

Adaptions and Innovations in Research Methods during the COVID-19 Pandemic

June 2023



Acknowledgements

This session is funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, with funds set aside for research in the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act.

The Child Care and Early Education Policy Research and Analysis (CCEEPRA) project is managed by Child Trends. Ivelisse Martinez-Beck is the Contracting Officer Representative and Dianna Tran is the Project Monitor.



The views expressed in this presentation do not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, the Administration for Children and Families or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Joining us today



Kathryn Tout & Zipi Diamond
Child Trends



**Dana Bell & Hailey Heinz (Child Care Access and Barriers to Family Stability
in a Majority-Hispanic Border State)**
University of New Mexico, Cradle to Career Policy Institute



Sara Bernstein (FACES), Gretchen Kirby (ICHQ, ExCELS), & Elizabeth Cavadel (AMCS)
Mathematica

Joining us today



Kyle DeMeo Cook (HS2K)
Boston University,
Center on the Ecology of
Early Development



**Margaret Gillis (Inclusion
of Children with
Disabilities in Subsidized
Child Care in California)**
SRI



JoAnn Hsueh & Michelle Maier (VIQI)
MDRC





Agenda



Poll



Context Setting



Discussion

Poll



Who is at this session?



How did COVID-19 impact your work?

Go to

www.menti.com

Enter the code

2982 8103



Or use QR code



Context Setting: Convening on Research Methods during the COVID- 19 Pandemic

Research During the Pandemic

- The context for child care and early education changed dramatically during the pandemic.
- Research continued and accommodated new contexts.
- Key questions:
 - What did research teams try?
 - What worked? What didn't?
 - What lessons were learned for future projects?



Hearing from the Field

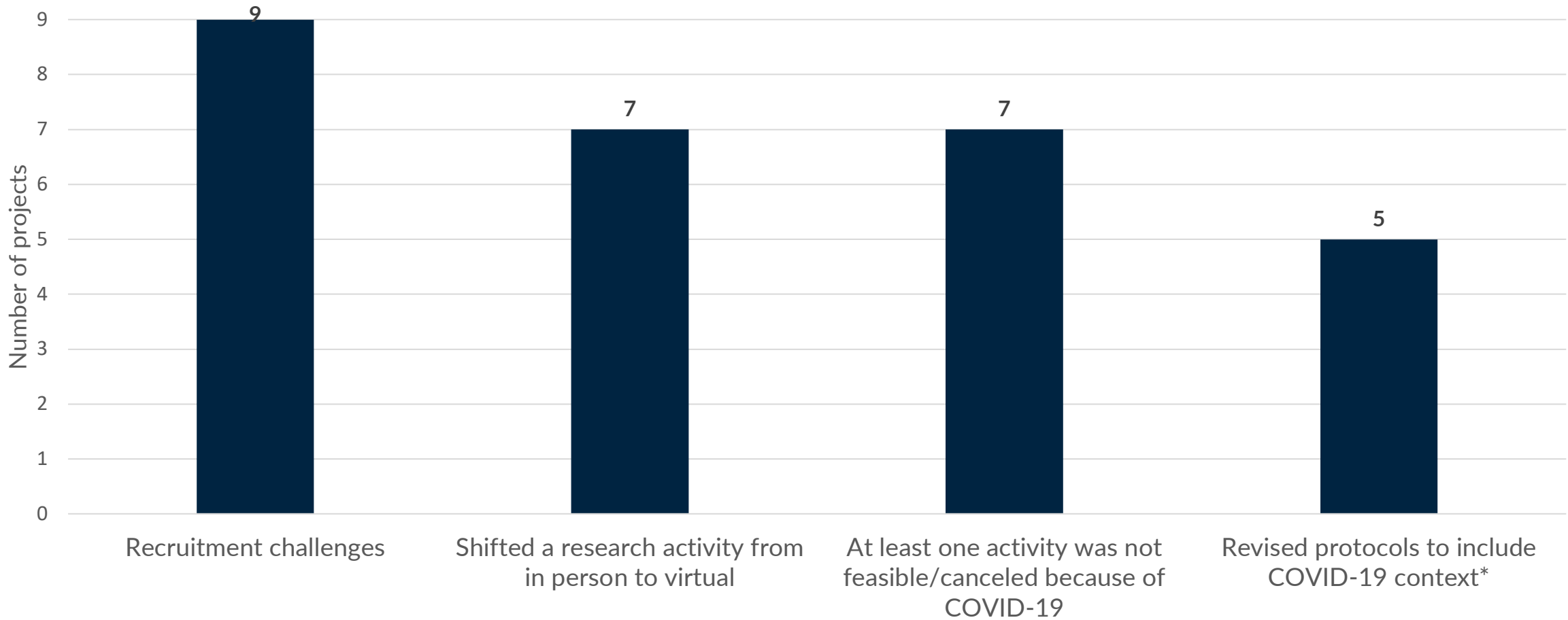
- Held a virtual convening on April 11, 2023
- Hosted by Child Trends as part of the CCEEPRA project, funded by OPRE
- 9 early care and education research projects funded by OPRE attended
- Discussed how COVID-19 impacted CCEE research and the implications of these revised research methods for researchers and participants

Projects Represented

Project Name	Topics Covered	Research Activities	Representatives
Variations in Implementation of Quality Interventions (VIQI)	Curricula and professional development interventions that may increase quality	Coaching, child assessments, classroom observations	JoAnn Hsueh & Michelle Maier, MDRC
Assessing the Implementation and Cost of High Quality Early Care and Education (ICHQ)	Measures of the implementation and cost of early care and education	Surveys	Gretchen Kirby, Mathematica
Early Care and Education Leadership Study (ExCELS)	Leadership in child care centers	Surveys	Gretchen Kirby, Mathematica
Understanding Children's Transitions from Head Start to Kindergarten (HS2K)	Children's transitions between Head Start and kindergarten	Interviews	Kyle DeMeo Cook, Boston University
Assessing Models of Coordinated Services for Low-Income Children and their Families (AMCS)	Coordinated services approaches for families with low incomes	Site visits, interviews	Elizabeth Cavadel, Mathematica
Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Subsidized Child Care in California: Partnership Grant	Children with disabilities in subsidized child care and early education programs in CA	Interviews, case studies, administrative data analyses	Margaret Gillis, SRI
Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES)	Data on Head Start programs, children, and families	Surveys, child assessments	Sara Bernstein, Mathematica
Child Care Access and Barriers to Family Stability in a Majority-Hispanic Border State: NM Partnership Grant	Subsidy enrollment and barriers for families in NM	Surveys	Dana Bell & Hailey Heinz, University of New Mexico



Key Themes



*Revised research protocols to incorporate COVID-19 context includes, for example, revising survey questions to ask about “before the pandemic” instead of “last year,” and asking about the impact of COVID-19 on service delivery in interviews.



Recruitment Challenges

- All 9 projects faced recruitment issues
- Issues:
 - Extended or delayed timelines
 - Low response rates
 - Some participants being more/less able to participate
- Solutions:
 - Expanding recruitment criteria
 - Using pre-pay and post-pay tokens of appreciation/incentives



Switching to Virtual Research Activities

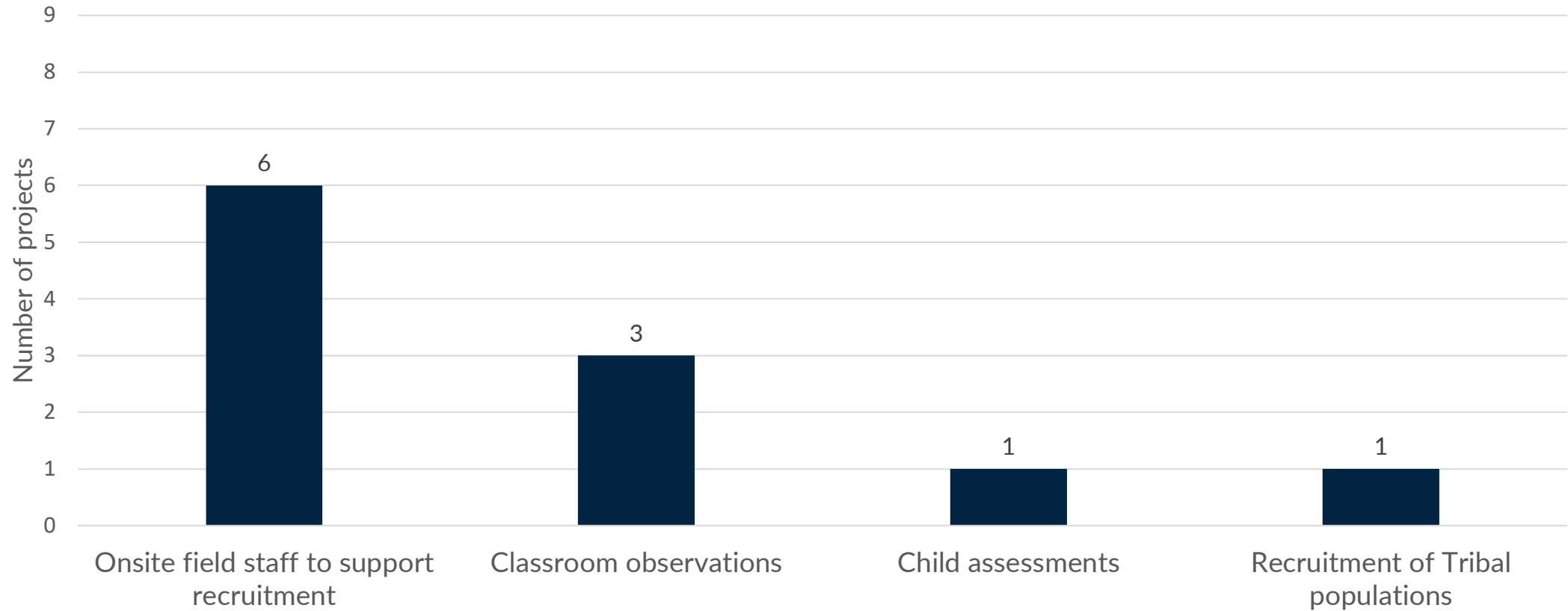
Virtual recruitment

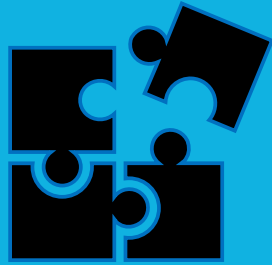
Online surveys

Online or
telephone
interviews or focus
groups



Canceled Research Activities





Context Setting: Some Implications of the Revised Methods for Future Studies



Care and Concern for Participants

- While considerations for research participants have always been a primary focus, researchers gained new perspectives on how to address the needs of participants during the pandemic:
 - Offering increased flexibility and timelines for recruitment
 - Providing more options for participation over a longer timeframe
 - Recognizing the many priorities for CCEE staff and families that took precedence over research activities



Recruitment and Participation

- Relying on CCEE programs to assist with recruitment and data collection can create additional burden on CCEE staff
- Research recruitment staff may need sensitivity training
- Importance of creating flexibility:
 - Submit OMB and IRB packages with multiple options for recruitment
 - Offer each participant the option of in-person or virtual participation
 - Understand and create solutions to support those more impacted by COVID-19 or with lower capacity to participate



Revised Research Activities

- **Interviews and focus groups:** offer evening and weekend times and technological support
- **Classroom observations:** both researchers and CCEE programs need significant technological support and solutions
- **Child assessments:** options for parent report, teacher report, or through an at-home data collection kit
- **Staff training:** in-person staff training for the research team is preferred

Discussion Questions

What are the effects of changes made during COVID-19 for research studies, researchers, and research participants?

What methods and procedures used during COVID-19 should be considered in future projects?

What are the effects of changes made during COVID-19 for research studies, researchers, and research participants?

Some populations (e.g., rural participants, Tribal participants) less able to participate in research

Harder to build rapport with virtual data collection

Virtual recruitment is challenging

More challenging to train research/data collection staff remotely

Limited ability to interpret administrative data

What methods and procedures used during COVID-19 should be considered for future projects?

Use multi-modal recruitment

Build relationships with the community and partners

Offer pre-pay and post-pay tokens of appreciation

Build flexibility for various recruitment and outreach methods into OMB packages

Thank you!

If you are interested in learning more about the projects featured in today's session, please use this QR code to find links to each project's homepage.

