Subsidy Density, Child Care Quality, and Low-Income Child and Family Well-being in

Tennessee: A Longitudinal Analysis Using Matched Administrative and Survey Data

Rena A. Hallam, University of Delaware; Don Bruce, University of Tennessee Knoxville

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Project Description.
The purpose of this study is to integrate extant state child care quality and TANF longitudinal datasets datasets to investigate policy relevant research on child care subsidy, child care quality, and child and family well-being. Specifically, this secondary analysis study provides the opportunity to examine the associations between global quality scores and subsidy utilization across four program types (school-age, infant/toddler, family child care, and preschool) over a four year period. Further, quality data has been matched with a subset of TANF participants to examine longitudinally the relationships between child care quality and family reported child and family well-being indicators.

Research questions.
- What is the relationship between subsidy density and global program quality?
- How does the receipt of child care subsidies affect child and family well-being?
- How are child care arrangements influenced by TANF participation patterns*?*
- What are the relationships between child and family well-being, child care subsidy and program quality?

Sample.
This particular sample is unique in that Tennessee requires all licensed programs to be observed in part of their Child Care Report Care and Evaluation program. Therefore, the sample includes all licensed child care programs in the state over a four year period. The sample of TANF participants are a representative sample from Tennessee that were tracked every six months for approximately 8 years.

Methods.
The statewide study matches existing administrative data on child care programs (e.g., subsidy data), with observed program quality scores from the state QRIS. This integrated child care data has then been matched with a longitudinal state representative sample of TANF recipients.

Progress Update.
To date, the integrated dataset has been created and analysis of child care quality and subsidy has been completed. Findings from this analysis (presented at last year's CCPRC) indicate that only infant-toddler program quality was influenced by subsidy density when examined longitudinally over the four year period. Additionally, program quality consistently improved over the four year period across program types. Recent analysis have examined teacher characteristics in relationship to program quality and suggest that professional development is a stronger predictor of quality than subsidy density across all four program types. Our current analysis is focused on linking TANF participant outcomes with quality data. We are currently examining TANF participant trends along with child care program participation trends. We anticipate that the outcome analysis will be completed by October, 2011.

Implications for policy/practice
Current findings contribute to the mixed empirical evidence regarding subsidy density and child care quality. However, these findings are also suggestive of the role the QRIS in improving quality over time in subsidy dense programs. The importance of professional development is also highlighted as teachers with reported more in-service opportunities scored higher on global quality measures.

Implications for research

This project highlights both the benefits and challenges of using state administrative data for subsidy research. In particular, matching administrative subsidy data with QRIS data at the program level allow for more nuanced examinations of the subsidy-quality link across different types of child care programs.

Contact

Rena Hallam, Associate Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, University of Delaware, rhallam@udel.edu