

Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Implementation Research and Evaluation Planning Grants FY2016 - Phase I/Cohort I

Evaluating Child Care Reforms in Illinois

Organization: Illinois Department of Human Services, Office of Innovation, Strategy and Performance

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The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 incorporated several statutory changes intended to promote child well-being. One of those changes, a longer redetermination period, was intended to lead to longer program participation spells, more stable usage of high quality child care arrangements, and more stable parental employment spells. Identifying the actual effects of the new redetermination policy is a priority for the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and its partner agencies.

With funding from this planning grant, IDHS will build on its existing partnership with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago to develop a comprehensive research and evaluation agenda to answer whether and how extending the CCDF redetermination period from six months (three months if self-employed) to twelve months will affect broad outcomes in three domains: 1) parental employment; 2) continuity of care, and; 3) access to child care quality. Funding from this planning grant will be used to design a comprehensive, well defined, and achievable research plan to answer those questions. The plan will draw on the Illinois Early Learning Council's research agenda and will incorporate feedback from Illinois program and policy experts in the ECE field as well as technical research experts. This process will ensure that grant activities are informed by a diversity of critical stakeholders both within DHS and in partner organizations so that deliverables and products are methodologically rigorous, optimally policy- relevant, and can provide actionable policy recommendations that reflect the realities of Illinois' complex early learning and development system.

IDHS will leverage resources and deliverables from this planning grant to enhance its own internal capacity to manage and conduct CCDF research and evaluation. Four main outcomes are expected under this grant: 1) A literature review; 2) An inventory of data sources; 3) Creation of a research advisory committee; and 4) Development and validation of an evaluation research proposal. These components of the planning strategy will provide IDHS with a clear, high- quality, and actionable research plan to evaluate the impacts of the new redetermination policy on Illinois children and families participating in the Child Care Assistance Program.

Georgia CCDF Evaluation Project (GCEP)

Organization: Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

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The goal of GCEP is to gauge the effectiveness of select policies, programs, and services outlined in the State Plan, as developed by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), the lead agency for CCDF in Georgia, and its partners.

DECAL will use the CCDBG Implementation Research and Evaluation Planning Grant to create a research agenda to help ensure that Georgia's low-income families (eligible for subsidized child care) have access to high-quality early care and education services.

GCEP includes two phases, the first of which is funded by this current grant opportunity. (Phase II may be funded by subsequent grant opportunities). Phase I focuses on four objectives to: 1) develop a coherent research agenda for Georgia's CCDF plan; 2) use administrative data to conduct preliminary research and data analyses on select CCDF goals; 3) implement specific process evaluations of key CCDF initiatives; and 4) plan for a large-scale, rigorous CCDF evaluation that will measure the impact of CCDF policies and programs on access to high quality child care. These objectives align with ACF priorities of this grant program to: 1) plan policy-relevant research based on evaluation of policies in response to the CCDBG Act of 2014; 2) build capacity in research and evaluation; and 3) address issues of current relevance to CCDF decision makers.

Phase I evaluation activities focus on initiatives related to three DECAL CCDF goals embedded in Georgia's 2016–2018 CCDF State Plan. Georgia's three CCDF goals are: 1) Reduce the cost of higher quality care for children and families receiving subsidies; 2) Raise the quality of teachers working with specific populations; 3) Implement new, innovative initiatives that build on other successful Georgia early education programs. Each of these state goals has specific initiatives designed to ensure that the goals are met. The evaluation activities will focus on how successful the initiatives are in accomplishing these goals.

The proposed project will work to identify the best methods to evaluate how effective Georgia's new CCDF initiatives are in meeting critical CCDF program priorities and Georgia's overarching goal of increasing access to high-quality child care for children receiving child care subsidies.

Identifying Ways for the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care to Support Children's Stable Access to High Quality Early Education and Care through Use of Subsidies

Organization: Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care

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The Child care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Implementation Research and Evaluation Planning Grant offers the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) opportunities to better understand how aspects of the current subsidy system shape the stability of children's participation in high quality early education and care, and to identify and evaluate cost-effective ways to improve stability. Through a review of ongoing research and exploratory analysis of existing data as well as interviews with families, EEC will identify subgroups of families and children who demonstrate greater instability in access to subsidized early education and care, and will work to understand the drivers of instability and inequitable access to high quality early education. The grant will then support the planning of an evaluation of potential policy changes to increase equitable access, which could be funded through Phase II, if offered.

Development of a Research Plan to Measure the Effects of a Family, Friend, and Neighbor Training Policy on Child Outcomes

Organization: Department of Health and Human Services, Nevada

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In line with the goals of the CCDBG Act of 2014 to enhance the quality of child care for low-income children, the Nevada Division of Welfare and Supportive Services Child Care and Development Program enacted a policy on March 1, 2016 to require specific training for Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) providers. Non-licensed providers must take 30 hours of health and safety training pre-service or during an orientation period of 90 days and then 24 hours of training annually thereafter. It is expected that the implementation of this new policy will improve the quality of care received by children who access informal care through FFN providers.

The goal of the Phase I planning grant is to develop a rigorous evaluation of the implementation of this new policy that could be carried out during Phase II. By increasing health and safety and early education and child care training for FFN providers through this new policy, it is expected that the quality of care received by children from FFN providers will increase. During Phase I, the lead agency will work with stakeholders and researchers to determine how to measure the effects of the new FFN training policy on child outcomes. Through this process, it is also expected that the lead agency will outline processes for data collection, analysis and data sharing, expand partnerships, and better utilize data to educate stakeholders and State leaders and inform decision-making processes.

The existing Quality Rating and Improvement System in Nevada, Silver State Stars QRIS, assesses and promotes quality in formal early childhood care settings including child care centers, family care centers, and school district pre-kindergarten programs. An outcome study is currently being conducted in the state in which the outcomes of children that attend high quality rated child care centers are being compared to the outcomes of children that attend low quality rated child care centers. Centers are identified as being high or low quality based on their QRIS star rating. Lessons learned during the current outcome study will be reviewed during Phase I and will help inform the research design for the proposed project. Additional considerations that will be examined during Phase I planning include: operationally defining the variables of interest for the outcome study, selecting appropriate valid and reliable outcome measurement assessments, and evaluating data system needs and improving data infrastructure.

Assessing the Impact of Child Care Subsidy on Program Access and Quality: Evaluation Planning

Organization: Oklahoma Department of Human Services

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The project, Assessing the Impact of Child Care Subsidy on Program Access and Quality: Evaluation Planning, aims to lay the foundation for future evaluative work that will contribute to knowledge about the efficacy of early care and education (ECE) programs, including child care subsidies, in achieving recent federal goals and priorities such as increasing access by low-income families to high-quality ECE programs and promoting the healthy development and school readiness of children served.

The 2016-2018 Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan for Oklahoma details the state's implementation steps to address the requirements included in the 2014 reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act. For the most part, the state already meets many of the Act's new requirements through existing services and programs. However, there are aspects of the Act that will require changes in state policy and/or additions to existing services. Additionally, there are existing policies and initiatives that, in the past, did not have sufficient capacity to be rigorously evaluated. This Phase I project will support planning and development of evaluation work that will lay the foundation for assessment of key aspects of Oklahoma's CCDF subsidy program. These key aspects, to be assessed in Phase II, include understanding features of access (e.g., how parents learn about and access programs; patterns of program use by children; coordination and collaboration across ECE programs available to low-income children), as well as supporting quality improvement (e.g., possibility of developing a self-assessment tool for quality monitoring and improvement).

In this context, for this Phase I project we will establish a researcher-practitioner partnership with nationally recognized early childhood researchers at Georgetown University (**Objective 1**); examine how parents use information about subsidized programs to select care (**Objective 2**); explore possibilities for supporting providers as they self-assess program quality to promote continued quality improvement (**Objective 3**); and refine a data system to describe where subsidy recipients receive care, what alternatives they considered and, for the non-recipients, which alternatives they actually pursued among the other ECE programs listed above (**Objective 4**). Accomplishing these objectives will endow the Lead Agency with the expertise, partnerships, systems, information, and deliverables needed to prepare a competitive application for Phase II project funding, to implement the research plan.

Evaluating CCDBG in Oregon: Impact of the 2014 Act on Children, Families, and the Quality of Home-Based Care in Oregon

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The 2014 CCDBG Act has the potential to have large impacts on the children, families, and providers that participate in the subsidy system. The impacts are likely to be particularly salient for home-based providers and the children and families they serve due to increased requirements for some. Such is the case in Oregon where approximately six in ten children in the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program are in home-based care and almost four in ten are in homes that have not been inspected or monitored and whose level of quality is unknown. In response to the 2014 CCDBG Act, the Oregon Legislature increased requirements and quality investments to ensure healthy, safe, and high-quality home-based options for children and families in the subsidy program. Thus, Oregon is ideally situated for a study of the impact of implementation of the 2014 CCDBG Act.

Increased understanding of home-based care within CCDF programs has policy implications for Oregon and the nation. Home-based care is a predominant form of care in the United States (NSECE, 2015) and is sometimes the best, or only, option for families. For example, families from traditionally underserved populations such as racial or linguistic minorities may find home-based care best able to provide cultural and linguistic congruency. Another example involves families with an infant, toddler or child with special developmental needs who may require or prefer care in a home. A third group includes families with employment constraints such as unpredictable schedules and nontraditional hours, which typically make home-based care the only option. Oregon legislators and other policy makers are committed to ensuring that these targeted populations have access to healthy, safe, and high-quality home-based child care within the CCDF program.

Oregon will build the capacity to conduct research whose overarching goal is assessing the impact of the 2014 CCDBG Act's implementation on children, families, providers, and the quality of home-based child care. In Phase I Oregon will expand its ability to merge administrative data sets to be able to assess the extent to which implementation affects participation in the CCDF program in Phase II. Oregon also proposes to increase the capacity of its Early Learning data systems in order to capture increased detail on

participation in professional development and support activities (PD/Support). The Legislature invested in PD/Support for home-based providers as part of its response to the 2014 Act. More detailed data will make it possible for the State to conduct a rigorous study of the impact of PD/Support on the quality of home-based care in Phase II.

Washington State CCDBG Research Planning Project

Organization: Washington State Department of Early Learning

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The Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL), the designated state lead agency for administration of Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds and programming, will conduct the Washington State CCDBG Research Planning Project.

The main goal of the project is to plan to generate new policy-relevant, timely, and useful knowledge regarding how implementation of the CCDBG Act of 2014 and Washington's 2015 Early Start Act have 1) impacted continuity of care for children in families receiving subsidy; 2) impacted stability for child care providers who accept subsidy; and 3) contributed to or prevented disproportionate impacts on vulnerable groups of children and providers. Vulnerable groups include children/families receiving subsidy and child care providers serving subsidy families in rural areas, those who are non-English speaking, and those from communities of color.

The Washington study will make use of administrative data, linking across data sets containing data on subsidy families, children, and providers and those containing provider quality rating data. This planning project will help inform a Phase II application to implement the planned research project.

Expected outcomes of the 18-month Phase I project include: 1) Develop a research and evaluation plan to examine implementation of Washington's 2015 Early Start Act specifically as it relates to the desired outcomes of child continuity and provider stability, and to examine outcomes among vulnerable groups in the state; 2) Generate meaningful administrative measures of child continuity and provider stability that may be used as outcome measures for the proposed research as well as incorporated into agency analytics to examine trends over time, geographic variation, and variation within and among identified vulnerable population groups; 3) Increase research capacity within the Washington State Department of Early Learning as well as across state agencies such that the state is able to compete for Phase II funding to implement the research plan; 4) Include the process and findings of the planning grant in the Department's annual Early Start Act progress report to the governor and legislature, providing visibility for the project and opportunity to inform future policy decisions.

Increasing Access to High Quality Care for Infants and Toddlers

Organization: Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Department of Community and Cultural Affairs (DCCA) and-Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)

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The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), as the lead proponent and implementer of this project, will engage other agencies such as the Northern Marianas College, Public School System (Early Head Start, Head Start, & Early Intervention Program), Commonwealth Health Corporation (Early Childhood Comprehensive System and Home Visiting Program), Department of Labor-Workforce Investment Agency (WIA), Department of Community and Cultural Affairs (DCCA) - Child Care Licensing Program, and Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) implementation consultants, in conducting the work of the CCDBG Implementation Research and Evaluation Planning Grant. Increasing Access to High Quality Care for Infants and Toddlers is the focus of this project as CCDF implements the requirements of the CCDBG Act of 2014. Two research questions will frame this project: (1) How does an increase in investment in quality improvement (from an increased infant and toddler care set aside) increase access to high quality care; and (2) How can state systems better support CCDF's efforts to increase access to high quality infant and toddler care? Because of CNMI CCDF's lack of experience and expertise in research and evaluation, the project approach will include participation from researcher partnerships to help create a data system, full participation in the research consortium, peer-learning opportunities, partnerships with state agencies, and flexibility in improving and incorporating lessons to be learned through the process.