



ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
OFFICE OF PLANNING, RESEARCH, AND EVALUATION

# Child & Family Development

FY2020



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OPRE REPORT #2021-50 | March 2021

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Administration for Children and Families  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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*Child and Family Development Research (FY2020)*, OPRE Report #2021-50, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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## ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Administration for Children & Families (ACF) is a division of the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS). ACF promotes the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals and communities.

### ACF programs aim to:

- Empower families and individuals to increase their economic independence and productivity
- Encourage strong, healthy, supportive communities that have a positive impact on quality of life and the development of children
- Create partnerships with front-line service providers, states, localities, and tribal communities to identify and implement solutions that transcend traditional program boundaries
- Improve access to services through planning, reform, and integration
- Address the needs, strengths, and abilities of vulnerable populations including refugees and migrants

## OFFICE OF PLANNING, RESEARCH, AND EVALUATION

The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) studies ACF programs and the populations they serve through rigorous research and evaluation projects. These include evaluations of existing programs, evaluations of innovative approaches to helping low-income children and families, research syntheses, and descriptive and exploratory studies. OPRE aims to build and disseminate knowledge about effective approaches to helping low-income children and families. OPRE's research and evaluation projects are conducted primarily through grants and contracts, and include collaboration with ACF programs offices, HHS's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), other Federal entities, and State, Tribal and community partners.

### OPRE includes four divisions:

- The Division of Economic Independence focuses on welfare, employment, and family self-sufficiency.
- The Division of Child and Family Development focuses on child care, Head Start, Early Head Start, child abuse and neglect, and human trafficking.
- The Division of Family Strengthening focuses on teen pregnancy prevention, youth development, healthy marriage, responsible fatherhood, family violence, runaway and homeless youth, and home visiting.
- The Division of Data and Improvement focuses on improving the quality, usefulness, sharing, and analysis of data on ACF programs.



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## CHILD AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

OPRE's Division of Child and Family Development (DCFD) is responsible for research and evaluation related to Head Start programs, early childhood development, childcare, child maltreatment, child welfare services, and human trafficking. OPRE's research in the area of child and family development focuses on young children, parents and caregivers, families, and youth. Examples of recent focal areas include: dual language learners, classroom quality, family engagement, provision of comprehensive services, and building workforce capacity.

DCFD invests in rigorous research and evaluation on child and family development topics and disseminates findings to a diverse range of stakeholders, including federal and state policymakers, program administrators, researchers, and intermediary organizations. DCFD funds experimental impact evaluations, process and implementation evaluations, descriptive and theory-building research projects, and measure development aimed at informing the design and implementation of programs and improving our ability to capture outcomes. Over the past year, DCFD has worked with ACF's Office of Head Start, Office of Child Care, and Children's Bureau to develop learning agendas that are aimed at building a culture of learning among program offices. DCFD also invests in building capacity in the research and evaluation community to answer policy-relevant questions.

DCFD works in close partnership with a number of other officers, including, among others:

### In ACF:

- The Office of Head Start;
- The Office of Child Care;
- The Children's Bureau;
- The Office of Trafficking in Persons; and
- The Office of Early Childhood Development;

### In HHS:

- The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation;
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration;
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention;
- The Health Resources and Services Administration; and
- The National Institutes of Health;

### In the Department of Education:

- The Institute for Education Sciences;
- The Office of Early Learning;
- The Office of Special Education; and
- The Office of English Language Acquisition

*The following pages describe major OPRE/DCFD projects in Fiscal Year 2020.*

## ACF EVALUATION POLICY

ACF's Evaluation Policy, published in the Federal Register on August 29, 2014, articulates five major principles for conducting evaluations and using evidence to inform policy and practice:

- **Rigor:** ACF is committed to using the most rigorous methods that are appropriate for the evaluation questions, budget, and other constraints.
- **Relevance:** Evaluation priorities should take into account legislative requirements and Congressional interests and should reflect the interests and needs of ACF, HHS, and Administration leadership; program office staff and leadership; ACF partners such as states, territories, tribes, and local grantees; the populations served; researchers; and other stakeholders. Evaluations should be designed to represent the diverse populations that ACF programs serve.
- **Transparency:** ACF will make information about planned and ongoing evaluations easily accessible, typically through posting on the web information about the contractor or grantee conducting the work and descriptions of the evaluation questions, methods to be used, and expected timeline for reporting results.
- **Independence:** To promote objectivity, ACF protects independence in the design, conduct, and analysis of evaluations.
- **Ethics:** ACF-sponsored evaluations will be conducted in an ethical manner and safeguard the dignity, rights, safety and privacy of participants.

# CROSS-CUTTING EARLY CHILDHOOD RESEARCH

DCFD sponsors projects that focus on issues facing low-income children and families who may be served in a variety of settings. These cross-cutting projects may examine populations that multiple ACF programs serve, may have several foci, or may develop research methodology that supports high-quality evaluations across OPRE's work.

## National Survey of Early Care and Education, 2012

The National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) of 2012 documented the nation's utilization and availability of early care and education (including school age care) in order to deepen understanding of the extent to which families' needs and preferences coordinate well with providers' offerings and constraints in the United States. The survey oversampled low-income families because they are a significant focus of early care and education (ECE)/school-age public policy. The NSECE 2012 included five survey components and four related questionnaires, including: a Household Survey; a Home-based Provider Survey; a Center-based Provider Survey; and a Workforce Survey. Data were collected from nationally-representative samples of households with children under the age of 13, ECE programs serving children birth to age five, and staff in ECE programs working directly with children in all fifty states and Washington, D.C. A follow-up project implements enhancements to the NSECE 2012 data, provides technical assistance to data users, conducts analyses on the 2012 data, and disseminates restricted-use data.

The 2012 survey was conducted through a contract with NORC at the University of Chicago (Rupa Datta), subcontractors Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, Child Trends, Berkeley Policy Associates, and Acumen LLC, and Co-PIs and consultants Lisa Gennetian, Ann Witte, Richard Brandon, Roberta Weber, Lee Kreader, and Deanna Schexnayder.

## National Survey of Early Care and Education, 2019

The National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) of 2019 repeated the NSECE surveys implemented in 2012 with (1) child care and early education programs and providers serving families with children from birth through age

five who are not yet in kindergarten; 2) the teachers and caregivers that work directly with young children; and (3) households with children from birth through age 13. Data collection was completed in 2019, and OPRE began to make the data available for secondary analysis in 2020.

These surveys of center- and home-based providers (both listed and unlisted) and the workforce include nationally representative information on the supply of child care and early education available to families across all income levels, with attention to generating a robust sample of providers serving low-income families of all racial, ethnic, language, and cultural backgrounds, in diverse geographic areas. Providers include programs that do or do not participate in the child care subsidy program, regulated, registered, or otherwise listed home-based providers, unlisted home-based providers, and center-based programs (e.g., private, community-based child care, Head Start, and state or local pre-K). The household survey of families with children ages birth through age 13-years includes information about the characteristics of all adults in the family and all the children as well as schedules of employment, training, and education of the adults and schedules of care used by the children, including all forms of non-parental care in center and homes. In addition, the NSECE 2019 provides information in a manner that facilitates comparisons with data collected for the NSECE in 2012 and allows for examination of the changing landscape of child care and early education programs during that 7-year period and the interactions of demand and supply/utilization of non-parental care.

The NSECE 2019 is implemented through a contract with NORC at the University of Chicago (Rupa Datta, Project Director), with partners from Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, Child Trends, and Mathematica Policy Research.

## Variations in Implementation of Quality Interventions

This project is studying the relationship of initial child care and early education (CCEE) classroom process and/or domain-specific quality to intervention-induced changes in observed quality and children's outcomes through a rigorous experimental design. The study will provide the conditions to test the association between process/domain-specific quality and child outcomes above and below predetermined levels of quality. Questions about the quality-child outcomes relationship will be addressed in the context of an in-depth implementation study to understand the conditions necessary to plan, install, and implement an evidence-based intervention that will produce changes in process and/or domain-specific quality and in child outcomes in CCEE classrooms at different levels of initial quality. CCEE classrooms include those in Head Start and community-based child care serving children age birth through four years, not yet in kindergarten. In 2019, DCFD worked with the contractor for the project to successfully complete a pilot on the feasibility of implementation and the ability to assess impacts on quality for two quality interventions in the context of a rigorous experimental design. DCFD expects to move forward with the full study during 2021.

This project is led by MDRC (JoAnn Hsueh as Principal Investigator) along with partners from Abt Associates, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, and MEF Associates.

## Building and Sustaining the Early Care and Education Workforce (BASE)

Newly funded in 2020, the Building and Sustaining the Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce project (BASE) aims to assist ACF, states, and localities in understanding what drives workforce turnover in the ECE field and to evaluate promising strategies to support recruitment and retention of a qualified ECE workforce. The dynamics contributing to high rates of staff departures in some center-based ECE programs and decreasing supply of family child care providers, including individuals paid to provide noncustodial care, are not well understood. It is critical that ACF learns more about what motivates individuals to enter jobs in child care and early education and about what supports their attachment to the field. Better comprehension of how various conditions, incentives, and strategies may differentially affect ECE workers, depending on individuals' backgrounds, programmatic and local contexts, and features of care settings, can inform public and

private efforts, and especially the initiatives of the Office of Child Care and Office of Head Start, to support states and programs in their activities to build and retain a qualified ECE workforce.

This project seeks to:

1. Assess the knowledge base about what contributes to high rates of turnover among ECE personnel;
2. Identify and assess existing efforts to increase recruitment and reduce the loss of ECE personnel, including specific efforts being implemented in Head Start/ Early Head Start programs and other subsidized ECE settings;
3. Assess the availability and potential of existing data to address questions about recruitment and maintenance of the workforce;
4. Design study options for investigating factors and strategies to increase workforce retention; and
5. Analyze existing data and collect new data to address key questions about workforce retention.

This project is led by MDRC (Cynthia Miller and JoAnn Hsueh as Co-Principal Investigators) in partnership with MEF Associates, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, Erikson Institute, Butler Institute for Families, University of Denver, and Decision Information Resources, Inc.

## Supporting the Sustainability of the Q-CCIIT Observational Tool

The Quality of Caregiver-Child Interactions for Infants and Toddlers (Q-CCIIT) observation tool is a reliable and valid research-based observational tool that measures the quality of interactions between infants and toddlers and their caregivers in early care and education (ECE) settings. The Q-CCIIT observation tool was developed by Mathematica and partners with funding from OPRE and the Office of Head Start.

In the fall of 2018, ACF awarded a contract to Mathematica to develop a plan to support capacity and infrastructure-building activities intended to facilitate the long-term sustainability, proper use, and dissemination of the Q-CCIIT observation tool. Upon completion of the project in 2019, ACF provided Mathematica with a time-limited license to administer Q-CCIIT trainings and distribute the Q-CCIIT instrument in accordance with the plan they developed.

This project was led by Mathematica (Ashley Kopack Klein as Project Director).

## Professional Development Tools to

## Improve Quality of Caregiver-Child Interactions for Infant and Toddler Care

The Quality of Caregiver-Child Interactions for Infants and Toddlers (Q-CCIIT) observation tool was developed between 2010 and 2014 to assess the quality of caregiver-child interactions in non-parental care settings serving infants and toddlers. The Q-CCIIT PD Tools project included the design and implementation of a research-based professional development system called We Grow Together grounded in the principles and practices of the Q-CCIIT observation tool. As part of We Grow Together, teachers and caregivers work with their professional development providers (mentors, coaches, supervisors) using resources delivered on an interactive website. The resources include training videos, materials, and exercises targeting the same principles and practices assessed by the Q-CCIIT measure: support for socioemotional, language and literacy, and cognitive development. This project is examining the implementation of the We Grow Together professional development system with teachers and caregivers of infants and toddlers and their professional development providers in Early Head Start, family child care, and community-based child care settings.

In particular, this project seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What tools and supports help early childhood professionals use We Grow Together's responsive caregiving principles to improve caregiver-child interactions?
2. Can WGT be used by early childhood professionals to support change in beliefs, knowledge, or practice concerning infants and toddlers?

This project is led by Mathematica Policy Research (Louisa Tarullo as Project Director, Shannon Monahan, and Sally Atkins-Burnett).

## Creating a Culture of Continuous Quality Improvement in Child Care and Head Start Settings

The purpose of this project is to explore how child care and Head Start programs can improve the quality of services received by young children, while institutionalizing continuous quality improvement activities. The project has designed and assessed the feasibility of implementation of a specific approach to continuous quality improvement — the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) — to promote the uptake and success of evidence-based practices around social and emotional

learning (SEL) in both child care and Head Start settings. In 2017, OPRE contracted with Child Trends and the team conducted a literature review, developed a theory of change framework, and designed a feasibility study with a measurement plan.

In 2018, a BSC was initiated to focus on supporting children's SEL within seven ECE settings in an East Coast, urban area. Simultaneously, researchers conducted a study to assess the feasibility of implementing a BSC in the early care and education context. An embedded case study design with data collection from multiple sources at multiple time points, across all phases of implementation of the BSC, was implemented to learn about the overall cost of implementation, the organizational and individual characteristics that relate to feasibility, barriers related to feasibility, and the supports within the BSC that are associated with progress towards improvement. At the end of 2020, the project has completed data collection and is preparing a final report for dissemination.

This project is led by Child Trends (Kathryn Tout as Principal Investigator, Tamara Halle as co-PI) along with partnership from the University of Massachusetts Boston (Anne Douglass as co-PI).

## Secondary Analyses of Data on Early Care and Education Grants

The Secondary Analyses of Data on Early Care and Education Grants aim to support researchers conducting secondary analyses of data to address key questions of relevance to the goals and outcomes of programs administered by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), in particular the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS). Analyzing existing data sets may provide researchers an efficient and cost-effective method for answering critical research questions. Findings from these grants are intended to inform policy, program administration, and future research.

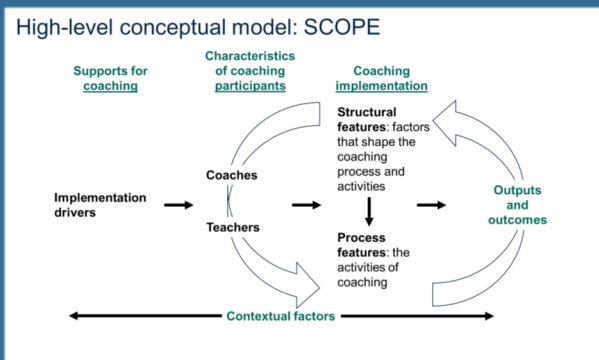


# SPOTLIGHT ON THE STUDY OF COACHING PRACTICES IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SETTINGS (SCOPE)

The Study of Coaching Practices in Early Care and Education Settings (SCOPE) project will advance understanding of how core features of coaching are implemented in early care and education (ECE) classrooms serving children supported by Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) subsidies or Head Start grants. Questions include how coaching practices may vary by key contextual factors and which coaching approaches are ripe for more rigorous evaluation. Goals are:

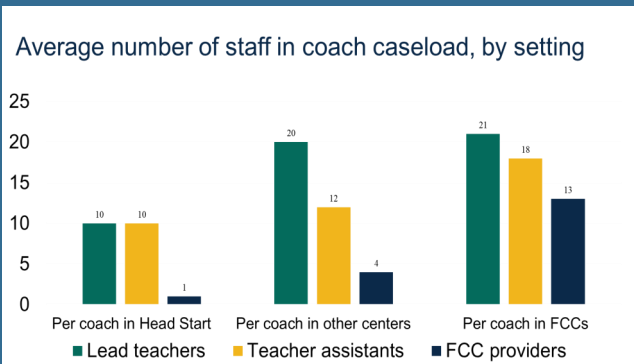
- Identify core features of coaching that are used as professional development for improving practice in early care and education preschool settings;
- Describe how coaching features vary across center-based and family child care (FCC) settings;
- Describe the contextual factors and drivers that may influence coaching implementation and features.

The SCOPE team developed a conceptual model to provide the framework for the study and study questions.



They conducted a web-based survey, examining the prevalence and variation in core coaching features with a sample of coaches, center directors, teachers, and family child care providers across seven states in the summer of 2019 (SCOPE 2019 survey). The SCOPE team is currently analyzing data from the SCOPE 2019 survey. Preliminary results explore coach caseloads, communication methods, and strategies. For example, results show that Head Start coaches in our sample provide support to an average of ten lead teachers, while coaches supporting

other centers or family child care settings supported an average of twenty to twenty one teachers.



Case studies were originally planned for Spring 2020, but were cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic. To better understand the impact of COVID-19 on coaching and professional development in ECE settings, we designed a new data collection effort using web-based surveys and qualitative interviews to follow up with coaches, center directors, and family child care providers who participated in the SCOPE 2019 survey. The goal of this effort is to understand the practice and processes of coaching and professional development in supporting ECE settings throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The information from the follow-up survey and qualitative interviews will help us understand the extent to which coaching and professional development activities have been sustained through and influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, and how they have changed compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic for this sample of respondents.

This project is led by Mathematica (Emily Moiduddin as Project Director).



## Child Care and Early Education Research Connections

Since 2005, Child Care & Early Education Research Connections (Research Connections) has promoted the use of research findings in policymaking and practice. Research Connections' website offers an up-to-date searchable library database of scholarly research, policy briefs, and government reports from a wide range of disciplines and sources. Research Connections is a primary source for "gray" literature (i.e., reports from states, local communities, and the federal government) on child care and early education research. Interactive tools in the library database allow users to refine their searches to identify key articles on child care and early education research topics. In 2020, a new cooperative agreement was established to a) develop a new website, b) carry out Research Connections mission to offer an up-to-date searchable library database of scholarly research, policy briefs, and government reports from a wide range of disciplines and sources, and c) promote outreach and dissemination to key policymakers, researchers, and professional development staff through collaborative activities. The new Research Connections website is set to release in Fall 2021.

Maintenance and curation of the current Research Connections website is supported through OPRE's Research Support Contract, which is awarded to ICF (Nina Johnson as Project Lead) with a subcontract to ICPSR. Development of the new Research Connections website is supported through the new cooperative agreement, which was competitively awarded to ICF in 2020 (Nina Johnson as Project Lead).

## Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium

ACF created the Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium (CCEEPRC) in 1995 to increase national capacity for sound child care and early education research, identify and respond to critical issues, and link child care and early education research with policy and practice. Supported by OPRE and the Offices of Child Care and Head Start, the CCEEPRC includes former and current grantees and contractors funded by ACF to conduct child care and early education policy-related research. CCEEPRC provides a forum for researchers and policymakers to connect across programs and projects through topical discussions and

workgroup activities, culminating in an annual meeting. Researchers, state agency administrators, technical assistance partners, and federal staff participate in CCEEPRC discussions to explore research findings, questions and methods, as well as emerging information needs, and to consider how these can inform child care and early education policies to better serve children and families. Materials from past CCEEPRC Annual Meetings can be found on the [Research Connections website](#).

This project is supported through OPRE's Research Support Contract, which is awarded to ICF (Carolyn Swaney and Alexis Monahan).

## ACF's National Research Conference on Early Childhood 2020

Since 1993, the National Research Conference on Early Childhood (formerly known as Head Start's National Research Conference) has presented results from applied research and evaluation to inform early childhood policy and practice.

The goals of NRCEC are to:

- identify and disseminate research relevant to young children (birth to 8 years) and their families;
- encourage collaboration among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to build the evidence base for policy and practice; and
- foster discussion of research priorities, gaps, and needs.

The 2020 NRCEC was a virtual event, with more than 2300 registrants. Symposia sessions were offered over four days and highlighted research relevant to early childhood policy and programs and services for young children from low-income families. Interactive poster sessions were offered each day. [Posters](#) from the conference will remain available through at least March of 2021 and videos from several of the conference symposia will be posted online in early 2021.

NRCEC 2020 was led by Impaq (Annie Oliver as Project Director).

## Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance Cross-Systems Evaluation

This project carries out utilization-focused evaluation

activities in support of the Office of Child Care (OCC) and Office of Head Start (OHS) Training and Technical Assistance Systems (T/TA Systems), to inform continuous improvement of the T/TA Systems. The project includes a comprehensive literature review, analyses of administrative data, evaluation studies, and technical support for evaluation and continuous quality improvement among T/TA stakeholders. Stakeholders include federal program office staff and T/TA partners, including the national centers and the regional networks of T/TA developers and providers funded by OHS and OCC.

This project is led by NORC at the University of Chicago (Carol Hafford and Marc Hernandez, Co-Principal Investigators).

## Network of Infant/Toddler Researchers

The Network of Infant/Toddler Researchers (NitR) answers questions concerning children's first three years of life by bringing together researchers interested in policy and practice that pertain to infants and toddlers. NitR members collaborate to identify relevant existing research and translate it for a variety of audiences. NitR builds capacity by facilitating networking and coordination among the participants to conduct future research that will inform programs. NitR members include staff from OPRE and other ACF/HHS agencies, researchers in academia, and contractors who are working on issues related to the first three years of life. In FY20, NitR hosted five virtual *Forums* for members to hear updates on a number of HHS-sponsored projects and discuss the implications for programs serving infants and toddlers. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 NitR Annual Meeting, originally scheduled for June 2020, was postponed to January 2021. The virtual meeting focused on the implementation of trauma-informed practices.

This project is supported through OPRE's Research Support Contract, which is awarded to ICF (Carolyn Swaney, Alexis Monahan). ICF has a subcontract for this project with Rachel Chazan Cohen.

## Human-Centered Design for Human Services (HCD4HS)

*This project is a joint effort with the Division of Economic Independence.*

In 2018, OPRE launched the Human-Centered Design for Human Services (HCD4HS) project. Human-centered design (HCD) aims to create solutions to complex problems through intentional engagement with the beneficiaries of the solution. The purpose of this project is to gain a

better understanding of what the process of HCD looks like in the context of human services; the requirements for implementation across a range of programs; and the evaluability, feasibility, and sustainability of HCD approaches.

Work under this project began with an assessment of the state of the field through expert and stakeholder consultation, a review of literature, and key informant interviews. These activities aimed to define core elements of HCD; identify human services programs that have implemented HCD; and identify evaluation efforts to date. A synthesis of the findings across these foundational activities is forthcoming.

Building on what is learned from the field, HCD4HS is now conducting a pilot demonstration study and implementation evaluation with three human services sites. The pilot study will provide training in HCD and assess the implementation, feasibility, evaluability, and outcomes of interest to ACF programs.

This project is led by Child Trends (Desiree Murray as Principal Investigator), with subcontracts to MEF Associates (Asaph Glosser) and Anthro-Tech, Inc (Suzanne Boyd).

## The Child & Family Data Archive

The Child & Family Data Archive is the place to discover, access, and analyze data on young children, their families and communities, and the programs that serve them. OPRE funds numerous data collection efforts through research studies on a wide range of early care and education (ECE) topics within and across child care, Head Start, and home visiting. The Child & Family Data Archive provides ongoing support to facilitate sharing data from previous, current, and future OPRE-supported grants and contracts relevant to the ECE field. Additionally, this archive may support the sharing of datasets in other ECE-relevant fields such as economic self-sufficiency, welfare, and employment.

The Child & Family Data Archive hosts over 300 datasets. Example datasets include:

- [American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey \(AI/AN FACES, 2015\)](#)
- [Child Care and Development Fund \(CCDF\) Policies Database \(2009-2017\)](#)
- [Family & Child Experiences Study \(FACES 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2014, 2017\)](#)
- [Early Head Start Family & Child Experiences Survey \(Baby FACES 2009-2012, 2018\)](#)
- [National Survey of Early Care and Education \(NSECE 2010-2012\)](#)

- [Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Study \(MSHS 2017\)](#)

The Child & Family Data Archive website ([www.childandfamilydataarchive.org](http://www.childandfamilydataarchive.org)) provides user-friendly information that allows stakeholders to access downloadable data 24/7, search the bibliography of data-related literature, request technical assistance, and much more.

The project is led by the [Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research](#) (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan (Susan Jekielek as Project Director, Kaye Marz as Project Manager).

## Early Care and Education Leadership Study (ExCELS)

Leadership is widely recognized as an essential driver of organizational performance and improvement, but little is known about its role in driving the quality of early childhood programs and desired outcomes for staff and families. In launching the Early Care and Education Leadership Study (ExCELS), OPRE seeks to fill the definitional and measurement gaps to help the early childhood field understand how effective leaders can improve quality experiences for families in early care and education (ECE) settings. The project will identify the key features of effective ECE leadership and highlight gaps in our understanding. In 2019 and 2020 the team reviewed existing research literature; constructed a theory of change that shows how ECE leaders can act as change agents for quality improvement; and developed a compendium of existing measures aligned with the theory of change to identify measurement gaps. In 2020 the team also began development of a short form instrument to examine key ECE leadership constructs in center-based settings. In coming years the project will publish and disseminate the literature review and compendium of measures, identify promising leadership quality improvement initiatives and methods of evaluating them, conduct a descriptive study in 100 centers that receive funding from Head Start or the Child Care and Development Fund, and pilot the new measure.

OPRE contracted with Mathematica Policy Research (Gretchen Kirby as Project Director) and its subcontractor, the University of Massachusetts, Boston (Anne Douglass as Co-PI), to conduct this study.

## Next Steps for Rigorous Research on Two-Generation Approaches

*This project is a joint effort with the Division of Economic Independence.*

The overall purpose of this project is to support ACF in building the evidence for programs that aim to meet the needs of low-income families by intentionally combining services aimed at supporting child development with services intended to improve parental economic security. Building on an earlier project, [Integrated Approaches to Supporting Child Development and Improving Family Economic Security](#), which revealed that most such programs were in the early stages of development, the specific objectives of this project include: (1) conducting formative research to better understand program implementation, strengthen promising programs, and prepare them for evaluations of effectiveness; (2) building the capacity of programs and researchers to conduct rigorous and meaningful evaluations of integrated approaches to supporting child development and improving family economic security; and (3) addressing measurement issues in order to promote learning across evaluations and a better understanding of relevant processes and outcomes of two-generation programs for low-income children and their parents.

During the past year, the project conducted stakeholder and expert engagement activities and selected five two-generation programs to participate in formative research activities. Over the course of the next three years, programs will receive technical assistance to implement the Learn, Innovate, Improve (LI<sup>2</sup>) framework, which is a research-based approach to program improvement that embeds analytic methods in the process of designing, implementing, and iteratively testing program changes. The project will also support a learning community consisting of the participating formative evaluation sites and a small number of additional interested sites, as well as develop a new measure of the construct “mutual reinforcement.”

This project is led by Mathematica (Emily Sama-Miller as the Project Director).

## Infant and Toddler Teacher and Caregiver Competencies

Identifying the competencies (knowledge, skills, and attributes) essential to a given profession may offer a common language and lens for assessing job performance and provide a clear structure for professional growth and development. The Infant and Toddler Teacher and Caregiver Competencies (ITTCC) project examines existing efforts — across states, institutes of higher education, professional organizations, and providers— related to competencies of teachers and caregivers serving infants and toddlers. In 2020, the ITCC project released a [compendium of measures](#) that can be used to assess the competencies of I/T teachers and caregivers. The project team also designed a research study that will be fielded in

2021 to learn more about how competencies are being implemented and assessed on the ground. This study will address the following overarching research questions:

- What are key lessons learned related to the implementation and assessment of infant and toddler teacher and caregiver competencies?
- How can competencies help build the capacity of the infant and toddler workforce and support quality improvement?

This project is led by Mathematica (Emily Moiduddin as Project Director).

## Consumer Education and Parental Choice in Early Care and Education

The 2014 Reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and subsequent 2016 Final Rule demonstrated a new commitment on the part of the child care subsidy program to providing equal access to stable, high-quality early care and education for children of low-income households. Part of supporting equal access included providing guidance to states and territories regarding child care consumer education strategies and the type of information that should be provided to support parents and/or caregivers in their early care and education (ECE) decision making.

In 2019, the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation launched a new project to learn more about how parents find and use information to make informed choices about their children's enrollment in early care and education programs, with a particular focus on parents' use of information from states' and territories' consumer education efforts. This project will also examine the breadth of states' and territories' consumer education efforts and dissemination strategies employed by states and territories to identify innovative efforts, as well as evaluate whether states' and territories' consumer education strategies inform parents' early care and education choices.

The project considers the search for early care and education as a journey through which parents learn about available options and make choices that best fit their needs at a given time and within existing constraints.

Key foundational activities in the first year of the project included:

- a literature review to assess the knowledge base related to parental ECE decision-making and consumer education efforts that inform behavior change

- a conceptual framework that reflects a model of parental ECE decision-making alongside states' and territories' consumer education efforts
- a comprehensive environmental scan to identify the consumer education strategies used by states and territories

Project activities that may be done in later years include: developing measures to assess the effectiveness of consumer education, collecting new data from parents across multiple states and territories to address key questions about how parents search for early care and education and use consumer education information to make decisions about early care and education; conducting case studies to learn more about the innovative consumer education strategies that states and territories are using; and conducting rigorous evaluations of states' and territories' consumer education efforts.

This project is led by NORC at the University of Chicago (Jill Connelly as Project Manager, Rupa Datta as co-PI) and Urban Institute (Diane Schilder as Project Manager, Teresa Derrick-Kills as co-PI) in collaboration with Child Care Aware of America and Roberta Weber of Oregon State University.

## Exploring the Opportunity Gap for Young Children Birth Through Age 8

DCFD is contributing funding to the National Academies of Engineering, Sciences, and Medicine to carry out a consensus study on the causes and consequences of the "opportunity gap" for young children from birth to age eight. The opportunity gap describes the potential causes and societal conditions that preclude equal access to high-quality educational opportunities, and it is hypothesized to be causally related to the achievement gap. An *ad hoc* committee will be formed to identify and describe the opportunity gap and its relationship, if any, with the achievement gap. The committee will produce a consensus report that synthesizes the information gathered and makes recommendations on how to improve conditions and promote success for children—at home, in communities, and in schools.



# SPOTLIGHT ON ASSESSING THE IMPLEMENTATION AND COST OF HIGH QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION (ECE-ICHQ)

As communities implement efforts to strengthen their early care and education (ECE) programs and systems, policymakers and community leaders increasingly need tools and methods to accurately estimate the costs of components of high-quality ECE systems and services and to understand the mechanisms through which quality components translate into high quality services that will benefit families and children.

These factors are key to determining the return on investments in those high quality services. The goal of the Assessing the Implementation and Cost of High-Quality Early Care and Education (ECE ICHQ) project is to create an instrument for research, practice, and programs to measure implementation and costs of providing ECE services at centers for children from birth to age 5. The project has two foci: (1) measuring programs' efforts to support quality; and (2) measuring the cost of operating the programs. The ultimate goal is to produce measures of implementation and costs that can be used to examine how differences in what a center does and how resources are used influence quality.

To inform measures development, ECE-ICHQ carried out a multi-case study that included (1) a qualitative study of the implementation of key functions of center-based ECE providers, and (2) a quantitative analysis of center costs and time use of staff. Data collection in each center was time intensive and spanned multiple respondents. The multi-case study was conducted in phases, which offered the opportunity to refine recruitment and data collection processes. In the pilot, we recruited a convenience sample of three centers and did onsite data collection. In Phase 1, we again completed on site data collection with a purposive sample of 15 centers in three states. Finally, in Phase 2, we recruited a purposive sample of 30 centers in three states for all remote data collection.

Following Phase 2, we refined a set of **measures** for the five key functions (structural supports for instruction and

caregiving; instructional planning, coordination and child assessment; center administration and planning; workforce development; and child and family support) for a field test that included:

- **Implementation measures** of what a center does (the package of services a center provides, including structural features and adopted practices) and how it does it
- **Cost measures** of resources used to provide the package of services and resource use across functions
- **Time use measures** on how staff use their time that helps allocate costs to key functions, since labor is a large driver of costs.

The final **instrument** will include all the data collection tools, guidance for producing the measures from the collected data, and instructions for interpreting and using the measures. Users will be able to develop implementation scores and costs for each of the key functions. They will also be able to develop total costs, total cost per child care hour, and total cost per child care hour by age of children served.

The field test validation was scheduled to begin in March 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the field test was postponed. The project is planning data collection in spring 2021 with a small sample of centers from Phase 2 to understand how the tools collect information in the wake and aftermath of the pandemic. Following the field test, a user's manual will be produced.

This project is led by Mathematica Policy Research (Andrew Burwick as Principal Investigator, Gretchen Kirby as Project Director), in partnership with consultant Elizabeth Davis at the University of Minnesota.

# CHILD CARE: RAISING QUALITY AND SUPPORTING PARENTAL EMPLOYMENT

A growing body of research demonstrating the link between high quality early care and education and positive child and family outcomes has encouraged efforts to enhance early care and education programs. Early care and education programs serve as resources for families, supporting young children's development in a variety of domains, assisting parents, and providing comprehensive services for families. Research in this area focuses on early learning education standards, improving quality in care settings, innovative interventions, and supporting parental employment through access to high quality care.

## Child Care and Development Block Grant Implementation Research and Evaluation Planning Grants Cohort 1 and Cohort 2

In 2016, ACF began the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Implementation Research and Evaluation Grants program. The goal of this grant program is to provide Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies the opportunity to plan for and evaluate initiatives and policy changes in response to the goals of the CCDBG Act of 2014. The grant program has two phases: a planning grant (Phase I) to develop and plan for an evaluation research project and an implementation grant (Phase II) to conduct the evaluations designed in Phase I.

The first cohort of planning grants (Phase I/Cohort 1) includes eight CCDF Lead Agencies awarded cooperative agreements in September 2016. The second cohort (Phase I/Cohort 2) includes three CCDF Lead Agencies awarded cooperative agreements in May 2017.

The first cohort of implementation grantees (Phase II/Cohort 1) includes four CCDF Lead Agencies awarded cooperative agreements in March 2018. Projects focus on: improving infant and toddler care quality with increased set-aside for quality; evaluating extension of redetermination length of subsidies; evaluating new health and safety standards; monitoring license exempt providers; stability of subsidies for families and providers; professional development supports for home based providers; and increasing access to care.

The second cohort of implementation grantees (Phase II/Cohort 2) were awarded cooperative agreements in Novem-

ber 2018 and includes two CCDF Lead Agencies. Their projects focus on improving culturally responsive practice in tribal early care and learning settings and how changes in authorization length and generosity of subsidy are associated with access to high quality care, child care continuity, and parental employment.

## Center for Supporting Research on the Child Care Development Block Grant Implementation

The purpose of this Center is to support Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies in building research capacity to help inform and evaluate policies and initiatives implemented in response to the goals of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014. OPRE also awarded research and evaluation planning grants to eight lead agencies in FY 2016 and to three additional grantees in FY 2017. The Center supports agencies that received planning and implementation grants. The Center also aims to enhance research capacity among all lead agencies, including those that are not grant recipients through developing resources and a series of webinars on the following topics: policy questions you can answer with your agency's administrative data, mapping answers to child care questions, and pairing stakeholder perspectives with your data. In response to COVID-19, the Center developed a list of COVID-19 child care surveys and data analyses that is updated regularly. As a primary focus, the Center provides capacity-building activities, tailoring specific activities to meet the interests and needs of lead agencies, as well as supporting cross-grantee collaboration and learning.

This project is led by the Urban Institute (Julia Isaacs as Project Director and Teresa Derrick-Mills as Deputy Project Director).

## Child Care Policy Research Partnership Grants

The Child Care Policy Research Partnership (CCPRP) Grant Program supports active collaborations between Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies and researchers to investigate questions of

immediate relevance to local and national child care policies and practices. In September 2019, ACF awarded 11 new CCPRP Grants. These grants will add to our knowledge about the efficacy of child care subsidy policies and quality improvement initiatives in promoting family economic self-sufficiency, low-incomes families' access to high quality child care programs, and children's healthy development and learning. The overarching goals of this grant program are to:

1. Develop research partnerships that support collaboration among child care researchers and CCDF Lead Agencies which build the capacity of lead agencies to conduct rigorous policy-relevant research.
2. Conduct research that addresses issues of interest to CCDF decision-makers at the local, state, and national levels.
3. Produce policy-relevant findings and information throughout the duration of the grant.
4. Encourage collaborative research projects across lead agencies that explore common research questions.
5. Foster the exchange of current research, ideas, and information among research, policy, and practice communities.
6. Disseminate findings to relevant stakeholders at local, state, and national levels.

## Child Care and Early Education Policy and Research Analysis Project (CCEEPRA)

The purpose of the Child Care and Early Education Policy and Research Analysis Project (CCEEPRA) is to support the provision of expert consultation, assessment, and analysis in child care and early education policy and research to ACF, including activities related to:

- providing expert advice, assistance and consultation in support of the agency's research priorities and goals;
- conducting assessment, analyses and summaries of policies, practices, and research of relevance to the agency's mission;
- conducting studies to inform policy and practice and the development of new research priorities;
- identifying and refining measures and instruments to improve the collection of data related to program policies and practices and to program outcomes for families and children;
- identifying sources of data and conducting statistical analyses on national and other original datasets to answer questions of relevance to ACF on

child care utilization, child care supply, and the effects of child care and other early childhood policies on parental and child outcomes;

- providing expertise in the preparation of written materials; and
- convening experts on ECE research and policy issues of relevance to the administration of the Child Care and Development Fund and other early childhood programs in States, Territories, and Tribes.

Products supported through this contract include literature reviews, measures compendia, meeting summaries, briefing papers, webinars, research briefs, and research-to-policy/research-to-practice briefs.

This project is led by Child Trends (Tamara Halle and Kathryn Tout, Principal Investigators).

## Early Care and Education Research Scholars: Child Care Dissertation Grants

The Early Care and Education Research Scholars: Child Care Dissertation Grants support dissertation research on child care policy issues in partnership with state Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies and build capacity in the field to focus research on questions that inform child care policy decision-making. The specific goals of the Child Care Dissertation Grants are to: (1) build capacity in the early care and education field by supporting high-quality dissertation research and student-faculty collaboration and mentorship, (2) conduct rigorous research that has the capacity to inform child care programs, policies, and practices, (3) support active communication, collaboration, and partnerships between researchers and CCDF policymakers, (4) foster the exchange of current research, ideas, and information among research, policy, and practice communities.

## Child Care Interstate Background Checks (CC-IBaCs)

The Child Care Interstate Background Checks (CC-IBaCs) project seeks to fill gaps in knowledge to inform states' and territories' implementation of interstate background checks as mandated by the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014. The project aims to identify barriers and promising solutions to implementation of interstate background checks, and provide ACF and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) administrators with timely knowledge, information, and options to help states achieve full implementation of the background checks requirements. In 2020, the project team piloted a Prevalence Study to quantify the added value of each component of the background check require-

ments, began designing a Demonstration Study to conduct an in-depth examination of interstate child abuse and neglect (CAN) registry processes, and finalized a brief summary of background check implementation challenges. The summary is expected to be published in early 2021.

This project is led by CNA under the current leadership of Elizabeth Raistrick, Project Director.

## Assessing Models of Coordinated Services for Low-Income Children and Their Families

Through this project, OPRE seeks to learn more about how states and communities coordinate early care and education, family economic security, and/or other health and human services to most efficiently and effectively serve the needs of low-income children and their families. This work builds on the [Integrated Approaches to Supporting Child Development and Improving Family Economic Security](#) project. The goal of this project is to build on previous investments by identifying the range of existing models that coordinate a broader set of services. Coordinated services approaches seek to address the multifaceted needs of families and to support children's development by providing access to high quality early care and education, while simultaneously addressing additional family needs such as parenting education, supports for family economic security, and other health and human services. By connecting and facilitating these services for families, coordinated services approaches endeavor to move families out of poverty in the short-term and decrease the chance that poverty will continue into the next generation. The project activities include a targeted literature synthesis, a national scan of existing state and local coordinated services approaches that coordinate early care and education with family economic security and/or other health and human services, and virtual site visits with select state and local coordinated services approaches to gather more in-depth information about how they are serving families on the ground, including their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. A series of reports and briefs will be produced to inform both ACF and the public about the findings and address gaps or needs in the field.

This project is led by Mathematica Policy Research (Elizabeth Cavadel as Project Director).

## Understanding the Role of Licensing in Early Care and Education (TRLECE)

Funded in 2019, this 5-year project seeks to strengthen the field's understanding of the role of the early care and education (ECE) licensing system in supporting ECE quality and outcomes for children, families, and key stakeholders (e.g., child care providers, licensing agencies, state administrations). Features of licensing systems include, but are not limited to, establishing

licensing standards, practices to monitor provider compliance, pre-service and ongoing health and safety training for child care providers, and training and management of licensing staff to perform roles related to monitoring and ensuring compliance. The goals of this project are to:

- assess the current state of the knowledge base about licensing;
- refine existing conceptual frameworks and develop new conceptual frameworks for how the licensing system can support ECE quality and outcomes;
- gather data on States' and Territories' perspectives and experiences about licensing in ECE, including their experiences in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic;
- identify the gaps in our knowledge about licensing and the most pressing research questions to address in the field; and
- determine both the availability of existing data sources and the need for new data collection that may inform licensing-related decisions of States, Territories, and the Federal Government.

Additional activities include the analysis of secondary data (e.g., national data sets, state licensing administrative data) and may include new data collection. The products resulting from this project will inform efforts by States, Territories, and the Federal Government in evaluating and strengthening the ECE licensing system.

This project is led by Child Trends (Kelly Maxwell as Principal Investigator/Project Director and Brenda Miranda as Co-Project Director) and ICF (Nina Johnson as Project Lead).

## Home-Based Child Care Supply and Quality Project

In 2019, the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation launched a new project to examine home-based child care (HBCC) supply and quality. HBCC is a vital part of our nation's child care supply and the most common form of care for children living in poverty. Yet, HBCC providers have fewer resources and supports when compared to providers in child care centers, and many HBCC providers face challenges in providing quality care. Additionally, the supply of In 2019, OPRE launched a new project to examine home-based child care (HBCC) supply and quality. HBCC is a vital part of our nation's child care supply and the most common form of care for children living in poverty. Yet, many HBCC providers face challenges in



providing quality care, with fewer resources and supports when compared to providers in child care centers. Additionally, the supply of licensed and publically subsidized family child care has declined dramatically over the past decade. To address these challenges, this project will: (1) fill gaps in our understanding of HBCC supply; and (2) address challenges defining and measuring quality in HBCC settings. The following research questions will drive study activities:

- What are the key drivers of HBCC supply?
- What are the essential features and drivers of quality in HBCC, and how should these features be measured?
- What factors support or inhibit HBCC provider participation in quality improvement efforts and in early care and education systems?

The study team will address these questions by:

- Reviewing existing literature, quality measures and indices, and data sets relevant to HBCC;
- Developing a conceptual framework on quality in HBCC;
- Analyzing existing data on HBCC provider characteristics and experiences;
- Developing a research agenda and design reports to guide future research.

These early activities will inform future activities, which may include collecting original data and developing a new measure of HBCC quality.

The study team will engage a variety of stakeholders, including state and local administrators, quality improvement providers, provider networks and associations, policymakers, and researchers, in shaping and learning from contract activities and will communicate project insights to the field through various products, such as reports, briefs, and presentations.

This project is led by Mathematica (Patricia Del Grosso as Project Director, with Sally Atkins-Burnett and Erikson Institute's Juliet Bromer as Principal Investigators).

## Child Care Research and Evaluation Capacity Building Center (Child Care ECB Center)

State, Territory, and Tribal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies are increasingly asked to use, conduct, and disseminate high-quality, rigorous, and policy-relevant research on early care and education. They are also expected to use research and evidence to inform their decisions. However, lead agen-

cies vary in their evaluation capacities. More information is needed to understand gaps and particular needs in the current research and evaluation capacity among agencies and better target support to build these capacities.

The Child Care Research and Evaluation Capacity Building Center (Center) will assess and build the research and evaluation capacities of State, Territory, and Tribal CCDF Lead Agencies. The Center will engage with stakeholders in planning activities and developing strategies. The Center will also focus on supporting *individual* and *organizational* research and evaluation capacity to create sustained change that lasts beyond the turnover of individual staff and the changing policies and priorities of federal and state policymakers.

The project is led by Urban Institute (Teresa Derrick-Mills as Principal Investigator) with a subcontract to Mathematica Policy Research (Gretchen Kirby as Co-PI).

## Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Policies Database

The CCDF Policies Database is a source of information on the detailed policies used to operate child care subsidy programs under the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). Since 2008, the CCDF Policies Database has collected, coded, and disseminated CCDF policies for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories and outlying areas. The database captures detailed information on eligibility, family payments, application procedures, and provider-related policies, including dates of enactment and some of the policy variations that exist within states/territories. The project disseminates information in different forms to meet the needs of various users—quantitative and qualitative researchers, policymakers, and administrators at all levels of government. The [annual report](#) and [companion brief](#) highlighting policies as of October 1, 2019 were both released in December 2020. On the [project's website](#), users can search the full database and download custom datasets. The website also provides access to all data documentation, project reports, and other resources.

This project is led by Urban Institute (Sarah Minton as Project Director).



# SPOTLIGHT ON DCFD'S COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the country in unprecedented ways. Since the beginning of the pandemic, OPRE, on behalf of ACF, has worked diligently to adjust research and evaluation projects in response to COVID-19, including efforts to capture the COVID-19 experiences of ACF programs and the populations they serve, allow the voices of program staff and participants to be heard, and learn how programs can be better prepared for future crises.

A number of Division of Child and Family Development research and evaluation projects illustrate this approach:

## **Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES)**

The FACES project team stopped all in person data collection in March 2020 (classroom observations and direct child outcomes assessments). The team added a module of questions about closures, COVID response, and continued services to the center director and program director surveys in both AI/AN FACES and FACES. They then continued with survey data collection from directors, staff, and parents via the internet.

## **Study of Coaching Practices in Early Care and Education Settings (SCOPE)**

The SCOPE project team had case studies originally planned for spring 2020 that had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To better understand the impact of COVID-19 on coaching and professional development in ECE settings, the team designed a new data collection effort using web-based surveys and qualitative interviews to follow up with coaches, center directors, and family childcare providers who participated in the SCOPE 2019 survey. The goal of this effort is to understand the practice and processes of coaching and professional development in supporting ECE settings throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The information from the follow-up survey and qualitative interviews will help the team understand the extent to which coaching and professional development activities have been sustained through and influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, and how they have changed compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic for this sample of respondents.

## **American Indian and Alaskan Native Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (AI/AN FACES)**

The AI/AN FACES project team was scheduled to be in the field in spring 2020. Because of the pandemic, the team decided to field all of the planned director, teacher, and parent surveys online or via phone interview, rather than in person, as planned. The team was unable to conduct the in-person classroom observations and direct child assessment that were planned for the spring. Because of this, the fall/spring change analyses with classroom quality and child outcomes were not possible. About 200 child assessments and 30 classroom observations were collected before shutdown. The team is currently considering what to do with the data.

## **The NSECE 2019 COVID-19 Follow-up Study**

The NSECE 2019 COVID-19 Follow-up Study is collecting data from center-based directors, listed and unlisted home-based paid providers, and the child care and early education workforce that participated in the NSECE 2019 study. The follow up study will address questions related to the experiences of care and early education providers and workers during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. This data collection will result in a national picture of the effects of the pandemic on care and early education providers and workers, a unique source of critical information for the Office of Child Care, Office of Head Start, and ACF more broadly.

# HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START: ENHANCING CHILD DEVELOPMENT, HEALTH, AND HUMAN SERVICES FOR LOW- INCOME FAMILIES

Head Start research over the past decades has provided valuable information not only for guiding program improvements in Head Start itself, but also for the larger field of early childhood programming and development. Head Start and Early Head Start programs have collaborated with researchers in making significant contributions in terms of program innovation and evaluation, as well as the use of systematic data collection, analysis and interpretation in program operations.

## Early Head Start Family and Child Experiences Study 2018 and 2020

The Early Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (Baby FACES) is a nationally representative descriptive study of Early Head Start (EHS) aimed at informing program planning, technical assistance, and research at the national level by:

- Providing descriptive information about the quality, frequency, and intensity of EHS services;
- Describing the characteristics and qualifications of staff working with EHS families and the professional supports they receive;
- Identifying key characteristics, strengths, and needs of families served in EHS;
- Learning how EHS children and families are faring in key areas of child and family well-being; and
- Exploring associations between the type and quality of EHS services and child and family well-being.

There have been two cohorts of the Baby FACES study to date and a third is planned for 2022. Baby FACES 2009 was the first cohort of the study. It used a longitudinal design and followed two age cohorts of children (newborns and one-year-olds) through their time in EHS, from 2009 to 2012. Baby FACES was redesigned in 2015 to employ a cross-sectional approach with a nationally representative sample of programs, centers, classrooms, home visitors, and children of all age groups enrolled in EHS. Data collection for the second cohort was completed in the spring of 2018. Baby FACES 2018 included a particular focus on unpacking how center-based EHS classrooms support infant/toddler

development through responsive relationships between teachers and children. Several reports and briefs summarizing findings from the 2018 data collection were under development during 2020. A third cohort was planned for 2020, but was rescheduled for spring 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Baby FACES 2022 will utilize a cross-sectional design to focus on the processes and practices in home-based EHS that support positive parent-infant/toddler relationships and child development.

Also in 2020, OPRE designed new research exploring the EHS-Child Care Partnerships as a special add-on under the Baby FACES study. This special add-on study will (1) follow-up with the sample from the national EHS-Child Care Partnerships Study to explore questions about partnership sustainability; (2) dig behind some of the findings from the national study to try to better understand how partnerships support improved access to high quality care for infants and toddlers; and (3) examine the quality of EHS-child care partnership classrooms among center-based partners.

This project is led by Mathematica Policy Research (Cheri Vogel, Sally Atkins-Burnett, Yange Xue).

## Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey 2014-2017 and 2019

The Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) is a periodic survey of a nationally representative sample of Head Start children that provides descriptive information on the characteristics, experiences, and outcomes of Head Start children and families, as well as the characteristics of the Head Start programs that serve them. The most recent publically available data were collected in the fall of 2014, spring of 2015, and spring of 2017. A number of products from these data collections, including the data files and supporting files, were released in 2018 and 2019. In 2017, a new contract was awarded to continue the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES). In 2019 the research team completed substantial planning for the new study and

launched data collection in the fall of 2019. A modified version of the follow up data collection occurred in the spring of 2020 due to the pandemic. The spring 2020 data collection has been followed by data preparation, data analyses, and a host of reporting and dissemination activities. Analyses and reporting will continue on into 2021. Plans for a follow up collection and a Special Topics Study for spring 2022 are also underway.

The project is led by Mathematica Policy Research (Lizabeth Malone as Project Director, Ashley Kopack Klein as APD, Louisa Tarullo as co-PI, Nikki Aikens as co-PI).

## American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey, 2015 and 2019

The Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) is a major source of information on Head Start programs and the children and families they serve. Since 1997, FACES has conducted studies in a nationally representative sample of Head Start programs, but has historically not included Region XI, whose programs are designed to serve predominantly AI/AN children and families. AI/AN FACES, designed to fill this information gap, was first fielded in 2015, and several reports and briefs have been released. Another cohort of AI/AN FACES is being fielded during the 2019-20 program year.

The design of AI/AN FACES 2015 was informed by members of the AI/AN FACES Workgroup which includes tribal Head Start directors, members of the National Indian Head Start Directors' Association (NIHSDA) Board of Directors, researchers with expertise working with tribal communities, Mathematica Policy Research study staff, and federal officials from the Office of Head Start, Region XI, and the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. Members of the AI/AN FACES Workgroup have shared insights and information on the kinds of information needed about Region XI Head Start programs (including children's development and school readiness, parent and family demographics, health, and program engagement, and teacher, classroom, and program characteristics). Members have also recommended recruitment practices that are responsive to the unique cultural and self-governing contexts of tribal Head Start programs.

While all data was collected in fall 2019, the spring 2020 data collection was modified due to the COVID-

19 pandemic. All in person data collection was cancelled and a set of questions for center and program directors was added to understand the impact the pandemic was having on families and programs. This project is led by Mathematica Policy Research (Lizabeth Malone as Project Director).

## Early Care and Education Research Scholars: Head Start Dissertation Grants

The Head Start Dissertation Grant Program is designed to build research capacity in and knowledge of effective early childhood interventions for low-income children and families. The grant program does this by providing support for dissertation research conducted by graduate students working in partnership with local Head Start or Early Head Start programs. The immediate goals of the grant program are to: (1) build capacity in the early care and education field by supporting high-quality dissertation research and student-faculty collaboration and mentorship, (2) conduct rigorous research that has the capacity to inform Head Start and Early Head Start programs, policies, and practices, (3) support active communication, collaboration, and partnerships between researchers and HS/EHS programs, and (4) foster the exchange of current research, ideas, and information among research, policy, and practice communities.

## Early Head Start University Partnership Grants: Building the Evidence for Infant/Toddler Center-based Programs

The goal of this grant program is to examine how Early Head Start (EHS) and other early care and education programs can promote and improve early child development by supporting both parenting and caregiving. Researchers working in partnership with EHS and/or EHS-Child Care Partnership center-based programs lead these studies, evaluating interventions that target both parents and center-based teachers as a means of achieving child development goals. Each of the four grantees is completing a rigorous examination of the implementation, effectiveness, and sustainability of the selected intervention. Together, they are examining questions of interest across their grants, as well.

## Head Start Connects: Individualizing and Connecting Families to Comprehensive Family Support Services

The Head Start Connects project was launched in 2018 to generate knowledge about the processes through which Head Start programs individualize, coordinate, and provide appropriate services that meet families' needs. The project is addressing this goal through a set of interrelated research activities that build on and inform one another. Thus far the project has conducted a literature review on the coordination, tailoring, and provision of family support services that draw on literature from early childhood and related fields. The findings and insights from the literature reviewed shaped the draft theory of change model developed by the team that articulates pathways between key program activities and processes related to the coordination of family support services and expected outputs and outcomes for families and children. Collectively, these activities and expert and stakeholder engagement informed the design and execution of a set of case studies, including review of program documents (e.g., manuals, goal-setting worksheets) related to service coordination and qualitative interviews with Head Start staff and families. The staff interviews involved a reflective case file review where staff described their work with specific families and how they engage with these families over time to coordinate family support services. Importantly, as part of the interviews, both Head Start staff and parents were asked a series of questions about changes to family needs and service coordination in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The case studies were completed in December 2020. The team is leveraging insights from the case studies to further refine the theory of change and develop a set of research questions to drive design options for a large-scale descriptive study of Head Start programs nationally focused on the coordination of family support services in Head Start.

This project is led by MDRC (Michelle Maier as Project Director).

## The Study of Disability Services Coordinators and Inclusion in Head Start

This study will provide a national picture of the Disability Services Coordinators (DSC) workforce for Early Head Start (EHS) and Head Start (HS), including American Indian and Alaska Native (Region XI) and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (Region XII) grantees. It will examine practices and policies for working with staff, families, children, and the community. This effort will explore how EHS/HS serves children with disabilities and their families and will seek to understand how EHS/HS collaborates with services in the community, including health providers, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and early intervention services.

The study goals include the following:

- to describe the characteristics and work of DSCs and related staff in EHS/HS programs;
- to describe how children with disabilities and their families are served by EHS/HS including through recruitment and selection; throughout screening and ongoing assessment; evaluation; and the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process and implementation;
- to describe how EHS/HS programs engage in capacity building with families and provide supportive services to families as they understand and advocate for their children with potential or identified disabilities, delays, or other issues such as chronic health impairments;
- to describe what EHS/HS programs do when services are not available and when children do not meet Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) eligibility requirements;
- to describe how EHS/HS programs engage with LEAs, IDEA Parts B and C providers, and community programs;
- to describe the training teachers receive as well as how they individualize practice and work to fully integrate children with disabilities into the classroom; and
- to describe how EHS/HS programs work with children with disabilities and their families on transitions to HS or kindergarten.

The team is in the second year of the study and is focusing on survey development, refining the study design, completing the OMB package, and throughout this time continuing to engage with stakeholders.

The project team is led by NORC at the University of Chicago (Michael López as Principal Investigator; Shannon TenBroeck as Project Director) in partnership with SRI International and consultant Amanda Schwartz.

## Understanding Children's Transitions from Head Start to Kindergarten

This project aims to better understand how to improve children's transitions from Head Start programs to elementary schools. Central to this project is a systems approach that recognizes that effective transitions require intentional engagement from both the sending programs (Head Start) and the receiving programs (elementary schools). This approach also recognizes that transition strategies and practices must be implemented at multiple levels – among classroom teachers in Head Start and kindergarten, families and teachers, elementary school principals and Head Start directors, Head Start grantees and school districts, and state and federal agencies. Foundational tasks have included a literature review, qualitative interviews with key informants, and de-

velopment of a theory of change. A report synthesizing this review of the knowledge base is forthcoming. Secondary analyses were also conducted this year to examine whether and how combinations of transition activities experienced by children and families predict successful kindergarten transitions. The project will conduct a comparative multi-case study describing approaches to supporting transitions from Head Start to kindergarten. Additional work may include development of design options for a descriptive study of the national landscape related to transition practices within Head Start programs, development of new measures of transition practices, and/or additional analyses of secondary data to address research questions of interest.

This project is led by NORC (Stacy Ehrlich as Project Director).

## Conversion of Enrollment Slots from Head Start to Early Head Start

Converting enrollment slots from Head Start to Early Head Start (i.e., shifting funding from services for Head Start preschool-age children to Early Head Start services for pregnant women, infants, and toddlers) necessitates strategic planning and the careful development and implementation of new processes to ensure high quality service delivery tailored to the unique needs of pregnant women, infants, and toddlers and delivered in accordance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

This project examines how and why Head Start grantees prepare for and engage in enrollment conversions and aims to identify facilitators and barriers to the provision of high quality Early Head Start services that meet community needs.

This project is led by Urban Institute (Diane Schilder and Catherine Kuhns) in partnership with MEF Associates (Kate Stepleton).

## Head Start Reach: Strengthening Recruitment, Enrollment, and Engagement Practices for Families

In 2020, OPRE launched Head Start Reach to fill gaps in our understanding of (1) the population of families that are eligible for Head Start (both enrolled and not enrolled families), (2) the extent to which Head Start is reaching especially vulnerable families within the eligible population, and (3) the family, program, and community-level factors that shape their recruitment, selection, enrollment, and retention (RSER) in Head Start. In the first two years, the project

team will conduct a set of interrelated research activities that build on and inform one another, including: (1) reviewing existing literature and data sets relevant to Head Start-eligible families as well as RSER approaches; (2) developing a conceptual framework that depicts factors that shape RSER; (3) analyzing existing data on eligible families and RSER; and (4) designing and conducting a small set of case studies to provide an in-depth examination of Head Start RSER approaches from the perspective of both families and programs. In future years, the project may design and execute a large-scale study to strengthen the research base on RSER approaches in Head Start and develop a toolkit for use by federal, state, and/or local agencies and programs to support RSER. The study team will engage a variety of stakeholders and experts in shaping and learning from contract activities and will communicate project insights to the field through various products, such as reports, briefs, and presentations.

The project is led by Mathematica (Louisa Tarullo as Project Director, Nikki Aikens as Co-Principle Investigator), with a subcontract to Brazelton Touchpoints Center (Cathy Ayoub as Co-Principle Investigator).

## Head Start's Response to COVID-19

In response to the COVID-19 and in partnership with the Office of Head Start, OPRE rapidly launched a study to understand the funding, administrative, staffing, and service-related challenges Head Start programs faced during the initial wave of the pandemic and continue to face during the ongoing pandemic. In August and September of 2020, the project team sent a survey to all center-based Head Start and Early Head Start grantees and delegate agencies providing direct services. The brief survey included a series of questions about: (1) the challenges programs are experiencing (e.g., operational, regulatory, budgetary, staffing, service provision), (2) programs' use of any administrative or funding flexibilities, (3) plans for use of CARES Act funding, (4) preparedness for re-opening and/or future closures of Head Start programs, and (5) supports needed to serve children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. The topics and questions covered in the survey were largely shaped by conversations with key stakeholders, including a subset of Head Start Regional Program Managers, Collaborative Office Directors, and other staff in the Office of Head Start. Based on preliminary survey findings and findings from related OPRE-funded Head Start data collection efforts focused on COVID-19 (e.g. Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey), ACF is currently developing plans to conduct a small set of case studies with Head Start grantees to gather more in-depth information on key aspects of grantees' and families' experiences during the pandemic. The case studies will be conducted in early 2021. By rapidly gathering and analyzing information on the response of Head Start programs to

COVID-19, the Office of Head Start has real-time data on the specific needs of programs as they continue serving children and families. The insights from this data collection and related efforts are intended to inform technical assistance, guidance, and program policies impacting Head Start programs. A public report describing study findings is expected in the late summer of 2021.

This study is being conducted by Child Trends (Leads: Kelly Maxwell and Sara Shaw) through the Child Care Early Education Policy Research Analysis project.



# PROMOTING CHILD WELFARE

The promotion of children's safety, permanence, and well-being are the principles that guide child welfare practice and policy. OPRE's child welfare research portfolio includes studies on children who have experienced or are at risk for maltreatment, families who are investigated by Child Protective Services, and children and families who access child welfare services. OPRE partners with ACF's Children's Bureau to conduct research covering a broad array of topics, including identification of antecedents and consequences of child maltreatment, strategies for its prevention, and service needs and outcomes for children who experience it.

## National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being

The National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) is a nationally-representative, longitudinal survey of children and families who have been the subjects of investigation by Child Protective Services. NSCAW examines data from first-hand reports of children, parents, and other caregivers, as well as reports from caseworkers, teachers, and administrative records data. NSCAW also addresses child and family well-being outcomes in detail and seeks to relate those outcomes to experience with the child welfare system, as well as family characteristics, community environment, and other factors.

In the fall of 2015, OPRE awarded a contract to field a third cohort for the study. Baseline and 18-month follow-up data collection is currently ongoing. Two new sub-studies will take advantage of the NSCAW sampling frame and data: a descriptive study of the Child Welfare Workforce, and a study of service needs and utilization for children and caregivers in Kinship Care settings.

This project is led by RTI International (Melissa Dolan as Project Director).

## Child Maltreatment Incidence Data Linkages

The Child Maltreatment Incidence Data Linkages (CMI Data Linkages) project aims to explore how innovative administrative data linkages can improve our understanding of child maltreatment incidence and related

risk and protective factors. CMI Data Linkages, which began in fall 2017, identified 5 sites using linked administrative data to examine child maltreatment incidence and related risk and protective factors. The project is supporting these sites as they *enhance* their existing linked administrative data by:

- Using innovative methods to link/analyze administrative data;
- Linking novel administrative data sources; or
- Scaling or replicating an existing data linkage or analysis approach in a new geographic area or jurisdiction.

The project provides sites with access to experts to help address challenges and supports a collaborative cross-site learning network that facilitates communication and information sharing. The project is also conducting a cross-site feasibility study to: (1) examine the factors (including state and local context, resources, organizational capacity, peer support, training, and existing infrastructure) that promote or impede the enhancement or scaling of existing administrative data linkage and analysis practices related to child maltreatment; and (2) determine the availability and quality of information on child maltreatment incidence and associated risk and protective factors that can be gleaned from linked administrative data. CMI Data Linkages intends to inform the accurate and ongoing surveillance of the incidence of child abuse and neglect and future prevention and treatment efforts.

This project is led by Mathematica (Matthew Stagner and Cay Bradley).

## Definitions and Policies Related to the Incidence of Child Abuse and Neglect

This project supports ACF in identifying federal, state, and/or local definitions and policies related to the surveillance of child maltreatment and related risk and protective factors. The primary goal is to create a State Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Policies Database that allows researchers and policy analysts to link to other data sources to address important questions about how variations in these definitions and policies are associated with child welfare intake, screening practices, substantiation decisions, service provision, and ultimately child safety and well-being. The database includes child abuse and neglect definitions and poli-



cies collected from all 50 states, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The SCAN Policies Database will be available at the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN). Additionally, a SCAN Policies Database website is being developed to allow key stakeholders to download summary state profiles of the child maltreatment policies and definitions as well as access resources to help understand and guide the interpretation of this information.

This project is led by Mathematica Policy Research (Elizabeth Weigensberg as Project Director, Nuzhat Islam as Deputy Project Director), with a subcontract to Child Trends.

## Understanding Postadoption and Guardianship Instability for Children and Youth Who Exit Foster Care

The Understanding Postadoption and Guardianship Instability for Children and Youth Who Exit Foster Care project began in 2017 to develop and execute studies focused on post-permanency instability for children and youth who exit foster care through adoption or guardianship. Thus far, the project team has completed a number of activities to inform conducting research studies on instability, including: (1) engaging experts and stakeholders; (2) conducting a comprehensive review of the existing literature; (3) developing a conceptual model that articulates key child, caregiver, family, and contextual factors that are thought to shape adoption and guardianship instability; (4) compiling existing data and state policies and procedures related to adoption and guardianship instability; (5) assessing the extent to which existing survey data can be used to answer key questions about instability; and (6) developing 5 study design options focused on understanding guardianship and adoption instability. In 2019, ACF decided to execute 2 of the 5 study designs developed by the project team. The selected study designs will allow ACF and other stakeholders to obtain data on rates of adoption instability, factors related to instability, and the ability of child welfare agencies to collect and track information related to instability. Findings from these studies are expected in 2021. In future years, the project will also support the creation of resources to help build the capacity of agencies at the federal-, state-, and/or local-level to obtain accurate and ongoing information on post-permanency instability among children and youth who exit foster care through adoption or guardianship.

The project is led by RTI international (Heather

Ringeisen as Project Director, Leyla Stambaugh as Associate Project Director), with subcontracts to the Case Western Reserve University (Nancy Rolock as Principle Investigator) and East Carolina University (Kevin White).

## Understanding Judicial Decision-Making and Hearing Quality in Child Welfare

Juvenile and family court judges are responsible for deciding when children enter and exit out-of-home care and for ensuring children in the system achieve safety, permanency, and well-being. The quality of child welfare court hearings is important because each of the hearings provides judges with an opportunity to learn about the child and parent as well as the family's strengths, needs, and progress. While some research has been conducted on child welfare hearing quality, questions remain about how to support effective judicial decision-making and improve outcomes for children and families. This project will study judicial decision-making during the life of a child welfare case as well as the quality of child welfare court proceedings, the factors associated with decision-making and hearing quality, and the influence that decision-making and hearing quality may have on case planning and outcomes such as parent engagement in services and children's permanency outcomes. The project includes a conceptual model as well as a compilation of measures and data sources that can be used to conduct research on judicial decision-making and hearing quality. Finally, design options will be developed and pre-testing and feasibility testing for the selected design(s) will be conducted.

This project is led by James Bell Associates (Anne Fromknecht as Project Director, Sophia Gatwoski as co-PI, Alicia Summers as co-PI), in collaboration with the American Bar Association.

## Building Capacity to Evaluate Child Welfare Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families

This project supports OPRE in its work with the Children's Bureau (CB) to advance the evidence around collaborative approaches to preventing child abuse and neglect. In 2018 and 2019, CB funded grants to states, communities, and Tribes to develop, implement, and evaluate proactive strategies that build on the strengths of families. The initiative supports community-level mobilization around

the development of multi-system collaboratives that provide a continuum of activities and services designed to prevent child abuse and neglect. The first cohort of four grantees received CWCC funds in 2018, and the second cohort of nine grantees received CWCC funds in 2019.

This project supports the CB effort through two primary components: 1) evaluation-related technical assistance to strengthen grantees' evaluation capacity to conduct site-specific outcome evaluations, and 2) a cross-site process evaluation of each cohort of grantees to better understand how communities came together to develop and implement integrated approaches to preventing child maltreatment, including documenting project and organizational leadership approaches, integration and alignment strategies, and recruitment and assessment methods to identify and serve at-risk families.

This project is led by Abt Associates (Allison Hyra as Project Director) in partnership with Child Trends (Karin Malm as Principal Investigator) and consultant Sharon McGroder.

## Building Capacity to Evaluate Interventions for Youth/Young Adults At-Risk of Homelessness (YARH)

*This project is a joint effort with the Division of Family Strengthening.*

This multi-phase project supports ACF's efforts to build evidence on how to end homelessness. Phase I of YARH provided evaluation-related technical assistance (TA) to organizations awarded planning grants to develop interventions for youth with child welfare involvement who are most likely to experience homelessness. Phase I of YARH provided evaluation-related technical assistance (TA) to organizations awarded planning grants to develop interventions for youth with child welfare involvement who are most likely to experience homelessness. Phase II of YARH continues to provide evaluation-related support for organizations awarded implementation grants for further developing and testing interventions developed under Phase I. Phase III of YARH will continue to provide important information to the field by supporting organizations from Phase II in evidence-building activities, including providing evaluation-related TA; assessing sites' readiness for summative evaluation; designing and conducting a federally led evaluation of at least one comprehensive service model, including an implementation study and an impact study; and disseminating knowledge gained through project activities. The evaluation team will work closely with ACF, a

broad range of stakeholders, and selected experts so that the TA activities and evaluation will yield timely findings that inform policy and practice.

OPRE released a brief in early 2020 on [Using Continuous Quality Improvement to Refine Interventions for Youth at Risk of Homelessness](#).

This project is led by Mathematica (Cay Bradley as Project Director, Andrew Burwick as Deputy Project Director, Russell Cole as Principal Investigator).

## Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse

The Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse was established in September 2018 by ACF to conduct an independent systematic review of research on programs and services intended to provide enhanced support to children and families and prevent foster care placements. The Prevention Services Clearinghouse, developed in accordance with the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) as codified in Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, reviews and rates programs and services as "well-supported," "supported," "promising," or "does not currently meet criteria." The Prevention Services Clearinghouse reviews evidence on mental health, substance abuse, in-home parent skill-based, as well as kinship navigator programs and services.

In 2020, the Clearinghouse continued to select, review, and rate programs and services as quickly as possible to support states' efforts to improve outcomes for children and families through the implementation of FFPSA.

The Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse is led by Abt Associates (Sandra Wilson as Project Director and Erin Bumgarner as Deputy Project Director) in partnership with the University of Denver (Suzanne Kerns as Principal Investigator).



## SPOTLIGHT ON SUPPORTING EVIDENCE BUILDING IN CHILD WELFARE

The overall goal of this project is to increase the number of evidence-supported interventions for the child welfare population. The project does this primarily by conducting rigorous evaluations and by supporting the field in moving toward rigorous evaluations, a significant focus of recent work.

The project focuses on interventions that have been fully implemented previously in at least one setting, have undergone formative testing, and have shown some significant impacts through summative evaluation. One ongoing evaluation is of the Family Unification Program, which provides Housing Choice Vouchers to homeless or unstably housed families involved in the child welfare system to prevent removal of children into out-of-home care or to increase reunification for children in out-of-home care. Plans are underway for evaluations of additional programs relevant to children, youth, and families involved in the child welfare system. The results of all evaluations will be disseminated to meet the needs of ACF, the Children's Bureau, policymakers, practitioners, and other key stakeholders. They will also be published in peer-reviewed journals, to promote inclusion in appropriate evidence reviews.

In 2020, the project focused significant effort on activities to support the child welfare field in moving toward rigorous evaluations. One key activity was the *Evidence-Building Academy for Child Welfare*

*Administrators and Evaluators*. The Academy brought together 50 teams of child welfare agency staff and evaluators and provided them with the tools to work together to accomplish their shared goal: conducting rigorous evaluation that moves evidence forward. Participants were interested in evaluating a wide variety of programs and interventions, including kinship navigator programs, substance abuse programs, court improvement projects, and an array of programs aimed at preventing foster care. Faculty, including leading child welfare researchers and several child welfare agency partners, walked participants through the essentials of evaluation in child welfare settings. The Academy included 15 modules, spread across two webinars and two four-day remote, interactive sessions. Session topics ranged from key evaluation concepts to evaluation planning and design to critically evaluating evidence. Materials developed for the Evidence-Building Academy will be made broadly available.

This project is led by Urban Institute (Marla McDaniel as Project Director and Mike Pergamit as Co-Principal Investigator), with partners at University of Chicago (Mark Courtney as Co-Principal Investigator), Chapin Hall at University of Chicago (Fred Wulczyn), and Child Trends (Karin Malm and Jessica Dym Bartlett).



# HUMAN TRAFFICKING: IMPROVING SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS

Domestic human trafficking involves both forced labor and sexual exploitation of minors and adults, of citizens and lawful permanent residents, and of men and women. To improve services for domestic victims of human trafficking, enhance performance measurement, and guide future evaluation, OPRE has partnered with the Children's Bureau (CB) and the Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP).

## Domestic Human Trafficking and the Child Welfare Population

The overall purpose of this project is to support ACF's Children's Bureau (CB) in its efforts to identify and better assist children and youth served by its programs who are victims of, or are at risk of, domestic human trafficking. Specifically, this project seeks to summarize current understanding of human trafficking and resources addressing human trafficking in the child welfare population in order to inform a research agenda. For example, the project team summarized the risks of trafficking victimization among children who run from foster care in a [report to Congress](#). Additionally, the project supports practice-relevant research studies. The first study will focus on identifying risk and protective factors for, and context of, human trafficking victimization in the child welfare population. The second study will focus on child welfare efforts to identify human trafficking and subsequent service delivery.

This project is led by RTI International (Deborah Gibbs as Project Director, Melissa Dolan as Associate Project Director).

## Evaluation of Domestic Victims of Human Trafficking Demonstration Projects

Building on the previous evaluation of the Domestic Victims of Human Trafficking Demonstration Projects, in 2016 ACF's Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP) in conjunction with FYSB awarded thirteen cooperative agreement grants to implement the Domestic Victims of Human Trafficking (DVHT) Program. The DVHT Program is focused on providing comprehensive case management, direct services and assistance, and re-

ferred to domestic victims of severe forms of human trafficking. Services include, but are not limited to: long-term housing; substance abuse treatment; mental health counseling; educational opportunities; job training and skills; and legal and financial advocacy. Programs must integrate survivor engagement into their case management and service delivery strategies. The intent of the DVHT Program is to build, expand, and sustain organizational and community capacity to deliver trauma-informed, strength-based, and victim-centered services for domestic victims of severe forms of human trafficking through coordinated case management, a system of referrals, and the formation of community partnerships.

Working closely with OTIP, OPRE is overseeing an evaluation of the DVHT Program. Key objectives are to assess grantee site policies, practices, and services, including the focus of this grant program on access to long-term housing options, substance abuse treatment, and integration of survivor-informed services. Findings from the evaluation are anticipated in early 2021.

This project is led by RTI International (Jennifer Hardison-Walters as Project Director, Kathleen Krieger as Associate Project Director).

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deliver trauma-informed, strength-based, and victim-centered services for domestic victims of severe forms of human trafficking through coordinated case management, a system of referrals, and the formation of community partnerships.

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This project is led by RTI International (Jennifer Hardison-Walters as Project Director, Kathleen Krieger as Associate Project Director).

## Evaluation of the National Human Trafficking Hotline Program

The primary objective of this project is to develop and execute an evaluation of the National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH), a 24-hour toll-free line which provides assistance and service referrals to potential victims, service providers, law enforcement officials, and other individuals who contact the NHTH, and also provides time-sensitive tips to appropriate local, state, or federal law enforcement authorities.

Specifically, the evaluation will: describe the activities, procedures, and organization of the NHTH; describe the customer service of the NHTH; describe the immediate outcomes of the NHTH; and explore the creation of one or more new performance measures. Additionally, this project will collect information from individual NHTH users to examine the experiences of individuals who seek assistance from the [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) (NHTH) after their interactions with the NHTH.

This project is led by RTI International (Jennifer Hardison-Walters as Project Director, Kathleen Krieger as Associate Project Director).

## Human Trafficking Policy and Research Analyses Project

This project will conduct research to answer questions identified by the Administration for Children and Families' (ACF's) Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation and Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP) that will inform the development of anti-trafficking strategies, policies, and programs to prevent and respond to human trafficking.

This project will include a variety of research and evaluation

activities such as:

- Designing and conducting original studies that will inform policy, best practices of programs and strategies to prevent and respond to human trafficking, and the development of new research priorities;
- Identifying emerging policy and research questions or topics of special interest to ACF that can be addressed through research activities, such as literature reviews; convening and/or reviewing recommendations from various experts, stakeholders, and federal staff and initiating work based on those recommendations; and identifying sources of policy and data and conducting summaries, assessments, or secondary statistical analyses to answer questions of relevance; and
- Preparation of written products, such as syntheses of research evidence to inform policy and practice; methodological and analytic research documents to advance human trafficking research and evaluation; and, translation of research findings and issues for policymakers and implementers of anti-trafficking programs.

Design and planning are underway for the initial studies to be implemented within this project. Anti-trafficking experts and stakeholders will provide input and guidance at various stages of the project.

The first study will be a focused prevalence inquiry of human trafficking in the US. The overarching goal is to advance knowledge of promising methods for estimating human trafficking prevalence in the US. The second study will be an evaluation of OTIP's Human Trafficking Youth Prevention Education demonstration grant program.

This work is being conducted through a contract to RTI International (Jennifer Hardison-Walters as Project Director, Natasha Latzman as Associate Project Director).

# RECOGNIZING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

While a growing body of research has greatly advanced knowledge of child and family development, more needs to be learned about the diversity of cultural features (e.g., language) among families accessing federal resources and the implications for early care and education programs and policies. DCFD seeks to better represent African American, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native, and other cultural minority groups in studies geared toward improving policy and practice. OPRE has launched several projects that aim to expand the knowledge base and improve resources for these communities.

## National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families

*This project is a joint effort with the Division of Family Strengthening and the Division of Economic Independence.*

The [National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families \(NRCHCF\)](#) leads and supports research concerning three priority areas—poverty reduction and self-sufficiency, healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood, and early care and education—to inform ACF programs and policies to better serve Hispanic families and children. The Center has three primary goals: (1) advancing a cutting-edge research agenda; (2) building research capacity; and (3) implementing an innovative communication and dissemination approach. The Center produced a number of reports, briefs, webinars and other resources this past year to inform the field, including national estimates of a range of [hardships](#), including [food insufficiency](#), during the pandemic, and rates of [health insurance among Hispanic children](#) and [banking access](#) among low-income Hispanic families in recent years, an analysis of [child care costs and of factors that predict use of infant and toddler care](#), national study of [father involvement](#), analysis of [state-level TANF policies](#) that may shape Hispanic families' access to the program, and a [webinar](#) and [guide](#) about how organizations are adapting to support Hispanic families during the pandemic. In addition, the Center continues activities designed to strengthen [emerging scholars](#) to advance understanding about the needs and experiences of low-income Hispanic children and families, including the [Research Scholars Program](#) and a [webinar](#) about navigating the job market during the pandemic.

This project is led by Child Trends (Lina Guzman as Principal Investigator, with Co-Investigators Elizabeth

Wildsmith, Danielle Crosby, Natasha Cabrera, Julia Mendez and Lisa Gennetian).

## Tribal Early Childhood Research Center

*This project is a joint effort with the Division of Family Strengthening.*

The Tribal Early Childhood Research Center (TRC) seeks to address gaps in early childhood research with American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities through partnerships with tribal Head Start, Early Head Start, child care, and home visiting programs. The goals of the research are: (1) to identify needs and/or develop effective practices for early childhood initiatives in tribal communities; (2) to identify, validate, and/or develop culturally meaningful measures of program practices and outcomes for AI/AN families; and (3) to establish peer-learning communities and provide training and professional development to facilitate interest and competencies in research relevant to early childhood initiatives in tribal communities. The TRC also engages in pilot research with AI/AN communities and secondary analyses of existing data on AI/AN children and families.

This project is led by the University of Colorado, Denver (Michelle Sarche as Principal Investigator).



# LINKS TO PROJECTS AND REPORTS

## Cross-Cutting Early Childhood Research

National Survey of Early Care and Education: 2012

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/national-survey-early-care-and-education-nsece-2010-2015>

National Survey of Early Care and Education: 2019

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/national-survey-early-care-and-education-2019-2017-2022>

Variations in Implementation of Quality Interventions (VIQI)

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/variations-implementation-quality-interventions-examining-quality-child-outcomes>

Building and Sustaining the Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce (BASE)

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/early-care-and-education-workforce-support-and-retention>

Supporting the Sustainability of the Q-CCIIT Observation Tool: Q-CCIIT Forward

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/supporting-sustainability-quality-caregiver-child-interaction-infants-and-toddlers-q>

Professional Development Tools to Improve Quality of Caregiver-Child Interactions for Infant and Toddler Care (Q-CCIIT PD Tools)

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/professional-development-tools-improve-quality-infant-toddler-care-q-cciit-pd-tools>

Spotlight: Study of Coaching Practices in Early Care and Education Settings

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/study-coaching-practices-early-care-and-education-settings-2016-2019>

Creating a Culture of Continuous Quality Improvement in Child Care and Head Start Settings (CCL)

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/creating-culture-continuous-quality-improvement-child-care-and-head-start-settings-2016>

Spotlight: Assessing the Implementation and Cost of High Quality Early Care and Education, 2014-2019 (ECE-ICHQ)

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/assessing-implementation-and-cost-high-quality-early-care-and-education-project-ece>

Child Care and Early Education Research Connections

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/child-care-and-early-education-research-connections-2013-2019>

Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium

<https://www.researchconnections.org/content/childcare/federal/cceprc.html>

ACF's National Research Conference on Early Childhood 2020

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/national-research-conference-early-childhood-nrcec>

Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance Cross-Systems Evaluation

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/early-childhood-training-and-technical-assistance-cross-system-evaluation-project-2015>

Network of Infant/Toddler Researchers

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/network-infant-toddler-researchers-nitr>

Human-Centered Design for Human Services (HCD4HS)

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/human-centered-design-human-services-hcd4hs-2018-2021>

Child and Family Data Archive

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/early-care-and-education-data-archive-2018-2023>

Early Care and Education Leadership Study (EXCELS), 2018-2023

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/early-care-and-education-leadership-study-excels-2018-2023>

Next Steps for Rigorous Research on Two-Generation Approaches

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/next-steps-rigorous-research-two-generation-approaches-ns2g-2019-2023>

Infant and Toddler Teacher and Caregiver Competencies

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/infant-and-toddler-teacher-and-caregiver-competencies-2017-2021>

Consumer Education and Parental Choice in Early Care and Education

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/consumer-education-and-parental-choice-early-care-and-education-2020-2025>

Exploring the Opportunity Gap for Young Children Birth to Age 8

<https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/exploring-the-opportunity-gap-for-young-children-from-birth-to-age-eight>

Secondary Analyses of Data on Early Care and Education Grants

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/secondary-analyses-of-data-on-early-care-and-education-grants-2020-2022>

### **Child Care: Raising Quality and Supporting Parental Employment**

Child Care and Development Block Grant Implementation Research and Evaluation Planning Grants Cohort 1, Phase I

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/child-care-development-block-grant-ccdbg-implementation-research-and-evaluation-grants>

Center for Supporting Research on Child Care and Development Block Grant Implementation, 2016-2021

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/center-supporting-research-child-care-and-development-block-grant-ccdbg-implementation>

Child Care Policy Research Partnership Grant Program

<https://www.federalgrants.com/Child-Care-Policy-Research-Partnership-Grants-76230.html>

Child Care and Early Education Policy and Research Analysis Project

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/child-care-and-early-education-policy-and-research-analysis-project-2005-2018>

Early Care and Education Research Scholars: Child Care

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/early-care-and-education-research-scholars-child-care-research-scholars-2000-2019>

Child Care Interstate Background Checks (CC-IBaCs)

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/child-care-interstate-background-checks-cc-ibacs-2018-2021>

Assessing Models of Coordinated Services for Low-Income Children and their Families

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/assessing-models-coordinated-services-low-income-children-and-their-families-2018-2021>

Integrated Approaches to Supporting Child Development and Improving Family Economic Security

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/integrated-approaches-supporting-child-development-improving-family-self-sufficiency>

Understanding the Role of Licensing in Early Care and Education Project (TRLECE)

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/understanding-role-licensing-early-care-and-education-trlece-2019-2024>

Home-Based Child Care Supply and Quality Project

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/home-based-child-care-supply-and-quality-2019-2024>



Child Care Research and Evaluation Capacity Building Center (Child Care ECB Center)

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/child-care-research-and-evaluation-capacity-building-center-child-care-ecb-center-2019>

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Policies Database

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/child-care-and-development-fund-ccdf-policies-database-2008-2018>

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Policies Database Website

<https://ccdf.urban.org/>

## **Head Start and Early Head Start: Enhancing Health and Human Services for Low-Income Families**

Early Head Start Family and Child Experiences Study 2018 and 2020

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/early-head-start-family-and-child-experiences-study-baby-faces-2007-2020>

Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey 2014-2017 and 2019

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/head-start-family-and-child-experiences-survey-faces-1997-2022>

American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey 2014 and 2019

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/american-indian-and-alaska-native-head-start-family-and-child-experiences-survey-ai-0>

Early Care and Education Research Scholars: Head Start

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/early-care-and-education-research-scholars-head-start-graduate-student-research-grants>

Early Head Start University Partnership Grants: Building the Evidence for Infant/Toddler Center-based Programs

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/early-head-start-university-partnerships-building-evidence-base-infant/toddler-center>

Head Start Connects: Individualizing and Connecting Families to Comprehensive Family Support Services

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/head-start-connects-individualizing-and-connecting-families-comprehensive-family>

The Study of Disabilities Services Coordinators and Inclusion in Head Start

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/the-study-of-disability-services-coordinators-and-inclusion-in-head-start-overview>

Understanding Children's Transitions from Head Start to Kindergarten

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/understanding-childrens-transitions-head-start-kindergarten-hs2k-2019-2022>

Conversion of Enrollment Slots from Head Start to Early Head Start

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/conversion-enrollment-slots-head-start-early-head-start>

Head Start REACH: Strengthening Recruitment, Enrollment, and Engagement Practices for Families

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/head-start-recruitment-selection-enrollment-and-retention-especially-vulnerable>

## **Promoting Child Welfare**

National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/national-survey-child-and-adolescent-well-being-nscaw-1997-2014-and-2015-2022>

Spotlight: Supporting Evidence Building in Child Welfare

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/supporting-evidence-building-child-welfare-2016-2021>

Child Maltreatment Incidence Data Linkages

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/child-maltreatment-incidence-data-linkages-cmi-data-linkages-2017-2020>

Definitions and Policies Related to the Incidence of Child Abuse and Neglect and Related Risk

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/definitions-and-policies-related-incidence-child-abuse-and-neglect-and-related-risk>

Understanding Postadoption and Guardianship Instability for Children and Youth Who Exit Foster Care  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/understanding-postadoption-and-guardianship-instability-children-and-youth-who-exit>

Understanding Judicial Decision-Making and Hearing Quality in Child Welfare  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/understanding-judicial-decision-making-and-hearing-quality-child-welfare-2018-2022>

Building Capacity to Evaluate Child Welfare Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/building-capacity-evaluate-child-welfare-community-collaborations-strengthen-and>

Building Capacity to Evaluation Interventions for Youth/Young Adults At-Risk of Homelessness (YARH)  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/building-capacity-evaluate-interventions-youth/young-adults-child-welfare-involvement>

Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/title-iv-e-prevention-services-clearinghouse-2018-2023>

### **Human Trafficking: Improving Services for Survivors**

Domestic Human Trafficking and the Child Welfare Population  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/domestic-human-trafficking-and-child-welfare-population-2016-2021>

Evaluation of Domestic Victims of Human Trafficking Program  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/evaluation-domestic-victims-human-trafficking-program-2016-2021>

Evaluation of the National Human Trafficking Hotline Program  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/evaluation-national-human-trafficking-hotline-program-2016-2021>

Human Trafficking Policy and Research Analyses Project  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/human-trafficking-policy-and-research-analyses-project-2019-2024>

### **Recognizing Cultural Diversity**

National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/center-research-hispanic-children-families-2013-2018-and-2018-2023>

Tribal Early Childhood Research Center  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/tribal-early-childhood-research-center-trc-2016-2020>