Childcare Subsidy
Research Agenda:
Provider Perspectives
Providers: What do we know?
We Know...

• Families using subsidy more likely to choose center-based or formal care arrangements

• On average, children using subsidies for childcare receive lower quality care
Tantalizing hints

• There is variation in the degree to which providers accept subsidies

• We have some preliminary suggestions about those decisions
Procedures and Policies Matter

• Factors that increase hassle, stress, and economic instability decrease attractiveness of accepting subsidies

• Not being paid for a child not attending
• Lack of direct knowledge about families’ status
• Relative difficulty communicating directly with state or local administrators;
• Frequent changes in clientele, DSS staff, or procedures – instability of the system
• CCDF state payment practices that don’t match provider practices
Cost/Benefit Ratio and Barriers

- What makes taking subsidy “worth it” to providers?

- Are there structural or other barriers that prevent willing providers from accepting or getting families to uptake subsidy dollars?

- How do decisions regarding accepting families using subsidy intersect with decisions about other ECE regulations or initiatives?
What We Need to Know

I. Develop a deeper understanding of (all) providers and the factors that affect their decision regarding subsidy

- Basic descriptive information regarding program or business characteristics, demographics, market and cultural contexts
- Factors that affect provider decision to engage with subsidy
Provider Characteristics

- Knowledge of subsidy (and other) policies
- Interpretation of those policies
- Expectations regarding and past experience with subsidy

  - subsidy program features
  - families using subsidy

- Motivation for providing childcare or ECE
- Degree to which business vs vocation vs family developmental phase
Program Characteristics

For example:

- Type of care
- Percent children eligible for subsidy
- Degree serve younger vs older (school-age) children
- For profit or NFP
- Administrative structure (who makes decisions?)
Larger Contextual Characteristics

II. Develop an updated and deeper understanding of the policy, implementation, market and cultural contexts in which providers operate

- Child care market in which they operate
- Subsidy density of their area
- Local and state policies regarding subsidy (e.g., rates, stability of funding source, ease of reimbursement – implementation policies)
- Other ECE initiatives – licensing, QRIS, HS, state PK, etc.
- Rural vs urban/suburban
- Cultural attitudes toward poor families, public services
Methodological Considerations

• Clarify key constructs and terms
  (e.g., contractual vs voucher)
• Assess and refine quality of data
  (e.g., provider reporting on market rate surveys)
• Don’t study subsidy decision-making in isolation of other ECE programs
Mixed and Multi-Method Designs

- Administrative data
- Interviews, surveys
- Ethnographic, “day in the life of” studies
- Comparisons by policy and cultural contexts
- Comparisons between type of subsidy provider (licensed, license-exempt, FFN; regulated family vs center ECE)
- Comparisons by motivation for providing care
- Ages of children in care (e.g., do providers think about or behave differently if they primarily serve younger vs school-age children)
“Lots and lots of qualitative data!!”
CONTACT INFORMATION

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