costs and implementation.

Stephanie Curenton

We are trying to collect evidence that concretely answers the question of what actually happens in two counties in Ohio when universal preK is introduced into a community. Research questions included the following: (1) How does the expansion of preK affect the quality and supply of child care for low-income families; (2) what is the effect of structural requirements, such as ratios, teacher requirements, and benefits for teachers; and (3) how

2008 CCPRC Meeting
Session 16 (Breakout C-3)
Friday, August 1, 10:45-12:00 noon

are centers that partner with preK programs different from centers that do not partner with them? This issue links to Monica's research.

Our research took place in two counties in New York State and Ohio.

- New York delivers preK services through a variety of mechanisms. In Albany most preK services are funded through contracts to providers. In Niagra most are funded through the public school system.
- Ohio has rolled out an attempt at universal preK. We looked at Franklin and Cuyahoga counties regarding a naturalistic experiment—the year before universal implementation and the year after.

Lessons for Researchers

We encountered sampling issues in the first year of our phone survey. The results must be described in the context of sample characteristics. Survey research only gets one slice of a total sample. Although the programs are universal, the results look different. They all offer preK but also offer other services. Different programs serve different populations and income groups.

Lessons for Administrators

Various funding streams with different missions are being combined. There is a need for bridge funding to enable programs to be more universal.

Diane Schilder

Partnerships with Head Start are related to the following:

- Improved structural indicators of quality
- Greater likelihood of providing resources and referrals to parents and children
- Employment benefits for teachers and staff members
- Better support for parents in their working lives
- Higher classroom quality as measure by the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool and *ECES*.

The following elements of partnership predict benefits:

- Communication between partners
- Specificity of agreements
- Alignment of goals
- Partnership with Head Start
- Funding and duration

2008 CCPRC Meeting
Session 16 (Breakout C-3)
Friday, August 1, 10:45-12:00 noon

- Policymakers taking specific steps to support partnerships, such as following Federal information memoranda to extend eligibility, providing training and technical assistance, and circulating current information about rules and regulations.

Discussion

Question: What are the implications for families, policymakers, program directors, and researchers?

- **Helen:** Programs and policymakers can be the focus of coordination issues and their effects, as can parents and children. For our study, the most invaluable thing that we did was to have a diverse advisory committee that included representatives of all the silos involved, organizations and agencies that represent and help parents navigate the silos, and parents. Each of the silos reported on the changes and issues that were emerging and that might affect the research. This process helped invigorate the various programs. The advisory committee sparked collaborative efforts and improved coordination among the agencies.
- **Stephanie:** Look at a program's slots and how they change over time as the program changes.
- **Helen:** Carolyn Drugge is the State Child Care Administrator in Maine. I praise her for trying to close the gaps and to implement better coordination between Head Start, preK, and special education programs.
- **Carolyn Drugge:** We have a new project funded through the Center for Community Inclusion. It provides services to families with children who need special education. State money is paid directly to a center or family child care home for the salaries. We visit every 3 months to provide support and are starting an expanded opportunities project to support inclusion in child care.

Comment: In Minnesota collaborative programs are doing a wonderful job, especially Head Start and child care programs. Public health is often missing from the mix.

- **Helen:** We learned that it grows and multiplies. More and more programs come in.

Comment: Every early childhood program needs to include protective factors. Support for parents is important.

- **Helen:** Child welfare caseworkers in Colorado did not think in terms of a child development frame. It was hard to get into the Head Start programs. Early childhood education and development programs were less likely than other services to be delivered through the child welfare system. Often, providers do not know how to handle the needs of children who are involved with the child welfare system, such as through the courts, foster care system, and/or health care system.

Comment: We have a strong advocacy network in Kentucky that is insisting that preK, Head Start, and child care programs all develop together. I am concerned about the child care sector, as preK is driving where early childhood learning is heading for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds. Sometimes infant-toddler slots become unavailable.

Comment: To meet preK requirements, we are seeing that infant-toddler slots are filling up. The number of credentialed teachers for younger children is decreasing.

Comment: In New York City, a legislative priority is to obtain flexible preK dollars. Did you look at full- and part-day preK?

- **Stephanie:** We are going to visit that issue. In our phone survey we asked if the programs were full- or part-day programs. We will try to determine if there is a difference in teacher characteristics between partnering programs and those that run a full-day or part-day program.
- **Diane:** We looked at the number of hours that a center provides. In Ohio a majority of providers offered year-round preK (by regulation). In New York State preK is offered for the school year.

Question: What are the unintended consequences of attempts to align the programs?

- **Monica:** There are large discrepancies in wages between community-based child care programs and early childhood education programs, which erects a barrier to collaboration.

Comment: In New York State, there was a decline of teachers in Head Start programs with bachelor's degrees as teachers with greater tenure and education moved to the State early childhood education program.

- **Diane:** We found the same thing. Centers that were partnering with Head Start had higher turnover as teachers moved to Head Start for better wages and benefits. Also, some teachers could not meet the new standards and left the center.

Question: What about infant and toddler teachers?

- **Monica:** We only had data for the lowest and highest paid teacher and for an assistant teacher. We did not break these data out by a child's age.

Comment: Did you look at urbanicity? Rural people are more inclined to blend resources and teachers. In urban settings it is more difficult. Cultural differences and more status discrepancies exist.

- **Helen:** In southeast Colorado there was less confusion about the roles, partly because in a small town people wear multiple hats. People are more certain about where to get services, and there are more one-stop services. Programs are more willing to blend funding and be more creative about the rules than in urban areas. There are also other issues that affect rural providers, such as transportation and reimbursement.
- **Diane:** We found from our child care-Head Start study that initially rural providers were more likely to serve children in partnerships. With the decline in State Head Start funding, we have heard that rural partnerships were discontinued due to the lack of funding. Also, children above the poverty line were more likely to be cut from the programs as they tried to serve the neediest.

2008 CCPRC Meeting
Session 16 (Breakout C-3)
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Question: Did anyone assess small, independent operations? Are they becoming a thing of the past?

- **Monica:** We will look at that.
- **Stephanie:** We looked at preK programs and contrasted all of those that offered State-funded preK with those that did not. The smallest programs were unlikely to offer preK.