# Evaluating the Implementation of Child Care Subsidy Policy and Administrative Changes

Pam Joshi & Kate Giapponi Schneider

Presentation at the CCEEPRC Annual Research Conference

February 7, 2018

MA Child Care Research Partnership

Funded by: HHS/ACF/OPRE Child Care Research Partnership Grant

# Policy implementation research: general points

- Focuses on the **black box** between policy changes and outcomes
  - Impact evaluation focuses on policy changes and outcomes relative to no policy change

- Multiple methods

- Multiple purposes

- Theory informs research questions asked, outcomes of interest, and interpretation of findings

# Meta research questions (Werner 2004)

1. ## What is happening?

- Document – program goals, operations and resources

2. ## Is it expected or desired?

- Assess – compared to what standard

3. ## Why is it happening as it is?

- Explain – uncover plausible reasons/hypotheses

# Study key components of programs

- Theoretical and practical basis/context

- Resources and capacity

- Environment (state/local) and variation

- Processes and systems

- Intended target population and services

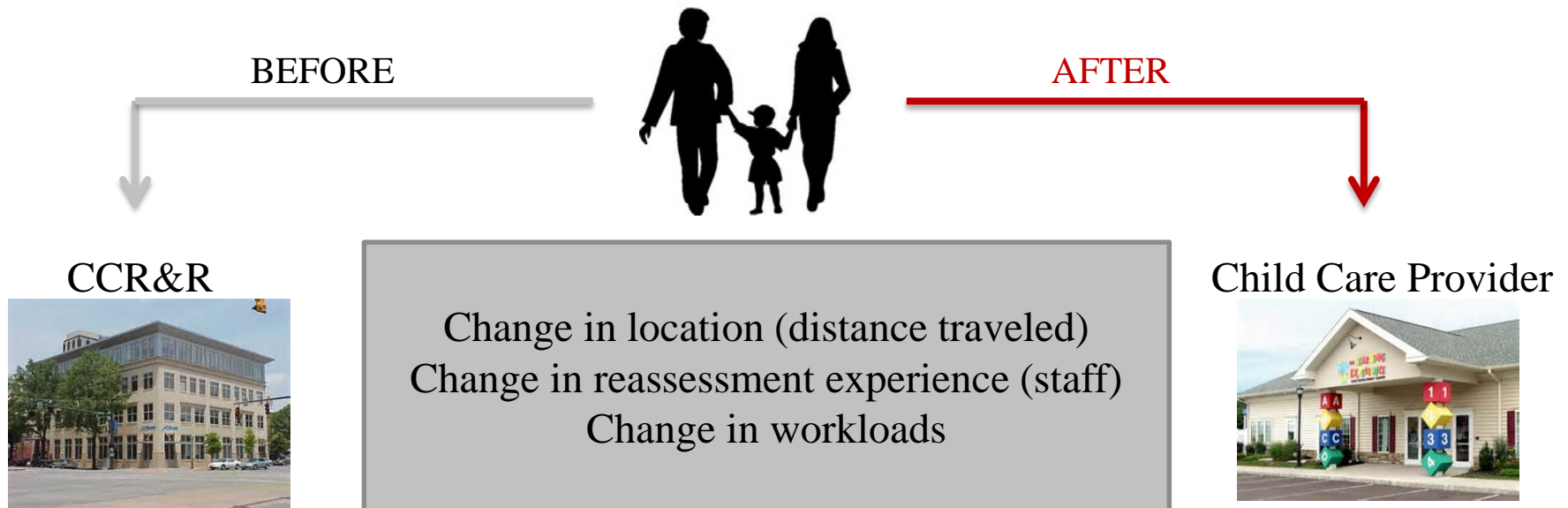- Relevant client/worker/agency outcomes

# Data sources

- Program planning, documents and manuals; legislative material, media

- Background statistical data

- Open-ended interviews key informants, program staff, advocacy/public interest groups, ex/clients

- Structured observations

- Worker/client surveys, administrative data, program management reports

# Examples: Implementing CCDBG Administrative and Policy Changes in Massachusetts

# Example 1: 2012 Massachusetts' Administrative Change

- In January 2012, MA initiated administrative changes that <u>shifted the location and responsibilities</u> for Income-Eligible <u>voucher reassessment</u> from <u>CCR&R agencies</u> to <u>contracted providers</u> for some families.

BEFORE

AFTER

CCR&R

Child Care Provider

Change in location (distance traveled)
Change in reassessment experience (staff)
Change in workloads

# Implementation Research Considerations

- **Retrospective**
  - Policy change was implemented statewide in January 2012
  - Research team met with state in June 2013
  - Research Partnership Grant was awarded October 2013

- **Exploratory**
  - No known performance measures
  - No other state had implemented this type of administrative change
    - No defined or prescribed model for the state to follow in implementing this type of administrative change

# Implementation Research Questions
## (Werner 2004)

1. **What is happening?**

   - History of the changes

   - Components of reassessment pre- and post-administrative change (model/work flow)

   - Variation in practices and experiences of all stakeholders (e.g., CCR&Rs, providers and families)

   - Unpack what is meant by family friendly, explore system administrative burden

   - Identify performance metrics

# Implementation Research Questions (Werner 2004)

## 2. Is it expected or desired?

- Administrative changes delivered as intended
  - Bottlenecks identified, solutions developed?
  - System more user friendly (for all stakeholders)?
  - Decrease distance traveled?
  - Reduce workloads for CCR&Rs?

## 3. Why is it happening as it is?

- Developed hypotheses
  - Variation in local practices (family friendliness)
  - Clarity of policy guidance, communication issues
  - Context - waitlist

# Implementation Research Design: Year 1

**Methods:**

- Document review
- In-depth interviews with 17 key policy and administration stakeholders
- In-depth interviews with 19 staff from all 7 CCR&Rs
- Site visits and client observations at 5 CCR&Rs

**Goals:**

❖ Document voucher reassessment process prior to the administrative change from the perspective of the state and the CCR&Rs

❖ Identify how the voucher reassessment administrative change was implemented

❖ Identify possible gaps/areas of intended flexibility in the design of the administrative change through which implementation may vary

# Implementation Research Design: Years 2 - 4

## Year 2 Methods:

- In-depth interviews with 53 child care providers in all 7 regions of the state (80 staff members)

## Year 3 & 4 Methods

- In-depth interviews with 40 families in 4 regions of the state (English and Spanish)

## Year 2 Goals:

- ❖ Identify how the change was implemented and experienced by providers (including intended/ desired effects)
- ❖ Identify implementation variation

## Year 3 & 4 Goals:

- ❖ Identify how the change was experienced by families (including intended/desired effects)
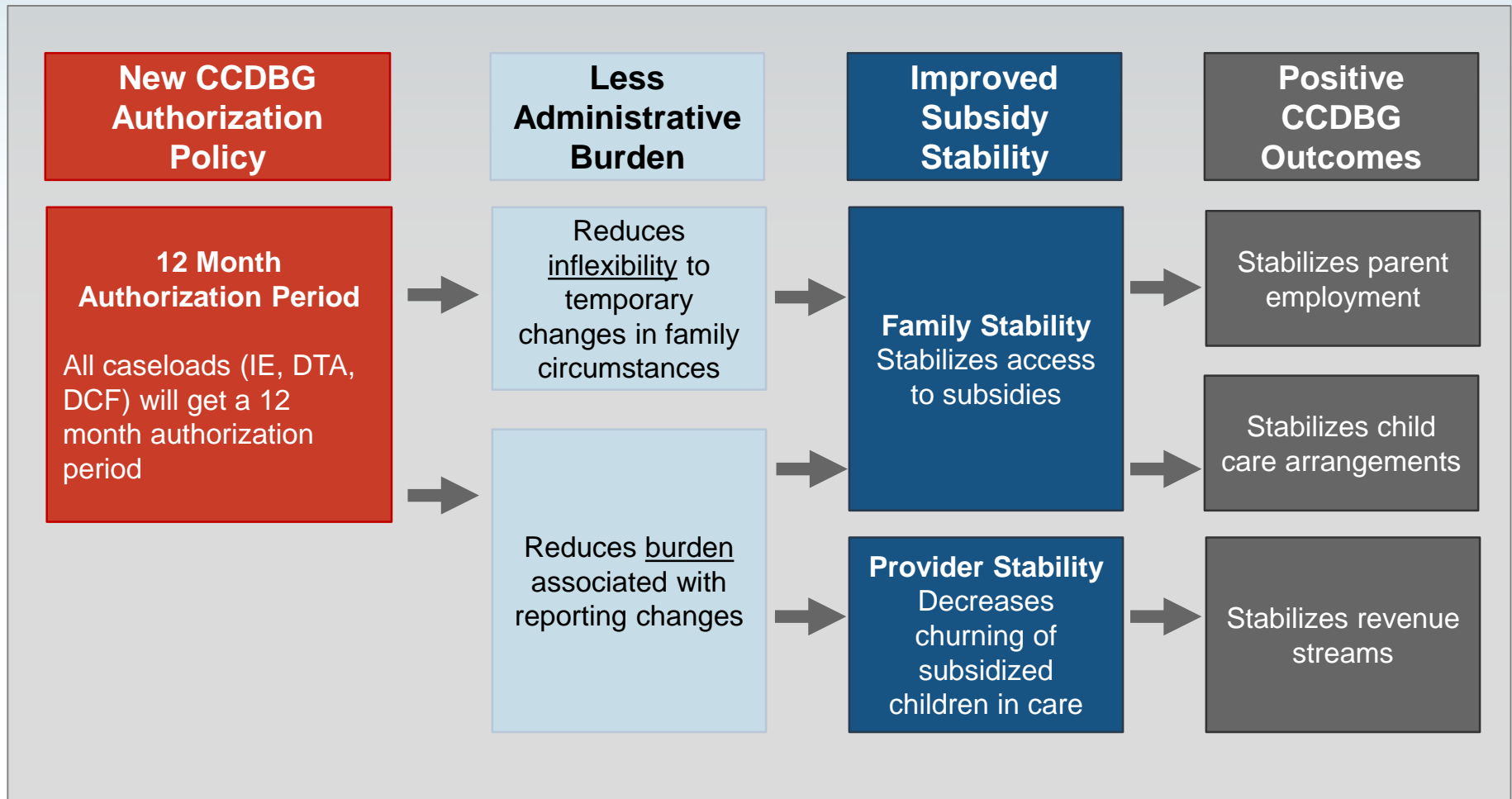- ❖ Identify outside factors affecting their subsidy stability
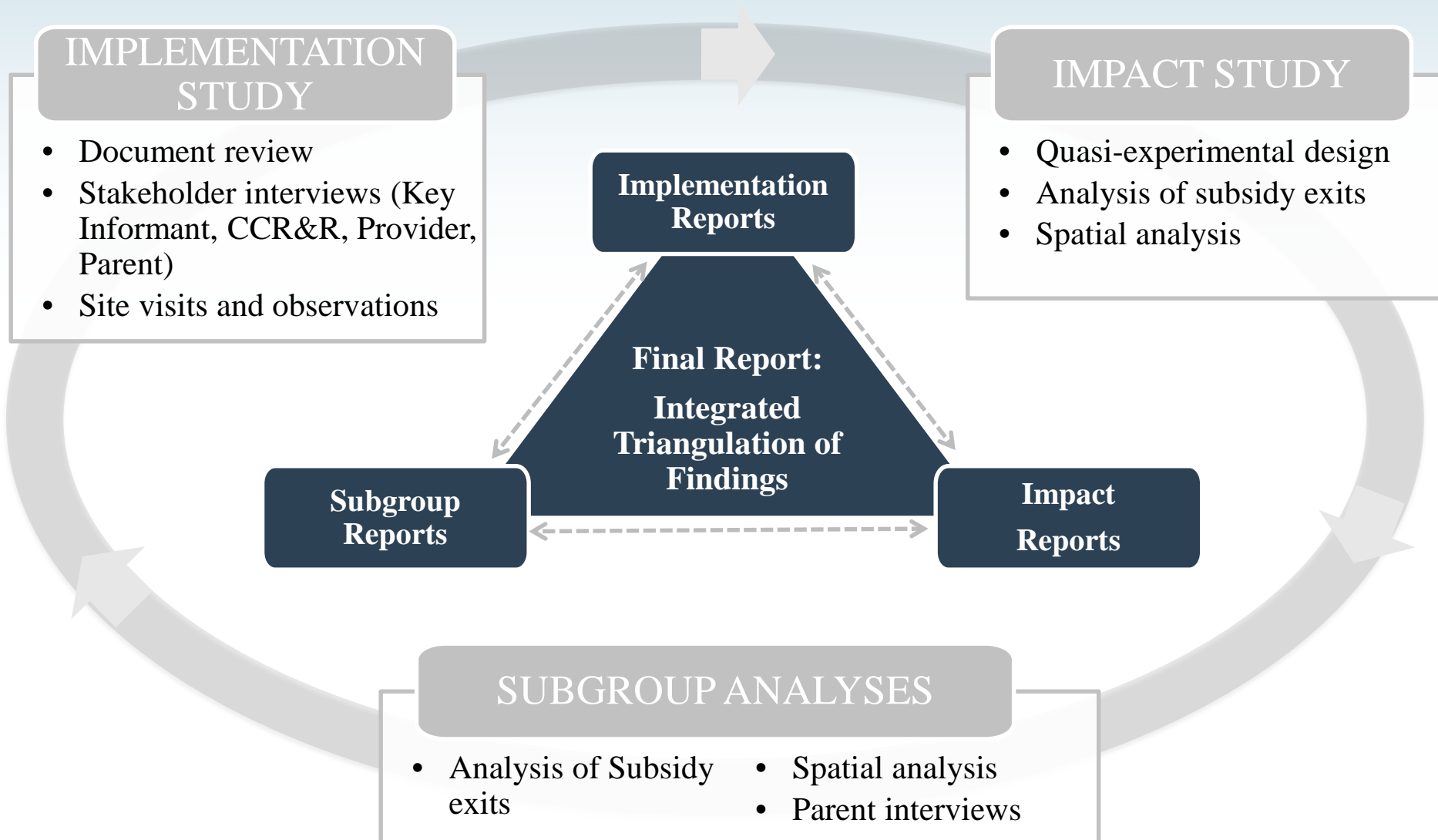
# Example of Intersection of Implementation and Impact Studies

**Location of Reassessment**

- **Implementation:** CCR&Rs have different <u>outpost</u> locations convenient for families.

  ➢ **Impact:** For each CCR&R region, control for the number and location of each outpost location.

- **Implementation:** Center-based providers that are part of an <u>umbrella agency</u> (e.g. YMCA) may require families to conduct reassessment at the main office rather than the provider location.

  ➢ **Impact:** Distances were calculated to umbrella agency main offices and provider locations.

# Example 2: Change in CCDBG 12 Month Authorization Policy

| **New CCDBG Authorization Policy** | **Less Administrative Burden** | **Improved Subsidy Stability** | **Positive CCDBG Outcomes** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **12 Month Authorization Period**<br><br>All caseloads (IE, DTA, DCF) will get a 12 month authorization period | Reduces <u>inflexibility</u> to temporary changes in family circumstances | **Family Stability** Stabilizes access to subsidies | Stabilizes parent employment |
| | | | Stabilizes child care arrangements |
| | Reduces <u>burden</u> associated with reporting changes | **Provider Stability** Decreases churning of subsidized children in care | Stabilizes revenue streams |

# Implementation Research Considerations

- **Prospective**
  - Regulatory and policy changes are currently in the process of being drafted (regulations set to be finalized by June 2018)
  - Researchers have been involved in the planning process
  - Research funding may be available in April 2018
- **Exploratory**
  - Several other states are currently in the process of making these changes
  - No defined or prescribed model for the state to follow
    - CCDBG block grants intentionally give states flexibility in policy design and implementation