

B2: Child Care Deserts: Current Knowledge and Next Steps for Researchers and Policy Makers

Wednesday, February 7, 2018

2:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. | *Washington II*

1. Descriptive Information

B2: Child Care Deserts: Current Knowledge and Next Steps for Researchers and Policy Makers

This session will explore early care and education (ECE) program access from the perspective of researchers and state-level policy makers. Using a “flash panel” (i.e. very short presentations), the session will briefly highlight key research findings and state-level policies related to access gaps in child care. Researchers on the panel will share work from MA (Dr. Hardy), NY (Dr. McCabe), and WV (Dr. Anderson) where studies have examined how different factors (e.g. rurality/urbanicity, poverty, prekindergarten policy) relate to “child care deserts” (geographic areas experiencing constrained access to ECE programs). Two presentations from state-level administrators (Dr. Ybarra, WA and Ms. Polojac, PA) will share efforts and needs related to advancing an understanding of childcare access gaps in their states. These diverse presentations will enable discussion about cross-state similarities related to child care deserts and related patterns of local access, as well as future directions for both research and policy to address gaps.

Facilitator

Lisa McCabe, Cornell University

Panelists

Erin Hardy, Brandeis University | *Neighborhood Access to Subsidized Early Care and Education in Massachusetts: Patterns by Race/Ethnicity, Nativity, and Urbanicity*

Lisa McCabe, Cornell University | *What’s Driving Child Care Deserts? Factors Related to Child Care Gaps in New York State*

Sara Anderson, West Virginia University | *Child Care, Pre-K, and Head Start in West Virginia: Child Care Deserts, Poverty, and Rurality*

Vickie Ybarra, Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families | *Considerations for Examining the Gap*

Susan Polojac, Pennsylvania Departments of Human Services and Education | *The Culture of Quality: Urban/Suburban and Rural Recruitment Strategies in Pennsylvania*

Scribe

Yasara Perera, ICF

2. Documents Available on Website

- a. Child Care, Pre-K, and Head Start in West Virginia: Child Care Deserts, Poverty, and Rurality
- b. What’s Driving Child Care Deserts? Factors Related to Child Care Gaps in New York State
- c. Rural Recruitment Efforts: Start Up TA and Peer Mentoring

3. Brief Summary of Presentations

- a. Goals of the meeting:
 - i. What’s new in research on child care deserts in MA, NY, and WV?
 - ii. How is research on child care accessibility informing state child care policy in WA and PA?
 - iii. What are the next steps?

- **Summary of Presentation #1: Lisa McCabe, What's Driving Child Care Deserts? Factors Related to Child Care Gaps in New York State**
 - This presentation looked at what the ECE capacity of individual communities is and what is driving those factors (urbanicity, community wealth, school district, etc.).
 - Worked with 696 school districts in New York which are unaligned from county, towns, etc.
 - Data include prekindergarten programs, registered child care settings, Head Start/Early Head start, community characteristics from school district and census data.
 - Findings:
 - Half day prekindergarten programs are the norm for wealthy families
 - Increasing need for full day programs in rural poor districts and small city districts
 - Some school districts in NYS have no registered (licensed) child care providers
 - State wide trend for decrease in Head Start enrollment and increase in Early Head Start enrollment
 - Implication of this data set is that location matters when talking about early education patterns. When looking at a whole state you can miss how patterns can look very different in communities with different characteristics.
 - Q: Did you take into account the Early Learn networks in New York City?
 - New York City is hard to deal in terms of data.
- **Summary of Presentation #2: Sara Anderson, Child Care, Pre-K, and Head Start in West Virginia**
 - Characteristics of care in WV:
 - More home-based providers because it is more of a rural state
 - Have universal Pre-K
 - Provided context of WV being a rural area and 18% in poverty
 - Questions being asked in research:
 - Where are these child care providers located
 - How are they distributed by poverty status and rurality?
 - Findings
 - Child Care centers are located in less rural, less impoverished areas and aggregated towards bigger cities
 - Head Start also located in less rural areas and are lacking in general across the state and lacking in poorer areas.
 - Pre-K is provided by every county regardless of how rural or poor the district is.
 - Home Care is filling in a lot of gaps in the rural and poor areas
 - 3 poorest counties in WV do not meet the qualifications of being a childcare desert
 - Conclusions: child care centers are lacking in areas where they may be needed most; several rural and poor counties are lacking in Head Start. Pre-K is the bright spot.
 - Next Step Questions:
 - How do states provide high quality care to children in rural and poor communities?
 - What are the best policy solutions to reach these children?
 - Relative care is based on the economy and the jobs available. This care is usually for parents that have jobs that do not have normal hours.
 - Q: Is there any reason to think that they are traveling outside of these county boundaries to access the care they need?
 - It is possible for families to bring their children into other counties to get care. It is hard to imagine a lot of these families are travelling more than an hour to receive care from these towns. Presenter is certain that a lot of families are not doing that.
 - Question: Are the subsidies pegged to where they live rather than county boundaries?
 - Presenter did not have the data to answer this question.

- **Summary of Presentation #3: Erin Hardy**, Child Care deserts: Advancing measures to better understand issues of equity
 - Research question: Why is it important to study racial/ethnic inequities and who is living in child deserts?
 - Description of the study:
 - Looking just at the subsidized child care deserts in MA
 - Findings:
 - Subsidy eligible students are racially/ethnically segregated
 - Subsidy-eligible children also live in low-income neighborhoods
 - First set of findings (using existing definitions and measures to observe racial/ethnic inequities in child care deserts)
 - Half of the eligible children in MA live in deserts
 - No major racial/ethnic differences
 - Second set of findings (could we develop additional equity-focused desert measures [extreme desert conditions]?)
 - Looking at neighborhoods that have extreme unmet needs and highly constrained supply. These neighborhoods must be a part of the “extreme needs” cluster and the “constrained supply” cluster.
 - Major racial/ethnic differences
 - Conclusions: measures matter for understanding equity.
 - Findings call for multiple definitions of child care deserts for policy analysis and research
 - Q: Are you able to see whether the behavior of the subsidy eligible communities? Can we demonstrate that that represents some families to get care and some to not get care?
 - Only have data for 70% for kids in MA.
 - What do neighborhood level usage levels look like based on race?
 - Still working towards this.
- **Summary of Presentation #4: Vickie Ybarra**, Stability among Subsidy Providers
 - One observation about WA is that there is a decline of subsidy providers in the state.
 - The research required the staff to know the licensing information for and QRIS data about providers.
 - There are trends of providers entering and exiting, especially those that are serving subsidy children under the age of 5
 - Q: Is there any reason behind the difference between providers providing care for infants/toddlers versus preschoolers?
 - Demand for infants and toddlers is high and the supply is not enough. WA is trying to expand publically funded preschool programs and reducing the number of children that need subsidy care.
 - Q: Are you looking at the age of providers and their demographic characteristics?
 - Absolutely going to look at these characteristics.
 - Comment: When they are entering, they may have one subsidy child in their care. Over the course of the year, they can be entering and exiting. Thus, they are not changing their licensing status.
 - Entering and exiting is not related to their license and are way out of the industry.
 - Comment: Serving is a parental choice issue. The child graduated from a program that is not provided by the state and thus the provider is losing that subsidized child.
 - Either of these could cause exiting which is why the data look at an entire fiscal year.
 - Comment: When we look at just one sector, we’re not taking into account that there is an array of options within a community that families can choose from and makes it hard to interpret if we are not looking at the overall sector. We have to be very careful when looking at silos.
 - Q: Are childcare providers eligible to become ECAP and switch from subsidized care to Pre-K?
 - What’s more likely is that the provider does both.
- **Summary of Presentation #5: Susan Polojac**, Rural Recruitment Efforts Start up TA and Peer Mentoring
 - Moderate/high risk counties are those that lack high quality child care options.

- Reach and Risk report provides the level of risk for school failure for children (based on 16 risk factors) and the availability of child care programs.
- Used strategy of a Start Up TA Peer Mentor Program to provide support to providers that are just starting off providing care because a lot of the counties where risk is high is where a lot of child care providers are located.
- Expand Keystone STARS to include other types of early learning programs serving children birth through Pre-K.
- If you give people tools, mini grants and build their capacity, they are going to be successful.
- 6,700 licensed programs in PA
- One strategy looking at rural counties to build the capacity.
- Q: Can you expand EI as another option?
 - We are looking at these services.

4. Brief Summary of Discussion

- a. Q: The presentations used different geographic units. What are the benefits and drawbacks of using the geographic units as related to policy and variation?
 - i. In New York, we have 61 counties and 700 school districts and variation is quite extreme. We have done both county and school district level mapping. School district level provides more data on neighborhoods. We are trying to enjoin the policy conversations across the early care and education silos.
 - ii. Counties do not have policy relevance at all for some questions. The right approach is to be thoughtful and not use a proxy geography that does not make sense. The smaller you get with data, the noisier that data is.
 - iii. There is great variability among the counties.
 - iv. Boundaries are somewhat artificial. You get very different answers from state to state.
- b. Q: Do you feel like these limitations prevent giving policy implications? What can we really say back to the state, county, community?
 - i. There is consistency using Census Tracts – let us be intentional about where we locate Head Start programs. With geographic work, there are concrete policy levers to work with.
 - ii. To get to policy, we can be better at working on these processes to implement.
- c. Comment: In LA and Chicago, they're looking at the whole lay of the land and are looking at the expansion of child care options. Some of them are naturally occurring.
- d. Comment: Very state specific unit of analysis and the way you are approaching this is helpful for policy makers to look through.

5. Summary of Key issues raised (facilitators are encouraged to spend the last 3-5 minutes of sessions summarizing the key issues raised during the session; bullets below are prompts for capturing the kinds of issues we're looking for)

- a. N/A