

Coordinated Evaluations of Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Policies and Initiatives: Phase I (Planning Grants)

Child Trends, Inc.

Principal Investigator(s): Sarah Daily

CCDF Lead Agency Partner(s): Vermont Department for Children and Families, Child Development Division

Project Title: Effects of CCDF Reimbursement Rate and Co-payment Policies on Equitable Access to High Quality Subsidized Care in Vermont

Research Objectives and Approach: The goal of this project is to examine the implementation of Vermont's recent changes in Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) provider reimbursement rates and family co-payment policies and to plan for an evaluation that would examine how these policy changes have affected equitable access to high-quality care for families who are eligible for subsidies in the state. During the planning period, the project team will collect survey data from parents and providers to inform Vermont about the state's implementation efforts and to examine the extent to which parents and providers are aware of policy changes in provider reimbursement rates and family co-payments. In addition, the project team will conduct an analysis of publicly available data (i.e., data from the American Community Survey and the Current Population Survey) to examine where eligible populations and demand for subsidized child care are located within the state. Findings from these activities will inform Vermont's policy efforts, adjustments to the project's theory of change, and the development of a plan for a rigorous evaluation of these policy changes.

Proposed research questions for a future evaluation include:

- 1) How have CCDF provider reimbursement rate and family co-payment policy changes impacted:
 - a. child and family participation in the subsidy system?
 - b. provider participation in the subsidy system?
 - c. equitable access to high-quality care?

Subpopulation(s) of Interest: The sub-populations of interest will be determined in partnership with Vermont upon further examination of current subsidy participation data and publicly available data.

Children's Hospital Corporation

Principal Investigator(s): Catherine Ayoub and Joanne Roberts

CCDF Lead Agency Partner(s): Tribal Lead Agencies participating in the Tribal Child Care Association of California

Project Title: Coordinated Evaluations of Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Policies and Initiatives in Tribal Communities

Research Objectives and Approach: The primary goal of this planning grant project is to develop a rigorous evaluation of child care subsidy policies that support equitable access for tribal communities in California, namely policies related to eligibility, provider payments, and family co-payments. To achieve this goal, the project team will first engage in a landscape analysis of these policies and practices across California and within tribal communities in the state. Using a community participatory and human centered design approach, the team will then seek to understand differences in policies, practices, and access within California's tribal communities as well as successful CCDF policies and practices that serve as drivers to increased access and capacity building within those communities. Across the grant period, the team will employ rapid cycle evaluation methods to gather feedback and additional information from stakeholders, including representatives from the tribal communities, California's Department of Social Services, California's Department of Early Learning and Care, and experts in the field. Such information will be collected through surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

Research questions guiding this work include:

- 1) How do payment rates differ between Tribal communities and the state of California?
- 2) How are different subsidy payment rates and co-payment structures related to Tribal community families' access to tribal child care?
- 3) How do subsidy payment rates influence what is affordable to Tribal community parents, align with Tribal parents' choices and preferences, meet Tribal parents' needs, require reasonable efforts, and support Tribal children's development through providing tribal high quality care?
- 4) How do co-payment structures and rates differ between Tribal communities and the state of California? How do co-payment policies affect access to tribal care and affordability?
- 5) How do co-pays, including exemptions and adjustments of co-pay policies, differ across specific Tribal family characteristics (i.e., the number of children in care, whether care is part-time or full-time, and whether the care is being provided for a child with special needs) and key Tribal populations (e.g. families with different characteristics and needs, children of different ages, children with special needs) within Tribal communities and the state of California? How are these differences related to Tribal parents' preferences, choices, and use of care?
- 6) Do other variables (e.g., type of care, community characteristics) moderate or mediate the relations among family co-payments, provider rates, and eligibility and access to Tribal care?
- 7) What are the differences in eligibility requirements between Tribal communities and California?
- 8) How do differences in eligibility requirements and policies between Tribal communities and the state of California influence access to care among subsidized Tribal families and low-income, working Tribal parents?

Subpopulation(s) of Interest: Tribal communities

Education Development Center, Inc.

Principal Investigator(s): Clare Waterman and Heidi Rosenberg

CCDF Lead Agency Partner(s): Connecticut Office of Early Childhood

Project Title: Partnership Planning Grant: Coordinated Evaluation of Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Policies and Initiatives in Connecticut.

Research Objectives and Approach: The goal of this project is to examine the effects of Connecticut's policies related to child care subsidy payment rates, family co-payments, and eligibility on families' access to affordable, high-quality child care that meets their needs and supports their children's healthy development. During the planning grant project period, the project team will: 1) refine the logic model for a rigorous evaluation of child care subsidy policies, 2) assess administrative data gaps and opportunities through a comprehensive data catalogue and conduct preliminary analyses of such data, and 3) develop a plan for a rigorous evaluation of child care subsidy policies recently enacted in Connecticut. The goal of the data catalogue is to clarify the child care subsidy administrative data that exist, in what format those data are saved, and where those data can be found so that it is clear which gaps will need to be filled through primary data collection over the course of a future evaluation.

Proposed research questions for a future evaluation include:

- 1) Is there an increase in the number of accredited programs as a result of Connecticut's new policy instituting an additional tiered quality rate increase of 20% for accredited center-based programs and 7% for accredited family child care providers?
- 2) Is there an increase in the number of providers participating in the subsidy system as a result of newly increased reimbursement rates?
- 3) Does ending a temporary policy that fully covered family co-payments during the pandemic lead to a reduction in the number of families accessing child care subsidies?
- 4) Are there differences in the number of families accessing child care subsidies following the expansion of eligibility to higher income families?
- 5) Are there differential effects of payment rates, co-payment policies, or other changes to family fees for key populations of interest (families with different characteristics and needs, children of different ages, children with special needs)?

Subpopulation(s) of Interest: Children with special needs and children of different ages

Georgia State University Research Foundation, Inc.

Principal Investigator(s): David Ribar and Thomas Goldring

CCDF Lead Agency Partner(s): Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)

Project Title: The Impact of Georgia's ACCESS Initiative on Subsidized Child Care

Research Objectives and Approach: The primary objective of this project is to develop a rigorous, policy-relevant, actionable evaluation plan of co-payment waivers in Georgia's child care subsidy program that leverages and takes advantage of the intervention that has begun under the state's Awarding Child Care Education Scholarship Supplements (ACCESS) initiative, which waives co-payments for all families receiving child care subsidies through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program. The evaluation plan will carefully consider how the ACCESS initiative and family-copayments affect equitable access to subsidized child care, especially for Black children. In order to support the development of the evaluation plan, the project team will review documents, policies, and research on reimbursement rates and family co-payment policies in CCDF programs across the nation; gather information from DECAL staff about their experiences and perspectives on the ACCESS initiative as well as family co-payments; and conduct interviews with representatives from local organizations that work closely with child care providers. In addition, the project team will investigate which child care subsidy administrative data could be used in a rigorous evaluation and explore the potential to link such data to administrative data from other federal programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), to identify a set of subsidy-eligible families. The principal output of this project will be the evaluation plan, which will include a detailed description of the implementation and operation of the ACCESS initiative, a policy summary based on the document and policy review, discussion of policy and equity considerations based on the agency and stakeholder consultations, a research literature review, a logic model for the evaluation, plans for experimental and quasi-experimental impact evaluations, and a list of outcomes to be analyzed.

The research question guiding the plan for a future evaluation is: How do the co-payment waivers under Georgia's ACCESS initiative and more generally, co-payments in Georgia's CCDF-supported Childcare and Parent Services program, affect families' access to child care, use of child care, and benefits of child care?

Subpopulation(s) of Interest: Black children receiving child care subsidies

Public Policy Associates, Incorporated

Principal Investigator(s): Nathan Burroughs

Project Director: Colleen Graber

CCDF Lead Agency Partner(s): Michigan Department of Education, Office of Great Start

Project Title: Informing Michigan's Family Co-Payment and Provider Payment Structure Policies and Administration

Research Objectives and Approach: This project seeks to understand how child care subsidy payment rates and family co-payments affect parents' access to affordable child care that meets their needs and supports children's development. In addition, this project aims to understand whether administrative burdens mediate the impact of changes in the generosity of payments to providers and family co-payments on outcomes of interest. During this planning project, the project team will engage Michigan stakeholders through advisory groups, develop and test key instruments, identify data sources for a potential evaluation, and conduct preliminary analyses of administrative data. Expected outputs of this planning project include piloted instruments for primary data collection in the evaluation, a list of variables available for secondary data analysis, preliminary analyses of equity of access, and plans for a mixed-method longitudinal analysis of reimbursement and co-payment policies' impact on equal access to child care subsidies.

Proposed estimates of interest for a future evaluation include:

- 1) the direct observable impact of provider payment rate policies and family co-payment policies on the following outcomes: participation in the Michigan child care subsidy program, the quality of care available to subsidy users, the cost of care to families as it relates to family income, the availability of preferred services, the diversity of local providers by program type, and parental satisfaction with child care options;
- 2) variation in the impact of payment rate policies and co-payment policies across key demographic subgroups, to assess equity by race/ethnicity and geographic area; and
- 3) the role of administrative burden on equal access to child care subsidies.

Subpopulation(s) of Interest: Race and ethnicity subgroups and children in different geographic areas

Public Policy Institute of California

Principal Investigator(s): Caroline Danielson and Niu Gao

CCDF Lead Agency Partner(s): California Department of Social Services, Child Care and Development Division

Project Title: Developing a Research Plan for Rigorous Evaluation of California's CCDF Policies and Practices

Research Objectives and Approach: The overarching aim of this project is to develop a rigorous research plan that will examine the implementation and outcomes of California's child care subsidy policies and practices related to payment rates and family co-payments. To achieve that aim, this project will seek to answer the following research questions:

- 1) As California develops its overall child care and development strategy, how do Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) subsidies fit into the landscape of other publicly-supported child care programs in the state, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) child care, Head Start, state preschool and transitional kindergarten?
- 2) Which key state, county and local administrative data sources can be feasibly brought together in a 1- to 3-year timeframe to advance the rigorous study of CCDF-supported subsidized child care?
- 3) What are the top two or three ways California can most fruitfully examine—and rigorously test—its CCDF payment and copayment policies in order to improve access and equity within its landscape of child care and development programs?

The project team will employ document review, dataset development, and key informant interviews as well as seek input from a technical advisory group to answer these questions. Expected outputs of the planning grant include: a detailed timeline of policy developments across California's major child care and development programs from 2009 through 2021, a list of available data elements for use in a future rigorous evaluation, a crosswalk between such data elements and the five dimensions of child care access, and a plan for a rigorous evaluation of California's policies related to payment rates and family co-payments.

Subpopulation(s) of Interest: Children ages 0-5

Regents of the University of Minnesota

Principal Investigator(s): Elizabeth Davis and Aaron Sojourner

CCDF Lead Agency Partner(s): Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Care Services Division

Project Title: Coordinated Evaluation of Minnesota's Child Care Assistance Payment Policies and Initiatives

Research Objectives and Approach: This project seeks to develop a rigorous evaluation plan to increase our understanding of the impact of Minnesota's subsidy policies on low-income families' access to high quality child care. The project team will integrate quantitative data analysis and a stakeholder-engagement process to achieve this goal. First, using existing administrative data, the project team will examine the effects of increased subsidy payment rates on a small set of outcomes for children, families, and providers. This analysis will inform the development of a rigorous quantitative methodology for the evaluation plan. In addition to quantitative analyses, the project team will engage in a community consultation process to: a) identify communities who experience different barriers to access or policy impacts and b) refine the team's conceptualization of key access constructs. The expected outputs of the planning grant include: a developed logic model, quantitative results, a list of outcome measures that could be used in a future quantitative evaluation, the development of additional administrative data partnerships to support a future quantitative evaluation, and learnings from communities and families experiencing systemic inequities in child care access.

Proposed research questions for a future evaluation include:

- 1) How do payment rate levels and structure affect access to care for subsidized families and how do they impact who participates in the subsidy program?
- 2) How does the subsidy payment rate structure affect which providers are willing to accept subsidy payments?
- 3) How does collection of family co-payments and policies around collecting any difference between the maximum subsidy payment rate set by the state and the provider's private-pay price affect families' choice of providers and providers' willingness to accept subsidy payments?
- 4) What are the characteristics of providers who do and do not accept subsidy payments?
- 5) How do subsidy payment policies affect the stability of subsidy participation and of child care arrangements for children?
- 6) Are there differential effects of payment rate policies for key populations of interest such as parents of infants and toddlers, children of different ages, families with different characteristics or families in rural areas?

Subpopulation(s) of Interest: Parents of infants and toddlers, rural communities, communities of color, and immigrant communities.

The University of Chicago

Principal Investigator(s): Julia Henly and David Alexander

CCDF Lead Agency Partner(s): Illinois Department of Human Services

Project Title: Improving Child Care Access through Payment Innovation in Illinois: A CCDF State-Research Partnership Phase 1 Evaluation Plan

Research Objectives and Approach: The main goal of this project is to develop a research plan for the implementation of a rigorous, policy-relevant evaluation that would assess whether Illinois' efforts to improve access through the use of a cost modeling approach to setting payment rates, a system of payments based on provider contracts, and the reduction of family co-payments to no more than 7% of family income successfully increases low-income families' access to quality child care. To achieve that aim, this project will seek to answer the following research questions during the planning period:

Payment Rates

- 1) What is the historical relationship between payment rate increases and access to quality care?
- 2) How have providers understood and used revenue from past payment rate increases?
- 3) What are key considerations for moving from a market analysis approach to a cost modeling approach for setting payment rates?

Provider Contracts

- 4) How have child care directors experienced a contract pilot program? What recommendations do each have for new contracts as a means of increasing access to quality child care?
- 5) Has the contract pilot resulted in increased pay and upgraded staff qualifications? Has it reduced staff turnover or improved program quality?
- 6) What have policy stakeholders learned from the contract pilot to inform state's contracting plans?

Co-Payment Rate Adjustment

- 7) Have historical family co-payment rate reductions made child care more accessible to subsidized parents across provider types and geographic areas?
- 8) What are stakeholder views regarding co-payment reductions for families?
- 9) How have Illinois child care providers understood and experienced past co-payment changes?

To answer these questions, the project team will engage in document review and conduct interviews with child care providers and other stakeholders in Illinois' child care system to learn about their views and experiences with payment rates, contracts, and family co-payment rates. In addition, the team will conduct secondary analyses of administrative records to gain insight into the relation between access and provider payment and family co-payment policies and will evaluate an ongoing pilot that aims to increase access to quality child care through contracting. The expected outputs of the planning grant include the completion of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) necessary for a rigorous evaluation, a complete plan for a rigorous evaluation, and dissemination products summarizing learnings that emerge from planning grant activities.

Subpopulation(s) of Interest: Underserved populations, with particular attention to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) families, families living in economically disadvantaged communities, families in rural areas, families with special caregiving needs, and families needing care outside of standard hours.

Trustees of Boston University

Principal Investigator(s): Yoonsook Ha & Kate Giapponi Schneider

CCDF Lead Agency Partner(s): Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)

Project Title: Planning for an Evaluation of the Relationship between Massachusetts's Child Care Subsidy Payment Rate and Family Co-Payment Policies and Access to Care

Research Objectives and Approach: The primary goals of this project are 1) to develop an evidence-based approach to inform Massachusetts's planned changes to subsidy co-payment and reimbursement rate policies and 2) to design a rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of these changes for families and providers. To achieve these aims, this project will answer the following research questions:

- 1) *History of Subsidy Reimbursement Rate and Co-Payment Model Changes:* When, how, and why did the state implement changes in subsidy reimbursement rates and the co-payment model?
- 2) *Other State Funding Sources, Policy Changes, or Practices:* What other sources of state funding or changes in policy/practice might influence provider participation in the subsidy system and/or the number of subsidy-receiving children? When were these changes implemented?
- 3) *Initial View of Impacts on Access:* What are key stakeholders' initial hypotheses regarding whether and how changes in subsidy reimbursement rates and/or the co-payment model impact subsidized children's access to care? What other factors may facilitate or serve as barriers to access to care?
- 4) *Potential Databases for Evaluation:* What is the quality and feasibility of using various datasets and data elements in constructing key measures of access, demand, and utilization of subsidized care?
- 5) *Selecting Measures for Evaluation:* What indicators have been used to measure availability of providers for subsidized care and subsidy utilization and how are they constructed?
- 6) *Initial Patterns of Availability and Utilization of Subsidized Care Related to Reimbursement Rate and Copayment Policy Changes:* What are the patterns of availability of providers and demand for/utilization of subsidized care over time? How do these patterns differ by various child, family, provider, and community level characteristics? How do the patterns relate to changes in subsidy reimbursement rates and family copayments? How does the combination of these two policy changes affect provider participation in subsidies and families' utilization of subsidized care?

The project team will answer these questions using a three-pronged approach. First, the team will document the state's past and evolving approaches to establishing subsidy reimbursement rates and family co-payments. Second, the team will assess state administrative data sources to develop and refine measures of access to, demand for, and utilization of care, and conduct preliminary analyses on how reimbursement rate changes implemented in past years may be associated with the demand for and supply of subsidized care. Finally, the team will design a rigorous evaluation study with evidence-based measures and approaches that can best assess the effectiveness of EEC policies, identify gaps in service delivery, and provide insightful information for EEC's future policy decision-making. The project team will use a mixed-methods approach that includes intensive document review, direct observation of the policy design and implementation process, in-depth interviews, and quantitative analyses.

Subpopulation(s) of Interest: Children of different ages and incomes, children with different subsidy eligibility statuses, and children living in different geographic areas/neighborhoods with different poverty levels.

Urban Institute

Principal Investigator(s): Diane Schilder, Rebecca Shaw & Kathryn Kigera

CCDF Lead Agency Partner(s): District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Early Learning (OSSE)

Project Title: District of Columbia Child Care Subsidy Innovations: Questions and Answers

Research Objectives and Approach: This project's overarching goal is to develop a research plan for a rigorous evaluation of the implementation and outcomes of subsidy payment rate and family co-payment policies and practices on families' access to quality care in the District of Columbia. The project team will employ elements of community-engaged methods to engage child care providers and families along with quantitative analyses during the planning grant period to: understand subsidy implementation from the perspective of OSSE stakeholders and subsidy case workers, understand subsidy policies from the perspective of child care providers, document families' perspectives, and document baseline conditions about the provider sector. Expected products from the planning grant include: a detailed four-year plan to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of changes in child care subsidy policy that will include technical details about the samples and measures used to collect data from child care subsidy case workers, providers, and families, including measures and scales we will use in coordination with other researchers; presentations at the Child Care and Early Education Research Partnership Conferences (CCEEPRC); and a brief and blog post summarizing key findings from the planning grant.

Proposed research questions for a future evaluation include:

- 1) How do payment rate policies and practices affect access to care among subsidized families?
- 2) How do co-payment policies affect access to care? Do co-payments affect affordability and availability of subsidized care? Do co-payments and exemptions and adjustments of co-payment policies based on specific family characteristics (i.e., the number of children in care, whether care is part-time or full-time, and whether the care is being provided for a child with special needs), affect family preferences, choices, and use of different types of care?
- 3) Are there differential effects of payment rate and co-payment policies for key populations of interest (i.e., families with different characteristics and needs, children of different ages, children with special needs)?
- 4) What is the impact on access to care of limiting family co-payments to 7% of their income?

Subpopulation(s) of Interest: Children with special needs and children of different ages