

Child Care for Low Income Working Families: Child Care Landscapes, Utilization, & Quality in Four Indiana Communities

James Elicker, Soo-Young Hong, Hsin-Hui Huang, Tae-Eun Kim, & Susan J. Kontos
Purdue University

Abstract

While the effects of child care quality on low-income children and parents has been documented, little is known about how local communities vary in providing child care to low income working families in the wake of the welfare reforms of the mid-1990's. This research addresses this issue by studying the child care experiences of low-income working parents and their young children (6 mo to 6 yrs).

In this poster we describe how four communities in Indiana vary in the provision of child care services to low-income working families, we describe the quality level of child care used by low income working families in each community, and we suggest how community contexts may affect the quality of care received by children from low-income families.

Research Problems

- What types of child care are low income working families using?
- What is the quality of care received by children from low-income families?
- Does the quality of care vary across communities, across 6 child care settings, and home- vs. center-based settings?

Participants

- Criteria:
- Annual family income less than \$35,000
 - Head of household working (employed, going to school, or in job training) at least half time
 - Family having a child (6 mos – 6 yrs) enrolled in a out-of-home care for 15+ hours per week

Description:

- N = 307 low-income working families of young children and their child care providers in 4 Indiana communities: St. Joseph (n = 78), Marion (n = 76), Allen (n = 76), Lake (n = 77)
- % of the families fell below federal poverty level
- Child mean age = 40 mos.
- 152 boys, 153 girls
- Child race: African American (59%), European American (23.5%), Other (12.7%)
- Only 25.7% living with fathers

Data Collection

- 4 urban counties in Indiana: St. Joseph (South Bend), Marion (Indianapolis), Allen (Fort Wayne), Lake (Gary, Hammond, E. Chicago)
- 2 1/2 hour observation in child care setting to assess global, structural, and process quality of the setting

Measures

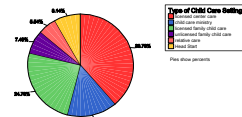
- Community context: Key informant interviews, parent focus groups, & Existing state and county data
- Global child care quality: ECERS-R (center-based) or FDCRS (home-based)
- Structural child care quality: Observed group size & adult-child ratio
- Process child care quality: Caregiver Interaction Scale (CIS, Arent) & improved caregiver-child responsive interaction

Community Landscapes

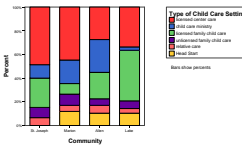
Community (County)	Marion	Lake	Allen	St. Joseph
County population*	282,454	484,254	321,849	285,673
% of children 0-5 years, 2007*	12.4%	12.3%	12.4%	13.3%
Total licensed child care spots**	21,281	7,716	6,572	8,023
% Licensed capacity in centers, 2007	8.4%	4.0%	5.6%	5.2%
LICENSED CAPACITY BY MONTH, 2007	8,913	3,134	2,006	1,829
NUMBER OF CHILDREN RECEIVING CHILD CARE VOUCHERS, 2007	131	0	38	28
NUMBER OF CHILDREN RECEIVING CHILD CARE VOUCHERS, 2007	18,330	16,626	6,324	3,174
MONTHLY % OF CHILDREN ON WAITING LIST FOR CHILD CARE VOUCHERS, 2007 (ratio, nonapplicable)	6.2%	2.0%	8.7%	6.2%
% of children receiving child care vouchers with limited income with respect to age**	54%	77%	63%	78%

Community	Marion	Lake	Allen	St. Joseph
Child care quality limits applied	Capacity Constraints	Capacity	Capacity Constraints	Capacity Turnover*
Parent Focus Groups	Center care preferred. Multiple child care settings.	Distance an relative care of center care. Public transportation in important issue.	Distance an relative care of center care. Public transportation in important issue.	Preference for home-based care. May use neighborhood day care for supplemental care.
Critical Issues	Many care providers and friends for backup. Need for extended hours. Providers are critical.	Distance an relative care of center care. Concerns about quality, safety. Care for children with special needs.	Distance an relative care of center care. Concerns about quality, safety. Care for sick care providers. Provider leave policies.	Size of home of home-based care. May use neighborhood day care for supplemental care. Need more licensed care. Flexible weekends. Concerns about quality.
Key informant interviews	Established funds for child care. Quality concerns about unlicensed care. High waitlist for extended hours and sick care.	Quality concerns about unlicensed care. High waitlist for extended hours and sick care.	Quality concerns about unlicensed care. High waitlist for extended hours and sick care.	Single licensed for services. Single licensed for services. Single licensed for services. Single licensed for services.
Critical Issues	Quality concerns about unlicensed care. High waitlist for extended hours and sick care.	Quality concerns about unlicensed care. High waitlist for extended hours and sick care.	Quality concerns about unlicensed care. High waitlist for extended hours and sick care.	Quality concerns about unlicensed care. High waitlist for extended hours and sick care.

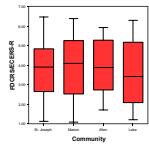
Types of Child Care Settings Used by Low-Income Working Families



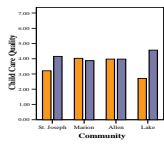
Distribution of Child Care Types Used was Different Across Community



Global Child Care Quality: No Difference Across Community ("Minimal" to "Good")

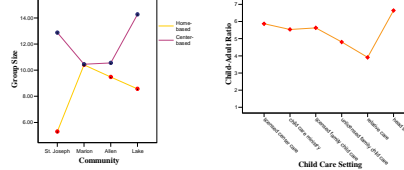


Center-based Child Care Had a Higher Quality than Home-Based Child Care



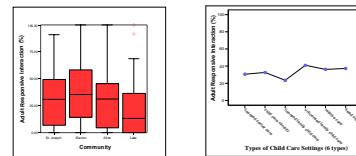
Structural Quality

- Group Size was Larger in Center-based Care than in Home-based Child Care
- Child-Adult Ratio was Different Across Types of Child Care

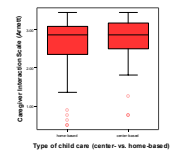


Process Quality

% of Adult Responsive Interaction was Different Across Community and Across Type of Child Care



Process Quality Caregiver Sensitivity (CIS) was Higher in Center-based than in Home-Based Care



Conclusions

- Low income working families use a variety of types of child care.
- The overall quality level of child care utilized by low income working families is low ("minimal" to "good").
- Child care quality across community:
 - Group size in center-based care were higher than in home-based care in St. Joseph and Lake, but were not significant different in Marion and Allen.
 - Percentages of observed adult responsive interactions in Marion and Allen were significant higher than in Lake.
- Child care quality across type of child care:
 - Adult responsive interactions were observed most often in Head Start (with the largest group sizes) and unlicensed family child care (with relatively small group sizes) and least often in licensed family child care.
- Child care quality in home- vs. center-based settings:
 - In general center-based programs provide higher quality care than home-based settings for this population.