

PROJECT BRIEF

The Georgia CCDF Evaluation Project

Project Team:

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Project Description

The Georgia CCDF Evaluation Project (GCEP) represents a multi-dimensional framework of research activities related to Georgia's 2016–2018 CCDF State Plan. The overall goal of GCEP is to develop an evaluation agenda around select policies, programs, and services outlined in Georgia's CCDF State Plan. The plan was developed by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), the lead agency for CCDF in Georgia, and its partners.

This project, conceptualized and funded as a planning grant, is focused on four objectives: 1) develop a coherent research agenda for Georgia's CCDF plan; 2) use administrative data to conduct preliminary research and data analyses on select CCDF goals; 3) implement specific process evaluations of key initiatives related to CCDF policies; and 4) plan for a large-scale, rigorous evaluation of a CCDF policy or a program funded through CCDF.

These objectives align with ACF priorities to: 1) plan policy-relevant research based on evaluation of CCDBG policies; 2) build capacity in research and evaluation; and 3) address issues of current relevance to CCDF decision makers. To meet these goals the state has 1) identified critical CCDF evaluation priorities; 2) determined the feasibility of implementing rigorous evaluation measures and procedures for those priorities; and 3) began initial evaluation activities.

The state identified evaluation priorities around access, workforce, family support, homelessness, and

providers serving a large number of children receiving subsidies.

After developing the priorities, the research team identified a specific research project related to each priority. For each project, the research team identified research questions, administrative data, and other evaluation activities.

Research Questions

For each project, the research team used the following questions to determine the feasibility and the appropriateness of each project:

- Is the project “evaluation ready?” In other words, is the project ready for a research team to incorporate more rigorous evaluation procedures?
- Are additional research and evaluation resources needed? In other words, can additional evaluation activities be conducted by DECAL's internal research team or are additional partners needed?
- Are there sufficient administrative data available to conduct to conduct preliminary research and data analyses?
- Is there a need to design a more rigorous evaluation, such as a randomized control trial for the project?

Methods

Within DECAL there is an internal research team that works across the Department to identify evaluation needs and implement a variety of research strategies. For each project (see Progress Update on pg. 2) DECAL identified a research lead, program lead, and

a workgroup for each topic. The workgroups met regularly and outlined project plans.

Two external entities also supported the project. Child Trends, a nationally recognized research organization with expertise in early childhood education policy, has advised, supported, and provided technical assistance to the internal work group and the external advisory committee. The second external entity is The University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government. This partner has provided ongoing assistance to the research team to support expanding internal research capacity.

Progress Update

The GCEP workgroup and external partners have identified five projects to explore further. These include: access to family child care learning homes, the supply and quality of infant and toddler teachers, child care centers serving a high number of Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) users, the implementation of a family support function within CAPS, and identifying ways to address homelessness.

From October 2016 through October 2017 DECAL's internal workgroups met on each of these focus areas to explore each projects potential relevance to the agency's strategic goals, alignment with CCDF policies, the capacity of the agency, and lastly the feasibility of the project.

As of December 2017, the research team has begun a formal evaluation of a new infant and toddler initiative focused on responsive caregiving and analyses of family child care administrative data.

To date, DECAL has hosted three research training seminars with the support of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government. The June seminar focused on survey methods and the class covered survey question development, open-coding, and reporting. The August seminar covered qualitative evaluation and coding. The November seminar covered data visualization tips and techniques. All of these seminars were attended

by DECAL's research team and many agency divisions were represented.

Implications for Policy/Practice

Since this project is designed as a planning grant, the implications of policy and practice have revolved around developing a coherent evaluation agenda for Georgia's CCDF policies and programs funded through CCDF. This project has been instrumental in supporting DECAL's research team in determining where evaluation resources and supports should be allocated. This includes the determination to focus evaluation resources on infant and toddler initiatives and not on other evaluation priorities.

Implications for Research

GCEP has provided the research and policy analysis team the opportunity to take a closer examination of internal and external data available to the agency. Furthermore, planning around specific research topics and taking into consideration other factors inhibiting and supporting these topics has provided DECAL with a more streamlined and focused research agenda for the potential Phase II implementation grant.

Contact

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