

2010 CCPRC Annual Meeting
Workshop Session B4
October 21, 2010, 2:30 p.m.

Poster Symposium: Child Care Subsidies and Child/Family Well-Being

Description

This breakout session was designed to increase understanding of the complex pathways through which child care subsidies influence child and maternal well-being. The organizing principle was that subsidy policies and practices lead to important changes in the lives of low-income families, and many of these have important implications for children's development and maternal well-being. This session did the following three things: First, it provided participants with a conceptual framework within which to understand the impact of child care subsidies on well-being. Second, using a poster symposium format, session participants were invited to engage in discussions with researchers who have prepared posters covering one or more of the subsidy pathways, with an emphasis on the parental employment, child care quality, and child care stability pathways. Concluding the session, participants were reconvened to discuss key findings from the poster symposium, expand upon the conceptual framework in light of these new results, and make suggestions for future research.

Introduction and Conceptual Framework

Chris Herbst, Arizona State University

Poster Presenters

Wendy Robeson, Wellesley College
Ellen Scott, University of Oregon
Anna Johnson, Columbia University
Nicole Forry, Child Trends
Chris Herbst, Arizona State University
Yoonsook Ha, University of South Carolina
Amy Claessens, University of Chicago

Scribe

Julia Wessel, Child Trends

1. Documents in Session Folder

- “Poster Symposium: Child Care Subsidies and Family Well-Being,” Chris Herbst

2. Summary of Presentations

- **Summary of Presentation #1:** Chris Herbst, Conceptual Framework Presentation
 - Three major ideas:
 - Working Assumption: subsidies lead to critical changes in the lives of low-income families, which might influence child and maternal well-being.

- Objective: to understand the mechanisms through which child care subsidy policy influence family well-being.
 - Approach: introduce conceptual framework for subsidy effects, present latest research, and facilitated group discussion and processing.
 - Conceptual Model: Key pathways through which child care subsidies influence child well-being:
 - Subsidies influence maternal employment, private consumption and non-parental child care which then leads to child well-being.
 - Subsidies also influence child care markets which influence non-parental child care and lead to child well-being. Child care markets influence the kinds of child care used by subsidy recipients. Subsidies are also affected by child well-being and also affected through maternal employment (i.e. if mothers aren't employed, they cannot get subsidies)
 - Income has a large effect on child development and well-being.
 - There are basically six literatures that are affected by this conceptual model since so many things effect child well-being.
- **Summary of Presentation #2: Wendy Robeson**
 - Looked at preK, Head Start, vouchers, and contracts; also included waiting list groups (eligible).
 - Study used administrative data, family surveys, program directors and provider surveys, and interviews
 - Examined how waitlisted families differed from those who received a subsidy in terms of employment and family well-being.
- **Summary of Presentation #3: Ellen Scott**
 - Qualitative component of an Oregon study—findings are based on in-depth interviews with relatively stable recipients of Oregon's child care subsidies.
 - Key points:
 - Without subsidy, parents would not be employed;
 - Parents rely on the subsidy to get back into the low-wage job market;
 - Subsidies allow parents to exercise more control in terms of child care decisions.
 - Subsidies don't guarantee family well-being because of additional payments (i.e. co-pays).
- **Summary of Presentation #4: Anna Johnson**
 - Used ECLS-B data set to look at effect of subsidy use on child care quality.
 - Addressed two levels of selection issues:
 - Not all families are eligible.
 - Not all eligible families receive subsidies.
 - Identified subsidy eligible families and predicted effect of subsidy use on quality as measured by the ECERS and FDCRS for 3 separate groups: subsidy recipients versus eligible non-recipients who instead use Head Start; subsidy recipients versus eligible non-recipients who instead use public pre-kindergarten; and subsidy recipients versus eligible non-recipients who instead use unsubsidized care.

- Subsidy recipients used lower-quality care compared to the care used by eligible non-recipients who instead used Head Start or public pre-kindergarten.
- However, compared to eligible non-recipients who used unsubsidized care instead of a subsidy, subsidy recipients received *higher*-quality care.
- **Summary of Presentation #5:** Nicole Forry
 - Examined subsidy use the year prior to kindergarten and children’s school readiness upon kindergarten entry using combined administrative and education data.
 - When comparing low-income children who were, and were not using a subsidy the year prior to kindergarten, children who received a subsidy scored higher on kindergarten assessments of academic skills (e.g., language/literacy and mathematical thinking) and worst on indicators of positive social-emotional development.
 - Future work on this project will look at the association between subsidy spells and children’s school readiness scores upon kindergarten entry.
- **Summary of Presentation #6:** Yoonsook Ha
 - Used Wisconsin administrative data to examine the relationship between the patterns of child care subsidy use and the stability of child care arrangements.
 - Focused on children who were under age 3 when they began receiving subsidies and these children were followed until they turned to age 5.
 - Key points:
 - Positive relationship between the number of subsidy spells and the number of care providers – each additional spell is related to 35% increase in the likelihood of having another provider.
 - Stability of child care is not just about subsidies, but also about the supply of stable, high quality care available to the families.
 - This is exploratory work right now, not causal.
- **Summary of Presentation #7:** Amy Claessens
 - Using ECLS-K data, Amy examined how young school-age children are spending their summers between kindergarten and first grade and that time in relation to reading and math achievement.
 - She found a boost in reading achievement for children in center care and informal care, but not math (for low-income subsidy eligible children).

3. Questions and Discussion:

- Impact of subsidies on relative care?
 - Looking at how frequently subsidies facilitate informal or Kith and Kin care rather than formal care is sometimes a taboo topic—how often does a subsidy allow a parent to use Kith and Kin care?
 - Family income is influenced by child care subsidies—why don’t we want low-income families to package resources to manage their every day lives?
 - Subsidies are a form of employment for FFNs who are getting the money.
- Reconciling what panelists found based on what others found
 - Comparison sample is a common theme across posters, especially in ECLS data sets.
 - Thinking about quality as a pathway to child outcomes.

- State-specific data (there might be dynamics specific to the State).
- We are looking at the association between subsidy receipt and children's school readiness outcomes as a linear relationship, but we may find different things when/if we look at this association in terms of a curvilinear relationship.
- Dosage needs to be included in the theoretical model.
- We need measures of the value of the child care subsidy receipt.
- Maternal employment should also be connected to child care market since the employment affects the market (i.e. parents working at night have a limited market).
- We need to consider many literatures for this topic, and there are parallel literatures/disciplines that aren't being looked at (i.e. maternal employment effect on child well-being; effects of non-parental child care on child well-being; and effect of income on child well-being).
- Investment in a study that has all of the components we need (administrative data/quality/education) would be beneficial.
- We need to add many other things to this model of long term child well-being in relation to child care subsidy receipt; parent decision-making process model is similar to this subsidy model.