

2010 CCPRC Annual Meeting  
Workshop Session A5  
October 21, 2010, 10:45 a.m.

## **Poster Symposium: Lessons Learned About Child Care Decision-Making from Child Care Policy Grantees**

### **Description**

This poster symposium provided an opportunity for current child care policy grantees to showcase their work related to child care decision-making. The projects presented findings related to parents' child care priorities and decision-making processes.

### **Facilitator**

Susan Jekielek, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation

### **Poster Presenters**

Caroline Carlin, University of Minnesota  
Anne Martin, Columbia University  
Wendy Robeson, Wellesley College  
Joanne Roberts, Wellesley College  
Juan Pedroza, Urban Institute  
Heather Sandstrom, Urban Institute  
Helen Ward, University of Southern Maine

### **Presenter/Discussants**

Julia Henly, University of Chicago  
Ajay Chaudry, Urban Institute

### **Scribe**

Shannon Moodie, Child Trends

### **1. Documents in Session Folder**

- “Parental Child Care Decision-Making: Graphic Description,” Julia Henly, University of Chicago (handout).

**2. Summary of Presentations:** Susan Jekielek introduced the session, explaining that after brief presentations from researchers on child care decision-making, participants will have time to review posters on this topic, and then return to discuss this research.

- **Summary of Presentation #1:** Caroline Carlin, University of Minnesota
  - Award received by Child Trends and the University of Minnesota; interested in how QRS in Minnesota is influencing child care choice. Longitudinal study involving 323 families; families' awareness of Parent Aware is being explored.
  - Parents were asked how they identified child care options; less than one percent reported using the quality information system to identify child care options. The main

- reasons they chose child care arrangements were convenience and the characteristics of care setting. Only some families knew about Parent Aware.
- This demonstrates that this is a new and growing system.
- **Summary of Presentation #2:** Anne Martin, Columbia University
    - Project used administrative data (phone surveys) from a random stratified sample to look at parent preferences in different types of child care.
    - It found that having a nurturing, caring provider was most important for families using family child care providers (FFN care). Convenience was most important for families using center-based care.
    - Space and the care environment were not seen as important. As children got older, education/educational activities increased in importance.
    - The researchers also wanted to know how families found out about child care options, and the most frequent responses were social networks and public agencies.
  - **Summary of Presentation #3:** Wendy Robeson and Joanne Roberts, Wellesley College
    - The Massachusetts Child Care Study focused on subsidized care including center-based care, family child care, Head Start and public pre-k (714 families).
    - Researchers also interviewed families on subsidized care as well as families on child care waiting lists. They found that families on waiting lists spend 25% of their income on child care, while families receiving subsidies spent 10% of their income on child care.
    - Fifty percent of families on waiting lists said that they ended up taking whatever care they could for their children. These families expressed a great deal of frustration with the waiting list process.
    - In an analysis of ECLS-B and NICHD data, the team found that child care quality predicted child outcomes, and specifically the type of caregiver predicted child outcomes.
  - **Summary of Presentation #4:** Juan Pedroza and Heather Sandstrom, Urban Institute
    - This presentation addressed a qualitative study of low-income families (86 families) and child care decision-making. The research team was particularly interested in what kinds of advice families would give others about choosing child care.
    - Some common factors that influence child care decision-making are relationships and networks, affordability, accessibility and convenience, and characteristics of the care setting.
    - Researchers also found that the factors influencing child care differ when parents are looking for infant/toddler versus preschool care.
  - **Summary of Presentation #5:** Helen Ward, University of Southern Maine
    - This presentation addressed qualitative analysis of refugee populations in Portland, Maine and their child care choices. The research team was interested in learning about whether the refugee families perceived child care decisions as influencing school readiness and language acquisition.

- Interviewees reported that they see child rearing in the U.S. as lonely and overly structured. They also feared giving children too much freedom (and how they would be perceived by others if they did).
- Positive perceptions of child care reported by study participants were socialization, a chance to learn English, and an emphasis on social-emotional skills.
- Negative aspects include cost, location, convenience, concerns about disciplinary practices, concerns about discrimination, and fear that children will lose their native language and culture.

### 3. Summary of Discussion with Presenters and Participants

- Julia Henly—Discussant
  - Child care decision-making is filled with complexity and there are multiple factors at various levels; it is important to situate parental preferences in the context of families' lives.
  - There is heterogeneity among the populations studied in these projects, but certain factors are common across all populations. Some factors, however, are population specific, thus context remains important.
  - Projects seem to “problematize” how families are getting information.
  - Social networks may in the future be seen as information transmitters for QRS.
  - Subsidies may be helping people in these studies feel like they have more choices.
  
- Ajay Chaudry—Discussant
  - Common factors in child-care decision-making are location/convenience, correspondence with work schedules, and relationships and networks.
  - It is important to think about how we might inform social networks.
  - Child Care Supply and Demand study will help to inform this work.
  - Audience question: Do constraints trump preferences in choosing child care?
    - Ajay Chaudry: The window of options is often narrowed to the point where parents only have one choice of child care.
    - Helen Ward: The most extreme group examples of constraints trumping preferences are families with kids with complex health issues or the behavioral components.
    - Susan Jekielek: The Child Care Decision-Making Work Group has products available on *Research Connections* at:
      - <http://www.researchconnections.org/files/childcare/keytopics/conceptualframeworkpaper.pdf>
      - <http://www.researchconnections.org/files/childcare/keytopics/foundationforpolicy.pdf>