Instability in Parental Employment: The relationship with child care instability

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2010 Annual Meeting of the Child Care Policy Research Consortium
Washington D.C. October 22, 2010
Forms of Instability in Employment

It is useful to think about “Instability” in two ways:
• Instability across Jobs in terms of the movement in and out of jobs
• Instability within a Job
• Instability within a Job related to job turnover
Instability Across Jobs

• Lots of instability and movement in and out of jobs particularly for low-wage workers
  – Some evidence about employment dynamics/patterns
  – High Job turnover; movement across jobs
  – Variations by worker/family characteristics
  – Variations by occupation/industry

• Employment instability likely worse in the course of a recession and a slow labor market recovery
Instability Factors within a Job

• There are several aspects of low-wage jobs that create and contribute to instability
  – Nonstandard work schedules timing (especially in industrial sectors where low-income working women are concentrated, e.g., health care; retail; hospitality).
  – Fluctuating hours (no minimum hour guarantees in most hourly jobs; fluctuating hours translates into variable earnings).
  – Unpredictable and variable schedules (just-in-time scheduling and variable shifts and days are common in hourly jobs).

• Limited Job Flexibility

• Instability within a job itself related to job turnover
Employment Instability and Child Care

• Paired Decisions
  – Child care and employment as simultaneous decisions
  – Employment characteristics shape child care needs and therefore are an important factor influencing child care decision making

• Interacting Instability
  – Employment instability can cause child care instability
  – Child care instability can cause employment instability
Flexibility: What is it? What kind is important for families?

• Families need flexibility somewhere: home, child care, work.
  – Emlen contributed to our understanding of flexibility

• In terms of work: important to recognize the kind of flexibility that benefits child care.
  – Employee control (input) over when, where, and/or how much they work
  – Common measures of flexibility do not properly distinguish employer vs employee-driven flexibility