

Urban Institute

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- *Potential Demand for Nontraditional Work Hours Secondary Analysis Research*

Key goals of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 are “to increase the number and percentage of low-income children in high-quality child care settings” and “to promote parental choice to empower working parents to make their own decisions regarding the child care services that best suits their family’s needs” (Sec. 658A.b.1). Despite this, an Urban Institute study released in 2018 showed that in the District of Columbia (DC) a large portion of families are in need of nontraditional hour (NTH) care but lack access to it. With the current crisis resulting from the novel coronavirus pandemic, the need for research on the potential demand from families such as health care workers with NTH work is even more urgent. Yet, currently limited research is available beyond the DC study on potential gaps between supply and demand for NTH care and little is known about the preferences and uses of families with NTH care needs. And no research is available from a national sample that describes the match between families’ preferences, the types of care they use, and how preferences and access are affected by family, child, and community characteristics.

Our study will produce policy-relevant information for the Office of Child Care and state child care administrators that describes parents’ preferences and use of NTH care and the factors that affect preferences and use. The NTH Study will also produce fact sheets with information on potential demand for NTH care in all 50 states and the District of Columbia (DC). The policy-relevant findings will inform state child care administrators about the potential needs of families to inform policy decisions related to increasing access to NTH care. We will conduct a two-phase study. For the first phase, we will analyze the 2019 National Study of Early Care and Education (NSECE), which contains a large, nationally representative sample of households with children below age 13 to (1) document differences in parental preferences and uses of child care for families with nontraditional hour (NTH) schedules versus traditional hour schedules; (2) perform regression analyses to determine factors (such as parental employment characteristics, demographics, proximity, and time period of needed care, subsidy use, and community characteristics) associated with different types of preferred and used child care. We hypothesize that families’ stated preferences will not match the care they use and will vary by family and child characteristics and that specific characteristics will be associated with the types of care used. For the second component, we will produce policy-relevant information for state child care administrators in the form of state fact sheets describing the potential demand for NTH care by building from existing analyses of the American Community Survey (ACS), Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) databases. Our hypothesis is that there will be substantial variability in potential demand for and policies about NTH care across states. Information produced from this research is vital for federal policymakers, state administrators, and local service providers as they seek to expand access to child care subsidies and regulated, high-quality care for families with NTH care needs, while honoring parental choice. The project will result in a report of findings, a set of policy-relevant state fact sheets, and presentations at key policy research conferences.