

<b>Sustaining Family Child Care Providers' Psychosocial Wellness</b>
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**Project Description.**

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the understanding of the training and support needs of Family Child Care Providers (FCCPs). Though past research indicates that work-family balance issues create unique challenges to FCCPs psychosocial wellness and that they may benefit from professional and social support, to date no studies have linked these factors using a theoretically driven framework. Our mixed-methods study will contribute to the literature on psychosocial wellness of FCCPs by investigating an integrated theoretical framework that describes the impact of work-family balance challenges upon FCCPs' psychosocial wellness, and accounts for the role of professional and social support in sustaining these individuals in their work and family roles.

**Research Questions and Methods.****Research questions.**

1. Are higher levels of perceived stress among FCCPs associated with higher levels of provider consideration of exiting the FCC profession and less engagement in professional development?
2. How do the routines in family child care (FCC) homes reflect the challenges FCCPs face in managing the overlaps of personal family life and the child care business? Specifically, what do FCCPs perceive the advantages and challenges of providing FCC to be? How do the rhythms of child care and family life facilitate or interfere with FCCPs accomplishing their professional development plans?
3. How do the personal and professional networks of FCCPs support their child care work and psychosocial wellness? Specifically, how do FCCPs view the role of other FCCPs and child care support personnel, what have their experiences been like when interacting with child care support personnel, and which support services have been most helpful?

**Sample.** This study is currently being conducted in Illinois. Two complementary samples are being employed: A large scale, statewide survey sample of FCCPs (N = 1392 providers) and in-depth, qualitative interviews with a small sample of FCCPs recruited in East Central Illinois. To allow for analyses to cross-cut both samples, statistical tests are being used to compare survey respondents with interview participants on key variables. To date, no significant differences have been found, indicating that the samples are comparable.

**Methods.** This study employs a mixed-methods approach, pairing quantitative analyses of survey data with qualitative analyses of in-depth interviews. Our study will combine analysis of statewide administrative survey data with a smaller sample of qualitative, in-depth semi structured interviews. This approach was chosen because employing quantitative analysis of the Illinois Department of Human Services' (IDHS) administrative Salary and Staffing Survey (SSS) data enriches their knowledge about the conditions and challenges of the child care workforce. While quantitative data are useful in establishing broad trends, qualitative data provide description of the processes and mechanisms underlying these trends.

**Progress Update.** Data Analyses are ongoing. Logistic regressions revealed that for each unit of increase on the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983), providers were approximately 8% more likely to consider exiting FCC. For each person in their child care network a provider had spoken to in the past week, there was a 25% drop in the likelihood of considering an exit.

Based upon work-family border theory (Clark, 2000), a work-family border stress scale has been created to measure stresses related to the interface of FCC work and personal family life. Correlation analyses indicate that work-family stress is positively associated with perceived stress. Based

upon social convoy theory (Kahn and Antonucci, 1980) which indicates that a person's perception of their role influences the construction of their social convoy, a sense of professionalism scale has been created to measure FCCPs' perception of FCC as a profession. Correlation analyses indicate that a sense of professionalism is positively associated with size of child care support network.

We will continue to pursue quantitative analyses to explore the correlations between FCCPs perceived stress, sense of professionalism, and intent to exit FCC. The theoretical constructs represented by these correlations are also being targeted in the analyses of the qualitative data that has been collected in the spring of 2012. Transcription, initial review, and categorical codes have been generated based upon initial analysis of large scale survey data, interview transcripts and field notes. Qualitative analysis will continue through the fall and winter.

### **Implications for policy/practice**

Knowledge about the perspectives and needs of FCCPs may enable more sensitive outreach to FCCPs that effectively addresses the unique needs of providers in home-based settings. Our research will also further develop our collective understanding of the diversity of home-based providers by focusing attention on those providing licensed FCC. Greater understanding of the unique context of home-based child care may inform tailored training that may help

FCCPs increase the quality of care they provide to children and families.

### **Implications for research**

This study employs qualitative interviews to explore themes that emerge in analyses of statewide administrative survey data. We hope our project will serve as an example of an effective way to use administrative data in connection with qualitative protocols to increase the depth of information generated in research.

### **For more information:**

Swartz, R.A. & Wiley, A. (2012) Sustaining Family Child Care Providers Psychosocial Wellness. National Head Start Research Conference. Washington, D.C: Office of Head Start. (Poster Presentation).

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