

PROJECT BRIEF

Evaluating Child Care Reforms in Illinois

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Project Description.

The evaluation of child care reforms in Illinois evaluates important statutory changes that resulted from the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014. The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) is partnered with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago to implement an evaluation of changes to the Child Care and Development (CCDF) program in three areas: (1) extending the redetermination of child care subsidy benefits; (2) the health, safety and child development training of license-exempt providers; and (3) the new monitoring of the license-exempt providers.

The Illinois evaluation is analyzing the impact CCDF program changes on children, their families and the workforce, specifically outcomes around parental employment; continuity of care; and child outcomes. In addition, we will assess the impact of training on the child care workforce (license-exempt providers and monitors).

Research Questions.

The study poses research questions targeted towards these CCDF policy changes.

1) 12 Month Eligibility Redetermination Period:

- What are the effects of extending the redetermination period from six months to 12 months on: Parental employment and earnings? The number of different providers used by children/families? The use of subsidized center-based and/or licensed home-based childcare relative to other forms of subsidized care (i.e., informal or license exempt)?

- How do observed effects vary across specific sub-populations of participants (e.g., receiving cash assistance; rural and urban families)?
- What is the budgetary impact of the policy change to the 12-month determination? Does that policy change impact access of subsidized care and create waiting lists?

2) Training and Monitoring for License-Exempt Care Providers:

- What are the effects of the new health, safety, and child development training for license-exempt providers for children in their care in outcomes such as: reports of abuse and neglect, continuity of child care; school (kindergarten) attendance and readiness; and referrals to other programs, (e.g., Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Early Intervention (EI))?

3) Monitors for License-Exempt Providers:

- What are the effects of the training and credentialing on license-exempt monitors' employment duration; probability of seeking additional training and professional development; continued careers in early childhood education; and earnings and participation in public benefit programs?

Methods.

To assess the effects of extending the redetermination period from six to 12 months on outcomes for parents and children, we will employ quasi-experimental methods, leveraging a natural experiment created by altered recertification periods for specific cohorts of program recipients. Specifically, we will compare

outcomes of program recipients who received unexpected the workforce and improve the quality of automatic extensions of child care subsidy benefits due to subsidized child care. Evidence to inform this a data system change in 2014 against recipient families decision-making is essential. who did not get those extensions using a regression-discontinuity design.

The evaluations of the training and monitoring of the license-exempt providers and the monitors will be descriptive in nature. They will include the production of relevant descriptive statistics and the use of regression analysis to address the research questions.

Progress Update.

The first step of the evaluation was to build the child care longitudinal database (CCALD) for Illinois. The major activity of the past year has been to finalize the database design of CCALD and complete final preparations of the child care subsidy payment data. Of particular importance in developing longitudinal databases is ensuring that the fields are accurately represented over time and that the database accommodates changes in data collection and data management systems. Illinois experienced a significant system change in 2014 that needed to be carefully addressed. Having accurate and consistent data before and after the data system change is crucial to the redetermination analysis.

Analysis efforts have focused on the first study question assessing the 12-Month Eligibility Redetermination Period. We identified the study cohorts in the administrative data and developed descriptive statistics for the length of spells of care receipt and the number and type of providers experienced by children in the treatment and comparison groups. Next steps include linking the child care subsidy records wage data in order to analyze parental employment and incorporating information on community characteristics from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey.

Implications for Policy/Practice.

We anticipate that the results from these studies will have an impact on child care decision-making of both policymakers and administrators in Illinois, but also for the field more broadly. These decision-makers must make tough choices around funding, must implement new programmatic features, must ensure access to families, and achieve positive outcomes for children and their parents. They must also build

Implications for research

This evaluation will address important, and heretofore unaddressed questions about the impact of key CCDF policy changes in Illinois and also in generate knowledge to inform research in the early childhood care and education field more broadly.

For more information:

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