

Maryland Research Capacity Cooperative Agreement

Rolf Grafwallner, Principal Investigator, Maryland State Department of Education

John Spears, Data Administrator, RESI of Towson University

Nicole Forry, Research Scientist and Marty Zaslow, Senior Scholar Child Trends

Grant Number: RCA 90YE0107

Period of Funding: 2008 - 2012

Project Description.

A recent shift of the child care subsidy program to the Maryland State Department of Education in 2006 has allowed for increased collaboration among the child care licensing, subsidy, and credentialing offices and the State education system.

The goal of this project is to examine associations between child care subsidy receipt and kindergartener's school readiness. The three main components of this project include:

- (1) enhancing and analyzing administrative data,
- (2) contextualizing findings from administrative data through findings from focus groups, and
- (3) building a research consortium with the goal of refining early childhood education policy.

Research Questions:

- How do children who received a child care subsidy the year prior to kindergarten perform on assessments of school readiness upon kindergarten entry? How do these children compare with children from low-income families who did not receive a subsidy?
- How do parents and community-based child care providers define high quality care and school readiness? What challenges and supports do providers experience when preparing children for kindergarten?
- How long do subsidy spells last in Maryland?

Data: Three years of merged administrative data and portfolio-based kindergarten school readiness assessments, including...

- *Child care subsidy administrative data:* select family and child demographics and voucher-level payment information,

- *Licensing/license monitoring administrative data:* provider type, capacity, licensing compliance, and enrollment data from licensing inspections,
- *Credentialing data:* tiered reimbursement level, credentials, and accreditation of providers,
- *Kindergarten school readiness portfolio data:* portfolio-based kindergarten assessments completed during the first quarter of the Kindergarten year. Seven domains of developmental skills are assessed: personal & social development, language & literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts, and physical development.
- *Other data:* Resource & Referral provider survey data, Head Start enrollment data from select counties, and pre-K enrollment data

Methods: Through multiple linkages of the datasets listed above, comprehensive datasets have been created each of the three years of this project. These datasets were analyzed using bivariate and multivariate methods. To supplement these quantitative analyses, a series of focus groups were held with resource and referral counselors, low-income parents, family child care providers and center directors serving low-income families, and kindergarten teachers in schools serving a high proportion of low-income children. Focus group data were analyzed using coding techniques from grounded theory.

Progress Update: We are currently in the process of developing multiple policy briefs/reports to summarize our quantitative and qualitative findings. Additionally, we are in the producing two journal articles. Titles of briefs/reports currently under development are listed below:

- *Maryland Early Childhood Risk and Reach Assessment*

- *Getting into the Black Box: How Do Low-Income Parents Make Choices about Early Care and Education in Maryland?*
- *Providing High Quality Care in Low-Income Areas: Definitions, Resources, and Challenges from Parents' and Child Care Providers' Perspectives*
- *Defining School Readiness: A Multidimensional Perspective*
- *Subsidy Continuity in Maryland*

Implications for Policy/Practice:

The study will provide important evidence of the efficacy of Federal CCDF subsidy funds and inform policy-makers about its implication on the state's result area, *Children Entering School Ready to Learn*.

Both the Governor and the State Legislature will learn about State General Fund implications on child outcomes aside from providing cash relief for child care tuition costs.

The study will inform State and Local Administrators on aspects of reform regarding the state's child care subsidy program to enhance the odds of quality care for child care subsidy recipients.

Implications for Research:

Based on findings from this study, the research team is interested in further exploration of:

- the role of quality in mediating the relationship between child care subsidy receipt and children's school readiness,
- provider practices to support children's social-emotional wellbeing prior to school entry, and
- provider and teacher practices in supporting children's transition to kindergarten.

For More Information:

Nikki Forry, Senior Research Scientist
Child Trends
nforry@childtrends.org; 202-572-6035

Additional Contacts:

Rolf Grafwallner, Assistant Superintendent of Education, Division of Early Childhood Development
Maryland State Department of Education
rgrafwal@msde.state.md.us; 410-767-0335

Martha Zaslow, Senior Scholar
mzaslow@childtrends.org

John V. Spears III, Senior Human Services Consultant
RESI of Towson University
jspears@towson.edu; 410-767-9654