

Foster parent child care subsidy receipt in Illinois: Impacts on placement stability.

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Introduction

Integration of many early childhood social service systems in the United States, notably Early Care and Education (ECE) and Child Welfare, is poor.

Efficient system integration has the potential to reduce the estimated \$70 billion annually in indirect costs of child maltreatment (Cicchetti, 2007; Heckman & Masterov, 2007) by streamlining service provision and capitalizing on the potential of early investment to promote healthy development.

Child care subsidies, in particular, may:

- Enable foster parent employment (thereby increasing foster family income), provide respite care, and link parents to information and support (Geen, 2004; Owens-Kane, 2007).
- Encourage selection of center care, which is likely to be more stable and higher quality than other arrangements (Johnson, et al., in press).
- Facilitate positive teacher-child attachments and thereby improve foster parent-child relationships and decrease child and parental stress, if used to support high quality, stable care (Phillips & Lowenstein, 2010).

Foster placement instability compounds the adverse developmental outcomes associated with maltreatment. (Lewis, et al., 2007; Rubin, et al., 2007).

Yet, placement instability is common—one to two thirds of placements disrupt at least once within the first two years (Webster, et al., 2000).

Taken together, child care subsidies have the potential to improve foster placement stability and improve children’s developmental outcomes both directly and indirectly, when subsidized care is stable and of high quality.

Data/ Sample

Obtained by merging data from the Illinois Department of Human Services’ Child Care Tracking System (CTS) and the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services’ (DCFS) Child and Youth Centered Information System (CYCIS).

The Child Care Tracking System contains information on all subsidies issued via the Child Care Development Fund in the State of Illinois, including type of care being subsidized and date of subsidy receipt, for every monthly subsidy payment.

The Child and Youth Information System includes information on children’s placement histories, as well as child demographics including child race, gender, and disability status for all children (age 1-60 months) who entered the child welfare system in the state of Illinois between January 2003 and January 2009.

The merged CCTS/CYCIS Illinois dataset contains a total sample size of 21,320 children. We limited our study sample to the 18,945 children who were in foster care for 3 months or more. Of these children, 3,922 (21%) were also in CCDF subsidized child care arrangements at some point prior to their fifth birthday. However, only 2,028 children (11% of the study sample) received a CCDF subsidy *while they were in foster care*.

Measures

Child Care Tracking System:

Receipt of subsidized child care (Y/N), monthly, from 1-60 months of child age

Children and Youth Centered Information System:

Date of birth/ Age at entry into foster care

***M* = 1.45 years, *SD* = 1.5 years**

Child Gender

52% of the children included in this sample were male

Child Race

52% were African American, 39% were white, 6% were Hispanic, and 3% were categorized as “other” race

Child Disability Status

15.5% had been diagnosed with some sort of disability according to DCFS records.

Type of foster care placement (ever in kinship care arrangement)

41% were in a kinship care arrangement

Total number of placements

11.3% had more than one placement, ranging from one to seven placements

Measures, cont.

Children and Youth Centered Information System, cont.:

Total time in foster care during the removal

***M* = 3 years in foster care (*SD* = 1.7 years)**

Stability is defined as the number of days spent in each placement, on average, as a proportion of total time in foster care, such that 0= no stability or a different placement for every day spent in foster care, and 1= perfect stability or only one placement while in foster care.

Stability ranged from 0.167 to 1 (*M*= 0.951, *SD*= 0.152)

Method

(1) Logistic regressions were utilized to determine the contribution of child gender, race, age at entry into foster care, type of foster care placement (kin vs. other) and disability status to the likelihood that the child would be exposed to subsidized child care during foster care placement.

(2) OLS regression analysis was used to determine the impact of subsidy receipt and number of months receiving subsidy while in foster care on foster placement stability, with controls for race, gender, and disability status.

(3) For children who were in subsidized care, total number of months receiving subsidized childcare and proportion of total months in care in which subsidies were received (months receiving subsidy/ total months in foster care) were added to the OLS regression models to determine whether duration and stability of subsidy receipt affect foster placement stability.

Results

Results (Table 1) show that children who enter foster care at an older age are more likely (27% per year) to receive subsidized child care while in foster care, as are African American children and children of “other” race (54% and 57% more likely than white children). Children in kinship foster care arrangements are also more likely (41% more than those in traditional foster care) to receive subsidized child care. Finally, children with diagnosed disabilities are 42% less likely to receive subsidized child care while in foster care than typically developing children.

Table 1: Contribution of foster care and child factors and likelihood of subsidy receipt in foster care

	Odds Ratio	SE
Age at entry into foster care	1.270***	0.019
Ever in kinship foster care	1.412***	0.070
Black	1.543**	0.080
Hispanic	0.798	0.097
Other	1.568**	0.224
Male	1.022	0.049
Disability	0.583***	0.046

Note: * p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Results (Table 2) also indicate that being in a subsidized child care arrangement while in foster care increases placement stability by 4.4% (p=0.000, Effect size= 0.282). Amount of subsidized child care also predicted placement stability, such that children who received more subsidized care (*b*= 0.014 per year, *SE*= 0.003, *p*=0.000), and children with a larger proportion of months in foster care during which childcare subsidies were received (*b*=0.005, *SE*=0.002, *p*=0.025) had more stable placements.

Interaction terms were included in the model presented in Table 2 to test the joint effect of subsidy receipt and age of entry into foster care, as well as being in a kin foster care arrangement. When subsidy*age of entry was included in the model, the main effect of being in a subsidized child care arrangement on placement stability was no longer significant. Rather, children who entered care at an older age had more stable foster care placements if they were in subsidized child care (*b*=0.025, *SE*= 0.002, *p*=0.000). When subsidy*kinship care was included in the model, the main effect of being in subsidized care remained, and children who were in kin care arrangements had more stable placements if they were also receiving a subsidy (*b*=0.14, *SE*=0.007, *p*=0.042)

Results, cont.

Table 2: Relationship between subsidy receipt in foster care and placement stability

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
Subsidy receipt in foster care	0.044***	0.004
Ever in kinship foster care	-0.007**	0.002
Black	-0.009***	0.002
Hispanic	0.011*	0.005
Other	-0.017*	0.007
Male	0.000	0.002
Disability	-0.004	0.003
Age at entry into foster care	-0.023***	0.001
Constant	0.988***	0.003

Note: * p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Discussion

Only 11% of children who entered foster care before their fifth birthday in Illinois between 2003 and 2009 and remained in care for at least three months received subsidized child care while in their out-of-home foster placements. Yet, receiving subsidized care was associated with more stable foster care placements. In addition, children in kinship care arrangements and older children were more likely to be in subsidized child care, and in both cases, when these children were in subsidized child care, their placements were more stable.

This suggests that increasing eligibility for and uptake of child care subsidies among foster parents, particularly foster parents of preschoolers and kin caregivers, could increase foster placement stability for young children. The mechanism that drives this relationship is unclear. For example, it could be that receiving child care subsidies enables foster parent employment, increasing family income, thereby making foster parents more able to continue fostering the young children in their care. Alternatively, foster parents with higher levels of self-efficacy and motivation might be more likely to both work and seek out child care subsidies, and be more stable. This alternative explanation could be especially true for certain types of caregivers (e.g. kin). Understanding the mechanism of these relationships presents an important avenue for future research.

The data presented here do not include information on the type of care being subsidized (and preclude comparison to non-subsidized child care experiences), which could be important, given that our hypotheses regarding the mechanism at work in the relationship between subsidy receipt and placement stability should hold for higher quality (e.g. licensed, center-based) arrangements moreso than lower quality and informal care. Future analysis of this data will include type of childcare and will utilize survival analysis to determine the effect of subsidy receipt (and timing of that receipt) on the likelihood of foster placement disruption for young children.

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