Child Care & Early Education
RESEARCH CONNECTIONS

A partnership of the National Center for Children in Poverty, the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research and the Child Care Bureau, and the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation

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Family Support
A Key Topic Resource List

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Research Connections conducted a comprehensive search of its collection for resources focused on family support. This Key Topic Resource List includes an overview of what the family support literature addresses, as well as a listing of selected resources on the topic.

Search results are grouped into three broad areas:

- Overview of family support
- Child care, early education, and family support
- Evaluation of family support programs

From the many results, Research Connections selected a limited number of resources of various types including reports and papers, fact sheets and briefs, summaries, and reviews. Selection criteria included policy relevance and date of publication. The full results came from searches on the phrases: "family support", "family support and child care", "family support and early education", "family support and evaluation", and "family support and transportation".

Resources are organized according to publisher type and publication date. Research Connections' one-sentence description is included for each resource on the following list. For complete citations, which include abstracts and full text for some resources, click on the titles.

Overview:

The goal of **family support** services is to ensure that families are able to meet their needs and overcome stressors that impair effective parenting. By helping families to provide a nurturing environment, family support services play a critical role in fostering the healthy development and school readiness of young children. Additionally, family support is seen as a crucial early intervention strategy for children who are at risk, or those with special needs. The concept of family support, while initially encompassing only income support, has evolved over time to include a more comprehensive and often integrated set of services. These include: "material supports" (such as cash assistance, tax credits, child care, family leave); and "instrumental supports" (such as parenting education, health and mental health services, employment services, family court services, resource and referral services).

Given the broad definition of family support, it is difficult to categorize the research around family support. Much of the research is descriptive focusing on specific services and methods of delivery. There are also a handful of evaluations examining the impact or outcomes of various individual and integrated family support programs. Examples of some of research questions in this field include:

- What types of family support (both formal and informal) do relative and non-relative caregivers provide?

- How does flexibility in family support relate to employment retention for low-income parents?

- What types of family support services and methods of delivery enhance school readiness?

- How are various integrated family support programs implemented and what are the effects of these services on family and child outcomes?

- How does the effectiveness of family support programs vary based on the characteristics, needs and circumstances of families?

Overview of Family Support

Universities and Research Organizations

- **Thompson, Lisa; Uyeda, Kimberly; Wright, Janel; & Halfon, Neal. (2005).** Family support: Fostering leadership and partnerships to improve access **(Building State Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Series No. 14). Los Angeles: University of California, National Center for Infant and Early Childhood Health Policy.**
  A discussion of the critical role of family support and how family support programs can help to improve care for young children.

- **Thompson, Lisa & Uyeda, Kimberly. (2004).** Family support: Fostering leadership and partnership to improve access and quality **(Building State Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Series No. 14). Los Angeles: University of California, National Center for Infant and Early Childhood Health Policy.**
  A discussion of the family support component of the State Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (SECCS) Initiative.

Other Organizations

- **Dunst, Carl J.; Trivette, Carol M.; & Deal, Angela G. (1988).** Family Support Scale. **(In Enabling and empowering families: Principles and guidelines for practice). Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.**
  A scale used to measure the helpfulness of various sources of support to families raising children.

Child Care, Early Education, and Family Support

Government

- **United States Administration for Children and Families. (1998).** Sustaining employment among low income parents: The problems of inflexible jobs, child care and family support: A research review: Final. **Washington, DC: U.S. Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation.**
  A review of research examining the relationship between employment retention and flexibility in family support, jobs, and child care arrangements among low-income families.

- **Connecticut State Board of Education. (1997).** Blueprint for action: Implementing the early childhood agenda in Connecticut. **Hartford: Connecticut State Board of Education.**
  A guide to aid 13 Connecticut schools implement a new early childhood agenda that focuses on school readiness, family support, and collaboration among schools, parents, and communities.

Journals

- **Bromer, Juliet & Henly, Julia R. (2004).** Child care as family support: Caregiving practices across child care providers. **Children and Youth Services Review, 26(10), 941-964.**
  A conceptual model of the family support role played by child care providers.

- **Green, Beth L., McAllister, Carol L. & Tarte, Jerod M. (2004).** The Strengths-Based Practices Inventory: A tool for measuring strengths-based service delivery in early childhood and family support programs. **Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services, 85(3), 326-335.**
  A discussion of how to evaluate whether early education programs provide services consistent with The Strengths-Based Practices model and of how to measure the impact on child development of this approach, with a presentation of The Strengths-Based Practices Inventory, an instrument for such measurement.

- **Brandon, Peter D. (2000).** An analysis of kin-provided child care in the context of intrafamily exchanges: Linking components of family support for parents raising young children. **American Journal of Economics and Sociology, 59(2), 191-216.**
  A study of the relationship between kin-provided child care and in-kind resource exchanges within extended families.

- **Center for the Future of Children. (1995).** State investments in family support: Appendix D. **The Future of Children, 5(3), 218-221.**
  A concise description of components of State family support services, with detailed references to family support initiatives of Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, and Missouri.

- **Roditti, Martha G. (1995).** Child day care: A key building block of family support and family preservation programs. **Child Welfare, 74(6), 1043-1068.**
  An exploration of the role of child care programs within the structure of family preservation and family support services.

Universities and Research Organizations

- **Caspe, Margaret & Lopez, Elena M. (2006).** Lessons from family-strengthening interventions: Learning from evidence-based practice. **Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.**
An examination of 13 extensively-evaluated parent/family education and support programs intended to improve family/child relationships, environments and development, includes discussion of program and evaluation practices, and child/family development outcomes based on the substantial research evidence related to these programs.

- **Bassok, Daphna; Stipek, Deborah J.; Inkelas, Moira; & Kuo, Alice A. (2005).** Building community systems for young children: Early childhood education **(Building State Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Series No. 11). Los Angeles: University of California, National Center for Infant and Early Childhood Health Policy.**
A discussion of the importance and funding sources of early child care and education, and the ways in which the State Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative (SECCS) improves early childhood outcomes.

- **Mendoza, Jean; Katz, Lilian; Robertson, Anne; & Rothenberg, Dianne. (2003).** Connecting with parents in the early years. **Champaign: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Clearinghouse on Early Education and Parenting.**
A literature review and discussions of participants at a symposium on communication between hard-to-reach parents of young children and early child care program staff, and its impact on children's school readiness.

- **Collins, Ann & Carlson, Barbara (1998).** Child care by kith and kin: Supporting family, friends and neighbors caring for children **(Children and Welfare Reform Issue Brief No. 5). New York: Columbia University, National Center for Children in Poverty.**
A brief on current research about, and policy approaches to reach out to, kith and kin child care providers.

- **Replogle, Elaine. (1995).** Head Start as a family support program: Renewing a community ethic. **Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.**
A description and assessment of the progress of six Head Start programs in implementing the recommendations of the Department of Health and Human Services' 1993 Advisory Committee on Head Start Quality and Expansion.

Other Organizations

- **Parents as Teachers National Center. (2007).** The Parents as Teachers program: Its impact on school readiness and later school achievement: A research summary. **St. Louis, MO: Parents as Teachers National Center.**
A summary of the results from a 2006 study of the impact of Parents as Teachers and other early childhood programs on the school readiness and performance on state evaluations of 7,710 Missouri children.

- **California Child Care Resource and Referral Network. (2005).** Linking child care and family support: Three successful collaborations. **San Francisco: California Child Care Resource and Referral Network.**
  A paper describing how collaboration between professional groups impacted three California communities' child care supply and accessibility.

- **Segal, Ann & Bruner, Charles. (2004).** On the path to school readiness: Key questions to consider before establishing universal pre-kindergarten. **Des Moines, IA: State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network.**
  A discussion of several components necessary to high quality universal prekindergarten programs, including integrated child care services, family support, well trained staff, access to healthcare services, and a safe and caring environment.

- **Bowman, Barbara T. (2003).** Family engagement and support **In D. Cryer & R.M. Clifford (Eds.), Early childhood education and care in the USA (pp. 119-136). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.**
  A discussion of how early childhood education and care programs involve parents in their children's education and encourage community support for families in need.

- **Stahl, Deborah; O'Donnell, Nina; Sprague, Peg; & Lopez, Marta. (2003)** Sparking Connections: Community-based strategies for helping family, friend and neighbor caregivers meet the needs of employees, their children and employers. **New York: Families and Work Institute.**
  Findings from interviews with experts from the fields of early learning, family support, health, and community development, and managers, employee parents and caregivers from member companies of the National Retail Federation Retail Work Life Forum, on the challenges of family, friend and neighbor care.

- **Schumacher, Rachel. (2002).** Family support and parent involvement in Head Start: What do Head Start Program Performance Standards require?. **Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.**
  A brief on aspects of the Head Start Program Performance Standards that require providing services to and involving parents.

- **Casey Family Programs. (2001).** Child care services for children in out-of-home care. **Washington, DC: Casey Family Programs, National Center for Resource Family Support.**
  An examination of federal funding streams for child care programs, including data on States' use of child care subsidies, and a review of five child care programs for children at risk of abuse or living in out-of-home care.

Evaluation of family support programs

Government

- **Fraser, Jeffery. (2002).** Family-based intensive services: Home visiting and parent support programs that start in the first three years **In C. J. Groark, K. E. Mehaffie, R. B. McCall, M. T. Greenberg, & Universities Children's Policy Collaborative (Eds.), From science to policy: Research on issues, programs and policies in early care and education. Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Education.**
  A review of the design, effectiveness, and cost of selected home visiting and family support programs for infants and toddlers.

- **United States Department of Health and Human Services (2001).** The Starting Early Starting Smart story. **Washington, DC: U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.**
  A description of the Starting Early Starting Smart (SESS) research initiative, designed to integrate behavioral health services with child care and primary health care services for children from birth to 7 years of age.

- **United States Administration on Children Youth and Families (2001).** National evaluation of family support programs: Final report Volume A: The meta-analysis. **Washington DC: U.S. Administration on Children Youth and Families.**
  Findings from an analysis of the results of the mass of research studies and evaluations of family support interventions conducted within the last 25-30 years, including assessment of the collective outcomes of the primary research and of the effectiveness of the programs studied.

- **United States Head Start Bureau (2000).** Head Start children's entry into public school: A report on the National Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Study. **Washington, DC: U.S. Head Start Bureau.**
  A review of the implementation and outcomes of the National Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Project, which funded local programs, in 30 states and the Navajo Nation, from the 1991-92 school year through the 1997-98 school year, related to parent involvement, educational enhancement, family support, health, and collaboration between public schools and Head Start.

Journals

- **Peterson, Carla A; Wall, Shavaun; Raikes, Helen; Kisker, Ellen Eliason; Swanson, Mark; Jerald Judith; Atwater, Jane; & Qiao, Wei. (2004).** Early Head Start: Identifying and serving children with disabilities. **Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 24(2), 76-88.**
  A longitudinal study of the number of Early Head Start children with developmental delays. Examined characteristics of low income families who received supportive services as compared to families who did not.

- **Bailey, Donald B. (2001).** [Evaluating parent involvement and family support in early intervention and preschool programs](). **Journal of Early Intervention, 24(1), 1-14.**
  A description of potential accountability areas for use in assessing the provision of supportive services to families participating in early intervention and preschool programs *for children with special needs.*

Universities and Research Organizations

- **Portland State University, Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health. (2005).** [Assessing strengths-based delivery of services for children and families: Data Trends: #113 March 2005](). **Portland: Portland State University, Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health.**
  An overview of the development of the Strengths-Based Practices Inventory (SBPI), a measure designed to assess the usage of strengths-based practices within early childhood and family support programs.

- **Case Western Reserve University, Center on Urban Poverty and Social Change (2003).** [Taking the initiative to scale: An evaluation of the Early Childhood Initiative]() (Briefly Stated, 3(2)). **Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University, Center on Urban Poverty and Social Change.**
  A summary of findings from a program evaluation of Cuyahoga County's Early Childhood Initiative, a comprehensive, multi-agency approach toward meeting the needs of children from birth to age six.

- **Fuligni, Allison Sidle & Brooks-Gunn, Jeanne. (2003).** [Family support initiatives]() **In Early Child Development in the 21st Century: Profiles of Current Research Initiatives (pp. 115-144). New York: Teachers College Press.**
  An overview of two national family support initiatives, the National Even Start Evaluation and the National Evaluation of Family Support Programs (NEFSP).