2011 STAM – CCPRC Meeting
Workshop A4
November 16, 2011, 10:00-11:15 am

Assessing the Supply of ECE and Understanding the Workforce

Description

Findings from two projects that examine ECE programs and the workforce were presented, followed by discussants who reflected and commented on the findings. The first presentation focused on the sampling frame developed for the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) and included an overview of the study and the methods used to collect and describe the data. An analysis of the sampling frame addressed the variation in licensed providers and prek and Head Start programs across the United States by income and urbanicity.

The second presentation addressed findings for the National Research Council Workshop, "Early Childhood Care and Education Workforce," which was conducted in March 2011. The major goal of this workshop was to understand the characteristics, supports, and work conditions of the ECE workforce, who are central to the quality of many children's early experiences. The workshop was organized around three key areas: (1) defining and describing the ECE workforce, (2) exploring the characteristics of the ECE workforce that affect children, and (3) describing the context that shapes the workforce and ways to build the ECE profession. The presentation summarized the workshop themes.

Presenters

Robert (Bob) Goerge, University of Chicago
Aletha Huston, University of Texas

Discussants

Janice Molnar, New York Office for Children and Families Services
Martha (Marty) Zaslow, Society for Research in Child Development and Child Trends

Scribe

Rebecca Starr, Child Trends

1. Documents in Session Folder

- "National Survey of Early Care and Education-Provider Sampling, Density and Availability;" Robert Goerge
- "The Early Childhood Care and Education Workforce: Challenges and Opportunities, A Workshop Report;" Aletha Huston and Holly Rhodes
- "National Survey of Early Care and Education;" Author unknown (Handout)

2. Summary of Presentations

- **Summary of Presentation #1:** Bob George

- Bob provided an overview of *The National Survey of Early Care and Education* (NSECE) which includes four coordinated, nationally-representative surveys: households, home-based providers, center-based providers, and classroom staff (workforce).
- Policy relevant questions include: understanding of care received by low-income children and how it varies across communities; providing baseline data on community collaboration; and planning for workforce improvement.
- Expected NSECE sample sizes: All 50 states and DC: 15,586 households; 13,000 formal providers of care; 4,450 informal home based providers; and 6,500 members of the workforce.
- The household sample will include families with children under 13; it will also include questions about the provision of informal in-home care.
- The survey will attempt to integrate all sectors of supply including home-based and a sample of formal providers (from State lists, national Head Start lists and prek programs).
- Planned analysis – nationwide availability of full-time 3- and 4-year-old care: enrollment, availability, and across different program types.
- Preliminary data:
  - Head Start (HS)--19,558 providers; prek programs--58,363; child care centers--111,124. 61% of HS providers were located at child care center; 9.2% of child care centers have a HS center; and 38% of public prek programs are located at child care center.
  - Density: HS--higher in communities where 40% of households are below FPL, small difference between urban and rural; prek—higher in communities with 40% of households below 250% FPL; child care density—somewhat higher in communities below 250% FPL and in urban areas.
- Data collection with providers will occur from December 2011-May 2012.

- **Summary of Presentation #2**: Aletha Huston
  - The *Early Childhood Care and Education Workforce: Challenges and Opportunities, a Workshop Report.* Workshop was sponsored by ACF and conducted by the Board on Children, Youth and Families of the Institute of Medicine/National Research Council (February 28-March 1, 2011).
  - Goals of workshop were to define and describe the early childhood workforce (ECCE), examine how the workforce affects children, and explore how to build the workforce.
  - *Defining the workforce*: current definitions don't distinguish workers who care for preschool versus school-age children; distinctions between child care workers and preschool teachers do not reflect the work performed. New definitions are needed.
    - Components of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) workforce include: ECCE occupation (people with direct contact with children 0-5); ECCE sector (director, cooks); and ECCE Enterprise (people who affect institutions such as professors who train teachers, licensing).
    - Distribution of ECCE Workforce: center based (51%); family child care (12%); family, friend and neighbor (FFN)-paid relatives (27%); and FFN-paid non-relatives (11%).

- Wages and earnings – women working in child care earn 31% less than women with similar background in other occupations
- New data needs: information about the workforce, conditions of employment, geographic distribution and quality.
- Why data and definitions are important: current statistical structures aren't picking up what we need to know about workforce and don't allow us to compare data across multiple contexts and promote sound policy and improvements in quality.

- *How the workforce affects children.* The ultimate goal is quality of ECCE to promote child development, and caregivers and context matter.
  - Quality is the mediator for children's development. In centers, high education/training and low child/adult ratios are associated with cognitive and social competencies, mediated by observed quality. In family child care homes, caregivers with more education and child centered beliefs demonstrate more positive care and higher home environment quality.
  - Lessons from cost-benefit analysis: benefits from both higher-cost, more intensive programs and lower-cost, less intensive programs; returns can be higher with targeting; and largest returns are associated with long-term follow-up.
  - How important is a Bachelor's degree? If you have well-designed training it can produce results, but training programs vary widely, often not providing important elements.
  - Focus needs to be on what the ECCE workforce needs to know, e.g., how to put up-to-date knowledge of teaching, learning and child development into practice and effective teaching strategies.
- *Building the workforce and the profession.*
  - Template for defining the profession from health care: government and private sector recognition; education and training; and proactive practice model and viability (e.g., practice guidelines, inter-professional teams, innovation, professional or advocacy groups).
  - Issues in building ECCE as a profession: low wages, stressful work conditions, inadequate training, lack of recognition, lack of attractive career paths. Low wages relate to high turnover (29% turnover rate per year). Barriers to increasing wages include the number of low-skilled people available, parents pay most of the costs, and parents do not elect to buy high quality at higher cost.
  - Policies to address low wages: closed delivery systems such as the military, require parity with preK, wage subsidies, salary supplements, assistance with health insurance costs, scholarships.
  - Effective PD: define competencies by aligning standards across groups; focus on research-based practice rather than general knowledge.
- *Major Themes*
  - I. Definition and data: 2.2 million in the ECCE workforce; clearer definitions are needed.
  - II. Workforce and quality: quality of interactions and programs matter for child outcomes; unclear whether Bachelor's is good indicator of quality; effective training is needed (concrete, explicit instruction, research-based, opportunities to

apply knowledge in practice); and new research that tests PD strategies systematically.
    - III. Strengthening workforce: low status, low paying occupation; need to move to ECCE as a profession with career pathways; and with new research to gain understanding of best practices.

- **Summary of Presentation #3:** Janice Molnar (Discussant)
  - Specific to New York State –
    - Interest in the dynamics of subsidy usage; want to better understanding low-income parent choice and how this relates to options. What drives choice? And what influences a provider's decision about whether to accept subsidy children or not?
    - Concerned about dynamics in rural communities. Counties are allocated subsidy dollars based on data on child poverty levels, employment rates, and unemployment rates. But many small counties aren't spending their subsidy allocations. Why is not clear. Is there a lack of supply? A lack of education – families don't know about subsidy?
    - New York is paying for an increased sample in the NSECE study. It is also partnering with Illinois on a study about subsidy continuity.
  - Janice found the ECCE workforce report thought provoking and on target. Her observations included: data systems are a challenge to better understanding the workforce in New York State. Federal mandates about the reporting of certain information might help. Better understanding about the most successful ways of training a low-educated workforce would also be helpful

- **Summary of Presentation #4:** Discussant: Marty Zaslow
  - By way of clarification, the ECCE workforce is not limited to the paid workforce (and the NSECE is collecting information on both the paid and unpaid workforce).
  - These two efforts make it clear that we need more data:
    - From the workshop, we have a framework for kinds of data we need to collect, including demographics, attitudes, preparation, and contextual information. These are included in the NSECE, which is good correspondence.
    - This is a historical moment. We are clear that attitudes matter, as do depression and stress. Practice-focused PD is important, now exposure to coaching is included.
    - Workshop provided framework about data collection based on K-12 system. This is critical. State agreement on common core elements. Need to collect something in common. At tipping point to be able to do that.
    - Need to tackle ECCE workforce definitions.
  - Unique contributions from these efforts include:
    - From the workforce workshop: there was beginning discussion about barriers to having ECE data that can speak to and be comparable to K-12 data. We need to build on and follow-up on this discussion.
    - We already have important information from the NSECE administrative data frame, i.e., about overlaps and co-location. A critical step will be merging administrative and survey data.

3. Summary of Discussion with Presenters and Participants

- The national workforce survey (NSECE) will provide details about the ECCE workforce. Information gathered from the surveys should help us to better understand how to build the workforce.
- The workshop on the ECCE workforce included discussions on definitions, how the workforce is related to quality, and how to strengthen the workforce. We need to learn about the workforce in order to strengthen the workforce and build it as a profession. There are many costs and barriers (i.e. workforce has low education, come from different backgrounds, it's difficult to meet their needs, there is high turnover etc.).