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# Discussant: Implications for NTH-Related Policy, Practice, and Research

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# Overarching finding

- Implicit bias often built into policies and systems and research in ways that challenge understanding/addressing NTH care. Most commonly due to one or more of the following assumptions:
  - Assume that parents are working a **stable schedule**, that the schedule is **based on an eight-hour workday** (plus commuting time), that the schedule involves a **traditional Monday–Friday workweek**, or a combination of those
  - Are based on **children’s developmental and care needs during the day** and do not recognize that children’s developmental and care needs are different during nontraditional hours
  - Mostly **support licensed center-based and licensed home-based settings** and do not support the in-home child care and care by relatives and friends that parents often recommend for children during many nontraditional hours
- These biases are often unconscious, intertwined, and very hard to escape

# 1. General approach: Assess NTH policies, practices and research efforts for unconscious assumptions and seek input from parents and providers

- Assess all domains/systems and all aspects of research design for each of the three often-unconscious assumptions
  - “traditional” work schedule, quality definitions based on daytime hours, focus on licensed group care options
- Engage with parents working nontraditional hours and the providers currently meeting these parents’ needs to ensure that research and policy efforts reflect their realities, preferences, and needs
- Examine research and policy strategies to consider whether they are designed to adequately support the options parents want and need

## 2. Recognize complexities of CC/ECE policies that are based on these assumptions – for example:

- **CCDF** – subsidies often not available for these settings, payment rates assume multiple children and have no “market” rate, payments not reliable given irregular schedules, approaches to authorizing care can be challenging, may need multiple providers for daytime and NTH
- **Supply building efforts** – don’t often recognize these settings as priorities, explore feasibility of incentives to expand daytime programs slightly earlier/later, understand limitations of differential rates in affecting overall supply (true costs unknown, uncertain/unstable demand, changing business model, etc. Adams et al 2022)
- **Quality supports** – develop different metrics for quality for NTH hours for licensing/QRIS/CCDF supports, consider how to address accountability/protections in home-based settings that respect parent preferences and do not limit choice, build on home visiting and coaching models, rework quality supports to reflect the motivations of caregivers and their different care demands

### 3. As researchers, actively work to address the gaps in our understanding, methods and tools to examine these issues

In addition to checking our biases and assumptions at every step, some ideas for what we can do include:

- Engage in parent-centered and provider-centered work, starting with their realities and challenges
  - Recognize need to identify different approaches and trusted intermediaries as these providers are less likely to be part of our traditional child care networks
- Address lack of data on license-exempt home-based providers who provide most of NTH care and seem to be preferred by parents for many time periods
- Recognize the nuances around NTH care (different time periods, preferences, definitions, etc.)
- Work to fill gaps in key areas such as how to define quality, how to rethink payment rates for these care options, explore different approaches to accountability, and so forth
- Explore the implications of misaligned policies in shaping equitable access

# Resources

For information and links to all of Urban's work on **nontraditional hour child care**, see: <https://www.urban.org/projects/informing-policy-decisions-about-nontraditional-hour-child-care>

For resources on **supporting involvement of home-based providers in various federal child care/ECE systems**, see: <https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/center-labor-human-services-and-population/projects/expanding-participation-home-based-child-care-providers-federal-programs-and-services>