

**Secondary Analyses of Data on Early Care and Education Grants  
Project Abstracts  
(Awarded September 2020)**

**Arizona State University**

- PI: Dr. Richard Fabes
- *Exclusionary Discipline in U.S. Public School Early Childhood Education*

Although there are many facets to effectively managing early education classrooms, discipline of young children's behavior is one vital element. Discipline is an adult decision, typically in response to a child's behavior or perceived behavior, that is intended to change that behavior. Positive forms of discipline promote academic and socio-emotional development and improve emotional and behavioral regulation. Other forms of discipline are harsh and can harm students' development and catalyze a cascading set of events that negatively impacts a student's life trajectory. In particular, the use of *exclusionary discipline* – defined as discipline that removes a student from the educational setting via expulsion or suspension – has been found to undermine students' health, well-being, and educational achievement and contributes to the “school to prison pipeline” by initiating a transition from the educational to the criminal justice system. Although considerable attention has been given to the use of exclusionary discipline in K-12 schools, less attention has been paid to its use within preschools. This is a critical oversight because young children thrive in a context of stable and supportive relationships with caring adults who teach, nurture, and care for them. Thus, there is a need for more rigorous research to help us better understand its prevalence and the factors that predict its use.

The purpose of this research is to examine the prevalence, disparities, and factors associated with the use of exclusionary discipline in U.S. public school-affiliated preschool programs. We plan to do this by conducting secondary data analyses using data from the 2015-2016 U.S. Department of Education Civil Right Data Collection (CRDC) as well as secondary datasets from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the U.S. Census, and the Children's Opportunity Index (e.g., [www.diversitydatakids.org](http://www.diversitydatakids.org)). Exploratory, single-level, and multilevel statistical models will be used to identify the factors that predict the use of exclusionary discipline at the school-, school district-, census tract-, county-, and state-levels. Outputs from these models will be used to create maps to identify the contexts with high and low rates of exclusionary discipline. These outputs will provide guidance and insight to educators and policymakers who are developing strategies designed to reduce the use of exclusionary discipline in preschool contexts. As such, the impact of this work will provide a basis for new information for researchers, practitioners, and policy makers that can be used to reduce and eliminate the use of exclusionary discipline in the context of early childhood education (and beyond).

## Child Care Aware of America

- PI: Dr. Dionne Dobbins
- *Child Care for Low-Income Families During Nonstandard Hours: Characteristics of Supply and Demand*

A significant portion of young children need child care on evenings, nights, and/or weekends while their parents work nonstandard hour (NSH) schedules. While there is a body of research on NSH child care, little has been written about the cross-section of supply, demand, and neighborhood contexts. Our team seeks to understand the areas in six states with supply gaps for NSH child care, particularly among those who accept Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) vouchers and participate in each state's Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS). We will also create a series of maps so that audiences can visualize the relationships between NSH child care supply and demand. Stakeholders can use these findings to develop innovative solutions that address supply gaps among families who qualify for CCDF and reduce barriers to accessing high-quality, developmentally productive child care.

This project will incorporate three existing datasets that have never been analyzed together, one of which has never been analyzed. Our new Child Care Data Center (CCDC) has provider-level data from six pilot states: Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Oregon, Washington, and Wisconsin. We will examine the demand for NSH child care among families with low incomes from these six states using the 2019 National Study of Early Care and Education (NSECE 2019). Finally, we will utilize the Child Opportunity Index 2.0 (COI 2.0) to examine overall neighborhood variables such as poverty, access to support services, and race/ethnicity.

Our work will build on the work of the Illinois-New York Child Care Research Partnership, which produced a study about the supply and demand of NSH child care for families with low incomes in select areas of the two states (Sandstrom et al., 2018). We plan to use a different dataset to get a better understanding of the number of low-income families who need NSH care. Additionally, we plan to overlay Child Opportunity Index 2.0 scores into our analysis so that we can better understand the types of neighborhoods that have a stronger need for NSH child care.

A key component of a successful research project is to encourage active communication, networking, and collaboration among researchers and policymakers. CCAoA has an extensive history of collaborating with multiple early care and education stakeholders, which include researchers and policymakers at the state and federal levels. In our Mapping the Gap™ work, we collaborated with ten states to create maps that examined child care issues. CCAoA will partner with the Quality Consulting and Research Group (QCRG) to complete the analyses associated with this project. QCRG has extensive experience with: (1) conducting community-based relevant research with teachers, children, and families living in low-income communities and (2) communicating, networking, and collaborating with early child care and education researchers and policymakers.

### **Child Trends, Incorporated**

- PI: Dr. Weilin Li
- *Secondary Analysis of Web-Scraped Data to Examine Effects of the Changing Child Care Market on Parents' Access to Child Care*

Between 2005 and 2017, while the number of licensed child care centers increased by two percent, the number of licensed home-based child care (HBCC) providers dropped by 44 percent. This drop is concerning because HBCC providers often offer settings with characteristics that meet parents' specific needs. As shown by a recent report from the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance (NCECQA; 2019), HBCC providers fill a critical gap in the early care and education (ECE) system for families with lower incomes, parents working nontraditional hours, infants and toddlers, families who speak languages other than English, and children with disabilities.

This study aims to help policymakers understand the implications of the HBCC decline, and hence better understand how to support and regulate the child care market to reduce barriers to ECE access, particularly for families and children most in need of services. Specifically, since families are the direct and ultimate consumers of early care and education, this study aims to examine how families' perceptions of ECE access changed as the number of HBCCs sharply declined. OPRE's framework defines ECE access as a multidimensional construct that involves reasonable effort to locate and enroll a child in an ECE arrangement that is affordable, supports the child's development, and meets parents' needs.

Therefore, this study aims to examine how families perceived any of those four dimensions differently in the wake of the decline. We plan to analyze two national datasets – the Child Care Licensing Studies (2014 and 2017) and National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE; 2012 and 2019) – to obtain state-level change in HBCC providers. We will also utilize data from Google, Yelp, Facebook, and Care.com to extract number of reviews and posts as well as ratings and sentiments in those reviews and posts to estimate parents' perception of ECE access. We will conduct a residualized change model to estimate how parents' perception of ECE access changed as HBCC declined.

## **Child Trends, Incorporated**

- PI: Dr. Doré LaForett
- *What Can Head Start Do to Interrupt Associations between Poverty and Child and Family Outcomes? A Study of Head Start's Family Support Services and Practices.*

The overall objective of this project is to examine the role that Head Start's family support services and practices can play in predicting improved child and family outcomes, which have been largely unexplored to date. Using data from the Family and Child Experiences Survey 2014 (FACES 2014), we hypothesize that increased efforts to connect families with support services will result in increased parent wellbeing and child school readiness over the Head Start year. While drawing from Head Start's roots in bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) that underscore its dual-generation approach, our research questions, hypotheses, and analytic plan are also theoretically grounded in the Family Stress Model (FSM; Conger et al., 1994) identifying family processes as mediating the association between economic factors and child outcomes.

Our study adds family support services and practices as critical factors that could play a role in the resources families have to cope with the stressors associated with living in poverty. We assert that the quantity, range, and facilitation of Head Start's family support services (FSS) that aim to relieve financial strain and promote family functioning will be associated with reduced financial strain, improved parent wellbeing (i.e., self-reported depressive symptoms), and improvements in four of the school readiness outcomes identified in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HS ELOF; Office of Head Start [OHS], 2015): approaches to learning (e.g., attention, persistence), social and emotional development (e.g., problem behaviors and cooperative behaviors in the classroom), language and literacy (e.g., receptive and expressive vocabulary, early literacy), and cognition (e.g., early math, executive function). We also will examine whether the relationship, empowerment, and collaboration (REC) practices (e.g., family-specific knowledge, collaboration, responsiveness, communication, family-focused concerns, respect, professional experience and training, and cultural background) of Head Start's Family Service Workers (FSW) moderate the association between FSS and child and family outcomes. Finally, given that 35% and 29% of children enrolled in Head Start are Latino or Black, respectively, and 28% are from homes where the primary home language is not English (OHS, 2019), we will test whether these associations vary by cultural and linguistic diversity. We will conduct a rigorous set of analyses to examine these questions using FACES 2014 data obtained from FSWs about Head Start FSS and REC practices, direct child assessment and teacher report of school readiness skills, and parent report of their own wellbeing, financial strain, and family background.

We predict that the findings will inform policies and practices reflecting Head Start's significant programmatic investment in supporting families through the requirements outlined in the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS; Administration for Children and Families, 2016); the guidance described in the Head Start Parent, Family, and Child Engagement Framework (HS PFCE Framework; Head Start National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, 2018); and a well-qualified and responsive FSW workforce that directly partners with parents to empower them to achieve the goals they set for themselves, their families, and their children to be successful.

## **Cornell University**

- PI: Dr. John Sipple
- *(In)equities in Early Care and Education Access: Interactions among Policies, Settings, and Community Contexts, 2007-2021*

Not all families have access to the high-quality early care and education arrangements they need to support young children’s development and working parents’ participation in the labor force. A large contributor to this problem is the uneven supply of child care throughout the United States, especially for infants and toddlers and families in rural communities (Jessen-Howard et al., 2018; Malik, et al., 2018). To address the need for access to high quality early care and education, public policies and funding have been created including child care subsidies and prekindergarten. Child care subsidies in particular are among the federal government’s largest investments in early care and education, while state funds for prekindergarten have grown in recent years.

Although these policies have roots at the federal and state level, the ways in which they are implemented in individual communities can vary greatly. Most research tends to focus on examining one set of policies (e.g., subsidies or prekindergarten expansion), without taking into account the complex child care landscape where policies are implemented and may interact in (unintended) ways that impact families’ experiences of child care choice. More work is needed to better understand how policy interactions and local level variability relate to desired outcomes such as equal access to high quality early care and education programs for all families.

Our research will analyze the equity implications of access to infant and toddler child care in relation to multiple early care and education policies, and across various contexts (including community wealth, geography [e.g., rural, urban]) over time.

The specific objectives for this work are as follows:

1. Explore how local supply of infant and toddler child care relates to multiple, interacting factors including early education policy variation (prekindergarten implementation and subsidy administration), community characteristics (rural/urban), and large-scale economic fluctuations; and
2. Better understand how local child care capacity relates to elementary academic outcomes for children over time.

We investigate these objectives with 15 years of data from four organizations including the NYS Education Department, the NYS Office of Children and Family Services, the National Center for Education Statistics, and the U.S. Census Bureau. The time frame of data includes significant economic challenges, including a national recession and the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning that these large scale events can be taken into account. Through a novel linking of these data, this research builds on previous research by exploring these patterns in relation to multiple early care and education policies, how these patterns vary for different segments of the early care and education system (especially family child care), and for rural communities. The findings will inform “community aware” early education policy development.

**Education Development Center, Inc.**

- PI: Dr. Clare Waterman Irwin
- *Child Care Coverage and Parents' Work Schedule Alignment: How Do Parents Address Gaps?*

In this secondary analysis of the 2012 and 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) data, we plan to conduct rigorous research that will address key questions of interest to federal and state Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) leaders and child care decision makers. We will provide analyses to address questions about variations in parents' access to child care that meets the needs of their work schedules, the choices parents make about how to address gaps between child care coverage and work schedules, and the factors that influence the presence of coverage gaps and the ways parents choose to address them.

Our study will focus on the child care coverage needs of low-income working parents, who face a greater number of challenges to accessing child care that supports their workforce participation, including unpredictable work schedules, nontraditional hours of employment, and availability of care. In particular, we will examine the association between a parent's receipt of child care subsidy and the existence of coverage gaps as well as the choices parents make about addressing such gaps. Given that the 2014 reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act included a number of provisions aimed at increasing access to care and helping parents make informed choices about child care, we will analyze whether trends related to coverage gaps and choices about how to address such gaps changed between 2012 and 2019.

Importantly, our analyses will address the full range of ages served by CCDF and included in the NSECE data, including school-age children (kindergarten through age 12), who are often omitted from studies examining child care access and working parents' needs. In so doing, our study will address a key gap in existing knowledge; namely, how families of children ages *birth through 12* are able to access child care that aligns with their work needs, and the factors that influence the choices they make about addressing coverage gaps. Findings from this study can help inform CCDF administrators' and other child care decision makers' knowledge about barriers to access and promote the development of policies that can reduce such barriers. Findings will also help address a gap in the literature related to the child care needs of the school-age population.

**Georgia State University Research Foundation, Inc.**

- PI: Dr. Ann DiGirolamo
- *Understanding Factors that Influence Referral-Making and Referral Uptake with Early Head Start*

The Early Head Start (EHS) program is now in its 25th year of implementation as a national early care and education (ECE) initiative under the leadership of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF). Over the course of more than two decades, EHS has served millions of low-income children and their families and supported high quality ECE within extraordinarily diverse communities across the country. This study will fill a critical gap in the literature related to referral activities of EHS programs.

The 2018 Baby FACES presents a renewed chance to reveal the inner workings of EHS programs, gain insights into the experiences of families and staff, and develop policy, program and funding responses to address best practices and areas of need. The research team at Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC) will conduct secondary data analysis of the Baby FACES 2018 data set in order to support ACF in furthering its research and programmatic goals and inform the broader field of early care and education (ECE). The study focuses on referral-making processes and referral connections among children and families who are at-risk within EHS programs. This study seeks to understand which EHS families are being referred to services based on level and type of risk, including demographic and other risk-related indicators (e.g., absent parent, parent with substance use issue). This study will examine the level of need and how it aligns with the rates of referral and referral connection. Additionally, GHPC will conduct novel research on the following variables that may moderate referral-making and referral uptake: urbanicity of the EHS program, quality of staff relationships with families, and the types of training staff have received. GHPC will employ a range of data methods to develop a family level risk index, analyze descriptive statistics, explore variables through regression models, and test moderating factors.

Early Head Start is a large and complex program that operates with aligned goals and uniform program standards. As a core component of EHS, referral-making and service connection are viewed as critical to family success. Because limited research exists on referrals within the EHS context, this analysis would have important implications for the development of future resources for EHS programs and staff. By understanding referral mechanisms and their utilization, ACF and experts in the field will have current information on how at-risk families are being connected to supports in the community and what factors may affect the success of the referral process. The findings may prompt further analysis and research related to staff roles, training needs, and assessment of family and child needs over the course of EHS enrollment and create opportunities for specific areas of technical assistance for EHS programs. This groundbreaking study will inform the next steps in research and provide important discussion points for diverse leaders across the ECE field.

## **Iowa State University**

- PI: Dr. Ji Young Choi
- *Head Start Children's Multiple Care Experiences: Patterns, Partnerships, and Effects on School Performance*

*Care multiplicity*, defined here as more than one concurrent early childhood education (ECE) experience, is common among children attending Head Start (HS). Yet, we know little about who experiences it nor what effects such experiences have for children's school performance. Understanding HS children's utilization of other publicly-funded center-based ECE programs has particular policy relevance given the capacity of such information to inform systematic collaboration and coordination to improve outcomes.

For over three decades Iowa has invested in coordinated early childhood services, including universal state-funded preschool, a comprehensive two-generation program for low-income families, and an integrated data system (IDS) designed to use administrative data in a systematic approach for social problem solving and continuous quality improvement through data-driven decision-making. This IDS was recently used for a comprehensive statewide needs assessment conducted with funding from a Preschool Development Grant B-5 (PDG) to document unduplicated counts of children across multiple ECE programs with administrative data from public health, education, and child welfare to study gaps in ECE access.

Capitalizing on these investments and the momentum generated by Iowa's PDG, this study will integrate HS enrollment and program partnership data into the representative cohort study of over 27,000 Iowa kindergartners used for PDG that already includes administrative datasets covering birth through grade 1. Using these data, this study will provide the following information for Iowa's children who attended HS: (1) patterns of care multiplicity; (2) child and family characteristics relating to care multiplicity experiences; (3) effects of care multiplicity on children's school performance (risk vs. on-target status) at kindergarten and first grade (i.e., literacy, math, attendance, and suspension history); and (4) the role of program partnership between HS and co-serving ECE programs on school performance.

Our study sample (expected  $N = 2,800$ ) will represent children who were born in Iowa, attended HS the year prior to kindergarten and attended kindergarten in Iowa in 2017-2018 (SY 2018). Analytic approaches include basic descriptive statistics as well as logistic regression and propensity score analysis to address selection bias in ECE programs.

Understanding the nature and extent of care multiplicity among HS enrollees will inform strategic approaches to improve quality programming for low-income children by highlighting patterns of care that best relate to school readiness outcomes in kindergarten. Specifically, findings from this research could be used to inform ACF priorities, topics including (a) building the supply of high-quality care and education, and (b) improving coordination and collaboration across early childhood and other social service programs. Our study is also situated within a strong partnership of state stakeholders across program types, with experience in cross-systems communication and collaboration among ECE program leaders, researchers, and policymakers. Such networking capacity means that our findings have strong likelihood of influencing direct changes in state programs in the immediate and long-term future.

## Johns Hopkins University

- PI: Dr. Lieny Jeon
- *Reducing Young Children's Chronic Absenteeism: How to Maximize Collaboration across Early Childhood Programs*

Children's regular attendance in early childhood programs is critical, in particular for those living in poverty, who are less likely to have resources for learning at home. Many cities in the U.S. devote considerable financial and human resources to early childhood programs to improve disadvantaged children's school readiness. However, there is a lack of research investigating how barriers to access, coordination across programs, and effectiveness of collaboration associate with children's long-term chronic absenteeism. This is essential, as chronic absenteeism is associated with long- and short-term detriments in and out of school, and is more common among disadvantaged children, who stand to gain the most from early childhood program attendance.

To address this gap, the project will analyze secondary data from the Baltimore City's Early Childhood Data Collaborative (ECDC), which houses multiple entities' early childhood longitudinal data. The ECDC comprises data from the Baltimore City Health Department (including vital records and infant and toddler program participation), Early Head Start, Head Start, and Baltimore City Public Schools (including attendance, public prekindergarten enrollment, and the prenatal period to age five wraparound service participation). By integrating secondary datasets from the ECDC entities, the goals of this project are (a) to understand children's patterns of usage in various early childhood service programs from the prenatal period to age five, and (b) to explore how those experiences are related to children's chronic absenteeism from early childhood through 6th grade. The ECDC partners, including Head Start, are committed to addressing early chronic absenteeism because they see it as a critical strategy to reduce the achievement gap between low-income and racially minoritized learners and their peers. Using a cohort of children from birth (born between 2007-2008) through 6th grade (2019-2020), we will address the following research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of families and children who utilize various early childhood services from the prenatal period to age five?
2. What are the common early childhood service pathways that children experience from the prenatal period to age five in urban settings, and how do they differ by demographic characteristics?
3. Are service pathways differently associated with children's chronic absenteeism over time through 6th grade after accounting for child and family demographics? For example, is long-term chronic absenteeism less likely for children who attend Head Start *and* receive other early childhood services than for their peers who attended Head Start only?
4. What factors predict higher rates of chronic absenteeism among Head Start participants?

The findings will be disseminated in multiple formats to help researchers, practitioners and policymakers understand how to maximize collaboration across early childhood programs and reduce chronic absenteeism in the short and long term.

**University of Arizona**

- PI: Dr. Melissa Barnett
- *Typologies of Family Partnerships in Head Start: Links to Children's School Readiness*

Children from economically disadvantaged families are at risk for starting school behind their more affluent peers. Early Care and Education (ECE) settings, especially Head Start, provide support and resources that contribute to positive developmental outcomes for many preschool age children. The positive impacts of Head Start programs on young children's development may be strengthened when programs engage with families. Family engagement, including collaborative family-school partnerships, is increasingly the focus of ECE policy, professional development, and quality improvement systems. However, teacher, center, and child and family characteristics linked to variability in the quality of these partnerships, and how family-school partnership quality is associated with children's acquisition of school readiness skills, remains largely unexamined.

In this secondary data analysis study, we draw data from the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) 2014-2015 to focus on the quality of partnerships between teachers and families, as a key potential resource to improve the school readiness of children enrolled in Head Start. We address three specific goals: (1) examine typologies, or profiles, of family partnership quality, as reported by parents and teachers; (2) examine center, teacher, and child and family characteristics associated with family partnership quality typologies; and (3) identify the extent to which family partnership quality is linked to academic school readiness skills.

This project has the potential to identify critical levers for future policy and program development aimed at implementing the Head Start Parent Family and Community Engagement Framework (PFCE) to promote positive goal-oriented family engagement, and ultimately to facilitate children's school readiness. To help meet this goal, the project includes a number of specific dissemination activities aimed at practitioners, policy makers and researchers.

## University of Connecticut

- PI: Dr. Caitlin Lombardi
- *Early Experiences of Ecological Risk and Children's Development: Understanding the Moderating Role of Early Head Start on Children and Families*

A large body of research has documented the developmental risks associated with economic disadvantage during early childhood. Growing evidence from neuroscience, psychology, and economics suggests that these income-based gaps in children's development emerge by age 3 (Heckman & Masterov, 2007; Johnson et al., 2016). The Early Head Start (EHS) program was designed to support disadvantaged families in an effort to reduce these gaps. Understanding how the EHS program can support children and families living with different types of ecological risks offers the opportunity to inform the targeting and delivery of services to best support children and families.

Led by Dr. Caitlin Lombardi at the University of Connecticut and Dr. Kyle DeMeo Cook at St. John's University, the goal of this project is to strengthen our understanding of the ecological risks facing children from low-income families, and the implications of EHS to support these families. We will accomplish this goal by addressing three aims. First, utilizing a person-centered approach, we will identify patterns of family ecological risks among the EHS population when children were 1 year old and examine how child characteristics and EHS experiences (type, dosage, and quality) are differentially associated with the identified risk profiles. For this question, we are particularly interested in how EHS experiences vary among children experiencing different types of family ecological risks. Second, we will examine how the ecological risk profiles are associated with children's development and parenting quality at age 3. This longitudinal view will provide an understanding of how the ecological risk profiles are differentially associated with aspects of child and parent outcomes. Third, we will consider how EHS experiences from ages 1 to 3 moderate associations between the ecological risk profiles and children's development and parenting quality. Here, our goal is to understand how EHS supports children and families in the context of different family ecological risks.

The research will use data from the EHS Family and Child Experiences study (Baby FACES; Vogel & Boller, 2009-2012), a longitudinal dataset providing information on EHS children, families, EHS professionals (teachers and/or home visitors), and programs. Baby FACES is especially strong for understanding children's earliest developmental contexts and provides multifaceted, longitudinal data on their home and EHS contexts consisting of direct observations of children's development and parenting quality, observational assessments of EHS quality using reliable and well-validated measures, and rich descriptive reports of children's home environments. Importantly, Baby FACES focuses exclusively on low-income families with young children, a population that is of critical interest for developmental science and public policy. This interdisciplinary study will seek to contribute to our understanding of children's development and parenting within low-income families while illuminating the specific roles that EHS may play in best supporting children and their families. Findings will inform the design and targeting of EHS services and help to inform other programs and policies aimed at supporting low-income children's development and the capacities of their parents.

## University of Delaware

- PI: Dr. Martha J. Buell
- *Preventing Expulsion and Suspension through Policy Alignment and Cohesion (PEASPAC): Linkages between Federal Guidance, State CCDF Plans, State Child Care Licensing, QRIS, and State Pre-K Policies*

This project will provide an analysis of the alignment and cohesion between the federal CCDF policy guidance and state-level policy actors. Specifically, the project will assess the vertical alignment of state CCDF plans with the federal guidance on key policy components for preventing exclusion through suspension and expulsion, vertical alignment of the state CCDF plan with state child care licensing policy, state Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) standards, and state Pre-K policies; and horizontal cohesion across the state-level units. Nationally, studies have demonstrated that suspension and expulsion are approaches to discipline that are overly applied to boys, children of color and children with disabilities, with devastating consequences. Thus, in 2016, the CCDBG state plan template changed with the addition of section 2.5.6. The addition reads, “Describe the Lead Agency’s policies to prevent the suspension and expulsion of children from birth to age 5 in child care and other early childhood programs receiving CCDF funds (98.16(ee)1), including how those policies are shared with families, providers, and the general public.”

Despite this guidance document, how states addressed this new section of their state plans has proved to vary widely. Furthermore, while the state plans provide guidance for spending federal funds, how these plans will be actualized depends on the policies in place in up to three different state-level policy units - child care licensing, QRIS, and state Pre-K - creating a complex policy context where policy alignment and coherence will be key to meeting the federal goal of reduced suspension and expulsion. Therefore, the intent of this secondary data analysis is threefold:

1. Analyze state CCDF plans according to the policy statements offered by HHS/ACF regarding key policy components that support eliminating suspension and expulsion;
2. Assess the vertical alignment between the state CCDF plan and state child care licensing policy, state QRIS policy, and state pre-K policy;
3. Assess and rate the cohesion of state plan and state-level child care licensing policy, state QRIS policy, and state Pre-K/preschool policy regarding discipline practices including exclusionary discipline- suspension and expulsion.

## **University of Massachusetts Boston**

- PI: Dr. Songtian Zeng
- *Challenging Behavior and Social-emotional Competence for Children in Head Start Classrooms: Is there Evidence of Teacher Implicit Bias?*

Head Start teachers serve a population of young children from low socioeconomic and increasingly diverse backgrounds. They have reported needing support responding to challenging behavior and promoting positive social-emotional development. Despite recent efforts from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to provide evidence-based social-emotional interventions and curriculum, teachers' own perceptions and expectations toward children may affect the fidelity of implementation and Head Start's social justice mission. Preliminary evidence suggests teacher implicit racial bias may be prevalent in preschools. However, these insights are neither based on updated national representative datasets, nor specifically focused on the unique circumstance of Head Start teachers. New insights are needed to verify if potential teacher bias is prevalent at the national level, and to inform teacher professional development, reduce education disparities, and promote student outcomes.

The goals of this study are to 1) understand to what extent implicit teacher bias exists in the context of challenging behavior and social-emotional competence in classrooms; and 2) to identify malleable factors that may promote Head Start teachers' equitable perception toward students' challenging behaviors and social-emotional competence (e.g., beyond the narrow focus of race and gender). This secondary data analysis study is based on the 2014 Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) dataset, which is the most updated dataset available with a diverse sample of children from historically marginalized groups, and rich information at the child, teacher, family, and classroom levels. FACES 2014 is ideal as it provides a national, representative sample of Head Start teachers' perceptions about children's challenging behaviors and social-emotional competence in their own classrooms for the first time. Methodologically, applying weighted descriptive analysis and hierarchical modeling with a large national Head Start sample enables us to model the dynamic and interacting factors, and provide more precise estimates of Head Start teachers' potential implicit bias toward subgroups of students in daily context, as opposed to control lab settings with children actors.

This investigation provides new insights related to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF)'s concern regarding potential policy and practices to "improve teacher and caregiver practice through professional development"; and to "support the unique strengths and needs of diverse and traditionally understudied populations of children, families, and early care and education teachers/providers." This study may not only expand our knowledge of other potential bias beyond the racial dimension, but better estimate the malleable factors that contribute to Head Start teachers' perception about children's challenging behaviors and social-emotional competence in the social-ecological context. Findings will inform teacher preparation and professional development to promote social well-being of children, as well as policy at the national level to support anti-bias education.

## **University of Missouri**

- PI: Dr. Irma Arteaga
- *Policy Influences on Early Care and Education*

In this study, we compare early care and education arrangements from 2012 to 2019 using two waves of the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE). While awareness of the importance of early education has been growing over the last two decades, concerns about affordability, quality, and access, especially for children from economically-disadvantaged families and English language learners, continue to challenge policy makers at the federal, state, and local levels. We take advantage of the release of the 2019 NSECE data to examine the consequences of two main policy or programmatic changes that have occurred between 2012 to 2019.

One policy is the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) in 2014. CCDF provides federal money to states and territories to subsidize the cost of child care for low-income families. The new law made significant changes to eligibility requirements and redetermination criteria for child care subsidies, making it likely that more families might be eligible and participate. Three aspects of the new law will be examined: higher-income eligibility thresholds, longer recertification periods, and fewer barriers for Hispanic and non-native English speakers. Because some states were already implementing some of these policies, the new law creates state variation in policy implementation between 2012 and 2019. Our work extends recent descriptive and correlational literature on the 2014 CCDF law by leveraging the longitudinal nature of the data and using quasi-experimental techniques. The main questions to be answered are (1) What effects these changes have made to the characteristics of children enrolled in various early care and education settings and (2) Is there evidence of differential impact among children from the lowest-income families or those residing in high-poverty communities and/or areas with higher percentages of Hispanic children?

The second policy of interest is the decision at the state or local level to increase the availability of prekindergarten (pre-k) classes in public school settings. Pre-k classes located in public school settings are often free or heavily subsidized and research suggests pre-k located in public schools may be more effective than home- or center-based programs at enhancing school readiness. Yet a lack of flexibility in scheduled hours may limit their attractiveness to some parents and the growth of this free or low-cost early care option may ultimately reduce the number of care slots available in other settings. We specifically seek to answer the following questions: (1) How do the characteristics of young children differ across early care and education settings as the availability of pre-k slots in public schools varies over time and within states? (2) Is there evidence of differential impact among children from the lowest-income families or those residing in high-poverty communities and/or areas with higher percentages of Hispanic children? For both inquiries, our focus is on children not yet in kindergarten.

To answer our research questions, we first document and compare the characteristics of young children attending various early care and education settings for both the 2012 and 2019 cohorts. We then will use regression analyses including multinomial probit equations, difference-in-difference analyses and Oaxaca decompositions to better understand the factors predicting the family's choice of main care setting. Investigations will allow us to test whether the two policy changes had effects on the decision to enroll in home-, center-, and Head Start settings in particular. Answers to these questions will assist the Administration for Children and Families in learning more about changes in the early care environment over time especially for economically-disadvantaged and English learning children.

## **University of Washington**

- PI: Dr. Holly S. Schindler
- *A Portrait of Fathers in Early Head Start: Two Decades Later*

In 1997, the Early Head Start (EHS) Father Study took place in an effort to better understand the characteristics of social and biological fathers in EHS communities, fathers' roles in families and child development, and the ways fathers participated in EHS services (Boller et al., 2006). Findings from that historic study led to notable shifts in programmatic and policy efforts aimed at including fathers in early care and education. In the two decades since the original evaluation, EHS has been a leader in working to make programs more father friendly, and the Administration for Children and Families has supported several father-focused initiatives (e.g., ACF, 2018; Burwick et al., 2004; Fatherhood Research and Practice Network, 2013). There has also been a growing effort to increase father engagement in a wide range of home visiting programs (Bellamy et al., 2020; Guterman et al., 2018; Schindler et al., 2017). In spite of these efforts, challenges engaging fathers in early care and education programs remain, and up-to-date data about EHS fathers is critically needed. This study will extend previous research by examining the characteristics and experiences of present-day fathers in EHS using nationally representative data from the EHS Family and Child Experiences Survey 2018 (Baby FACES 2018). As a first step, this project will use descriptive analyses to produce a comprehensive portrait of fathers in EHS families. Second, lessons from this study will reveal the program experiences of fathers in EHS. The third set of analyses will investigate predictors of fathers' participation in EHS home-based programs using multilevel logistic regression. Findings from this study will provide insights into how the early care and education community could further reduce barriers to access for fathers, support fathers' unique strengths, and design effective strategies for meeting the needs of fathers and their families.

## Urban Institute

- PI: Dr. Erica Greenberg
- *Gateway to a Qualified Workforce: The Role of Minimum Preservice Qualifications Requirements in Early Care and Education*

This project aims to inform efforts to recruit a qualified early care and education (ECE) workforce with new evidence on the most widely used tools available: minimum preservice qualifications requirements. Set by state child care regulations, the Head Start Act of 2007, and prekindergarten policies nationwide, these requirements cover all sectors of early care and education and predate Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), large-scale coaching initiatives, and other contemporary quality investments. Literature has documented substantial variation in requirements across states and sectors. But little is known about how much the *relative* stringency of requirements—within states, among ECE sectors and K–12 education, and over time—shapes the ECE workforce.

This study will link data from the 2012 and 2019 waves of the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) with an innovative 50-state qualifications database constructed for this study. The research team will use these sources to answer the following questions: (1) How much do minimum ECE preservice qualifications requirements vary? (2) How do minimum preservice qualifications requirements in child care relate to those in state prekindergarten and K–12 education? (3) How do minimum preservice qualifications requirements relate to the training and experience, diversity, motivation, and compensation of the ECE workforce?

Analyses for the first two questions will focus on rich quantitative description, including summary and distributional statistics, while the third research question calls for more advanced methods, including multivariate regression and quasi-experimental modeling to provide causal evidence on how minimum preservice qualifications requirements shape the ECE workforce. Main findings will be nationally representative. Analyses will also be replicated to focus on educators in programs funded by the Child Care and Development Fund, Head Start, and Early Head Start, given the importance of these programs for vulnerable children and families and concerns that differences in entry requirements across sectors leave these programs with the least qualified workforce.

Answers to these research questions are relevant to federal and state policymakers and administrators, including those considering the costs and benefits of changes to state licensing regulations and those involved in future reauthorization of the Head Start Act. The study will be pre-registered and will result in a comprehensive report of findings, a user-friendly policy brief, and broad dissemination through a blog post and conference presentations. With extensive expertise in the ECE workforce, diverse populations of children and families, and research dissemination, the study team is well qualified to put findings into the hands of those who need them while contributing to the broader network of grantees conducting secondary analyses of data on early care and education.

## Urban Institute

- PI: Dr. Heather Sandstrom
- *More Than Babysitters: An In-Depth Look at the Characteristics, Work Experiences, and Retention of Infant-Toddler Teachers in the US*

Most children under age 3 with working mothers are in some form of non-parental care. Although the majority are in home-based care settings, in recent years, more families have turned to center-based care for their infants and toddlers. Although young children spend a significant amount of time in non-parental care, and during a critical period in their development, past studies show infant-toddler care is of low-to-moderate quality and difficult to access in many communities. The supply of high-quality care cannot keep up with demand. At the heart of the issue of quality care is the early childhood workforce. A healthy and stable workforce is a critical component of high-quality early care and education. Yet studies examining the well-being of child care workers show high levels of economic insecurity, depression, anxiety, and stress. Many also suffer from poor physical health because of constant exposure to infectious diseases, environmental hazards, and musculoskeletal injury. High staff turnover is common, often attributed to low pay and poor benefits. The concern is that teachers' own well-being can affect the quality of their interactions with children and children's engagement in learning.

We use restricted-use data from the 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) to closely examine the characteristics, qualifications, and job experiences of this understudied population: infant and toddler teachers in child care centers. The NSECE included a nationally representative sample of child care centers and surveyed center-based classroom staff. We will perform descriptive analyses to examine the qualifications and diversity of infant-toddler teachers in 2019 compared with 2012. During this period, states rolled out extensive efforts to improve the supply and quality of infant-toddler care under CCDBG reauthorization, as well as other efforts to professionalize the broader early childhood workforce. Multivariate analyses aim to predict factors associated with infant-toddler teachers' health, mental health, and turnover intentions. Predictors include teacher qualifications and training, aspects of job quality (e.g., work environment, professional development supports, and job stressors), center characteristics (e.g., funding sources, accreditation, participation in a quality rating and improvement system), and community characteristics (e.g., poverty density, female employment rate). We also examine characteristics of centers with high staff retention (i.e., no turnover) and characteristics of centers with high turnover to identify possible policy levers.

The findings will provide important information to federal policymakers, state administrators, and local service providers as they seek to recruit and retain a qualified infant-toddler workforce. As state child care administrators work to address the concern about infant-toddler care supply and quality to comply with new federal regulations, we will disseminate our research in user-friendly products to provide them with critical evidence to inform their decision-making.

## **Urban Institute**

- PI: Dr. Diane Schilder
- *Potential Demand for Nontraditional Work Hours Secondary Analysis Research*

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

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

## Utah State University

- PI: Dr. Lisa Boyce
- *Investigating Child Learning: Understanding Dual-language Environments (INCLUDE)*

Bilingualism has practical benefits in an increasingly globalized world, as well as cognitive benefits essential for academic achievement. Children who are Dual Language Learners (DLLs) in the Head Start program may develop English and their home language in distinctly different patterns. Think, for example, of a DLL student who excels at communicating in both English and Spanish compared to a child with strong Spanish and emerging English skills. While Head Start program policy clearly requires classrooms to support DLL students, a “one-size-fits-all” approach to support DLL students will not meet the needs of this diverse group.

Research indicates there are meaningful differences in school readiness indicators between groups of children who have different patterns of Spanish-English dual language development. Findings indicate that children who have the most even proficiency between languages reap the most benefits. While this reiterates the importance of maintaining home languages while supporting English growth, it is unclear how early care environments influence the joint development of English and Spanish.

Individually testing environmental impacts on each language separately may inadvertently miss critical information about the “whole” DLL student. The approach in this project is innovative as it considers the impacts of early care environments on both English and Spanish development simultaneous rather than inspecting each language individually. Understanding the complex interplay between home and classroom influences and the simultaneous development of two languages will provide opportunities for programs and families to work together to individualize services by *supporting strengths and needs* for this unique population.

The current project will use an existing data set that is nationally representative of Head Start programs to achieve the following objectives:

1. Identify aspects of home and Head Start environments that impact the simultaneous development of English and Spanish language and later impacts on behavioral outcomes.
2. Engage in active conversation with policy makers and practitioners at a local Head Start partner site, to develop and disseminate person-centered approaches that engage, support, and meet the unique needs of DLL students.

**Wellesley College**

- PI: Dr. Nancy L. Marshall
- *Parental Work Schedules, CCDF Policies & Child Care Arrangements in Low-Income Families*

CCDF's primary goal is to support the economic security of low-income families and the health, safety and positive development of young children by providing resources that help eligible low-income families to access quality child care. When parents in these families are employed, they are more likely to be in low-wage jobs characterized by nonstandard schedules and/or unpredictable schedules. Formal child care programs most often offer care during standard hours and rely on predictable schedules to maintain ratios and manage costs. This creates a potential mismatch with the parental work schedules of many low-income families seeking to access quality child care, which can be a barrier to their employment and to their children's health, safety and positive development. CCDF policies can potentially ameliorate these challenges, by including relatives as eligible providers, including job search as a qualifying activity, continuing subsidies after a job loss and providing more notice for adverse changes to a subsidy, by not requiring minimum work hours for eligibility, and by subsidizing child care to cover travel to/from work and to allow overnight workers to rest during the day.

This project uses data from the NSECE 2019 and the CCDF Policies Database to provide updated information on the extent of the challenges posed by parental work schedules, the implications of parental work schedules for low-income families' ability to access quality child care and the impact of parental decisions around type of child care and subsidy use on child-care-related work disruptions and child care stability. In addition, combining the NSECE 2019 and the CCDF Policies Database allows us to examine the potential role of state variations in CCDF policies and practices after the 2014 Reauthorization in ameliorating the barriers faced by low-income families. The results of this research can inform state-level policies and practices and contribute to our knowledge base with respect to low-income working families in need of child care for their children under the age of 6.