

Child Care Policy Research Consortium 2009 Annual Meeting Overview

The purpose of the Child Care Policy Research Consortium (CCPRC) is to increase national capacity for sound child care research, identify and respond to critical issues, and link child care research with policy and practice. The Consortium includes researchers and policymakers who are, or have been, involved in child care research projects sponsored by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families.

The 2009 Annual CCPRC Meeting was held on Thursday October 29th and Friday October 30th, at the Ritz-Carlton in Washington, DC. Pre-meeting sessions took place on Wednesday, October 28.

The meeting was developed collaboratively by the CCPRC Steering Committee, the OPRE Child Care Research Team, the Child Care Bureau, and principal investigators of funded projects. Within major categories identified by the CCPRC Steering Committee including 1) providers, 2) children and 3) parents, theme groups were formed to address issues of measurement/evaluation, quality, and systems and the market. The result was a total of nine theme groups that refined the research questions to be addressed and developed proposed plenary and breakout sessions. Through the Steering Committee, interrelated and overlapping issues were identified, leading to the development of cross-cutting sessions.

This three-day invitational meeting provided a forum for researchers and policymakers to explore emerging research findings, questions, and methods that relate to the next generation of policies; strengthen partnerships and professional relationships; and by highlighting the research and policy questions of importance to the field, supported OPRE in shaping its ongoing child care research agenda. In addition to CCPRC members, partners from across the Department of Health and Human Services and other Federal agencies participated in the meeting.

- Wednesday consisted of pre-meeting sessions designed to highlight special issues and provide an opportunity for groups of grantees to meet.
 - State Data Capacity Grantees and Child Care Research Scholars met in closed sessions with their OPRE project officers.
 - A work session focused on “Challenges and Lessons Learned in Research with Parents about Child Care.” Participants in this session explored the challenges in interviewing and communicating with parents, including terminology and language, method and design, and implementation issues. Materials from this session, including a session summary, are provided along with the regular meeting summaries.
 - An evening session offered an update from the design phase team of the National Study of Child Care Supply and Demand.
- Thursday and Friday were devoted to plenary and breakout sessions that addressed the meeting themes and included discussions with ACF Leadership. There were three plenary sessions on Thursday: 1) Dialogue about Research Priorities with ACF Leadership; 2) High-Stakes Testing and Assessment: Quality and Children’s Outcomes; and 3) Understanding Parental Decisions about Children’s Care: Theoretical, Methodological, and Practice

Insights. Friday plenary sessions focused on: 1) Early Childhood Workforce—Assessing and Measuring Readiness for Change; 2) Outside Forces Affecting Child Care Markets; and 3) a closing session, Big Issues and Small Insights: A Discussion with ACF Leaders. Through breakout and poster sessions, as well as informal networking opportunities, participants were encouraged to delve deeply into the issues raised in the plenary sessions. The final plenary provided a summary about how the presentations and discussions from the 2009 CCPRC Annual Meeting related to the key policy and research issues raised by ACF Leadership during the opening plenary.

All of the products developed for this meeting including the agenda, participant list, detailed session summaries and associated documents are posted on the meeting website at

www.researchconnections.org.

Wednesday, October 28, 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Pre-meeting Session)

Challenges and Lessons Learned in Research with Parents about Child Care

The purpose of this session was to engage in a participant-directed discussion of the challenges researchers experience in communicating with parents about child care. Session leaders included Susan Jekielek, Bobbie Weber, Julia Henly, Rupa Datta, Gina Adams, Ajay Chaudry, Helen Ward, Ann Collins, Kathryn Tout, and Nikki Forry. There is a growing interest in understanding how parents facing diverse circumstances make child care decisions. Numerous researchers have explored this question and have experiences and wisdom to share. In response to interest in the field, quantitative and qualitative researchers who have studied, or are currently studying, parental perceptions, processes, choices, and constraints shared lessons learned and identified next steps for improving research with parents around child care. Particular emphasis was given to: 1) Terminology and Language—language that researchers use when talking to parents about their child care; 2) Study Design and Methods; and 3) Practical Considerations and Implementation Issues. Large and small group brainstorming sessions were used to identify key issues, challenges, strategies, and lessons learned in research with parents about child care. In next steps, participants identified a list of guidance documents and research products that would be helpful in moving the field forward on this topic.

Thursday, October 29, 8:45 am to 9:45 am

Opening Session (Plenary 1): Dialogue about Research Priorities with ACF Leadership

Leadership from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) discussed priorities in child care and early education, including ACF's interagency work with the U.S. Department of Education and other Federal partners. Participants included Naomi Goldstein, Shannon Rudisill, Mary Bruce Webb and Ivelisse Martinez-Beck. Shannon discussed priorities for the Obama Administration as expressed by the following: "Happy, healthy, and successful children. Ready for school and ready for life." Of particular interest to the Administration are: early learning systems and quality infrastructure; standards, performance and outcomes; the inclusion of health; continuity of care; accreditation and quality measurement; and the relationship between Quality Rating and Improvement Systems, accreditation and measures of quality across States. Naomi and Mary Bruce reinforced these priorities and discussed specific projects that are underway.

Concurrent Breakout Sessions: Thursday, October 29, 10:30 am to 12:00 noon

Breakout A-1: Coordination Across Professional Development and Training Systems: A Critical Look at the Role of Institutions of Higher Education.

This session involved an examination of the role of higher education in supporting State initiatives to enhance quality and build a high quality workforce. Panelists included Beth Rous, Pamela Winton, Stephany Hewitt, Dan Haggard, and Kate Tarrant. It began with an overview across four major areas related to professional development including developing State infrastructure to support articulation, honing faculty resources, supporting non-traditional students, and assessing and evaluating competency through licensure, certification, and credentialing. Key issues discussed were the importance of articulation across institutions and settings, access by the early learning workforce including providers who are English Language Learners (ELL), faculty resources, and interagency efforts.

Breakout A-2: Data and Measurement Challenges in Doing Subsidy Research

The purposes of this session were to: 1) Provide an overview of key challenges in collecting subsidy information using different types of data; and 2) Examine more closely the challenges and promises posed by different approaches to studying subsidies. Session leaders included Susan Jekielek, Deanna Schexnayder, Ann Collins, Robert Goerge, and Linda Giannarelli. The panel highlighted two studies that represent alternative research designs and types of data, and then introduced a new data resource on State-specific subsidy policies of interest to subsidy researchers. Following the presentations, there was a facilitated discussion of what we have learned and what we still need to know that could improve our ability to research subsidy-related questions. Among the themes that emerged were the need for sharper terminology, common definitions, improved conceptualization of issues and better data. Other issues identified were the importance of letting research questions drive data choices, taking advantage of multiple data sources and linkages, and looking at subsidy use from multiple points of view.

Breakout A-3, Emerging Issues in Home-Based Care

Home-based child care—child care provided by regulated family child care providers and family, friend and neighbor caregivers who are legally exempt from regulation—is a common type of child care for many children, especially for infants and toddlers, children of color, and children from families with low incomes. This cross-cutting session highlighted the developing body of knowledge on home-based care, with findings from multiple projects that have been synthesized in current reviews of the literature. Session leaders included T’Pring Westbrook, Amy Susman-Stillman, Toni Porter, and Diane Paulsell. Key themes included the need to refine definitions, evaluate quality initiatives aimed at home-based care, initiate more rigorous studies, and increase implementation and evaluation data.

Breakout A-4: Are Quality Rating and Improvement Systems Living Up to Their Promises?

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) are designed to achieve multiple goals, including better alignment and coordination of services, standards, and incentives in an early childhood system; improved quality of care and education; increased availability of information for parents; and, promotion of children’s positive development. The objective of this session was to provide a framework for developing and measuring the expected outcomes of QRIS in each area and to update the audience on existing efforts to support

research and evaluation on QRIS. Sessions leaders included J. Lee Kreader, Kimberly Boller, James Elicker, and Kathryn Tout. Presenters proposed a set of key indicators for the outcomes of interest and used examples from ongoing research to demonstrate the strength of the existing evidence base. Presentations also addressed issues related to the design and timing of QRIS evaluation, challenges to consider, child outcomes, and the intersection of research with policy. A key theme from this session was that QRIS's are complex adaptive systems that require issues to be considered first at the systems level, and then at the level of children and families. Reasonable interim outcomes need to be shared with policy-makers, and while it may take time to produce child outcomes, now is the time to measure outcomes often and frequently.

Thursday, October 29, 12:00 noon to 2:00 pm

Plenary Session 2: High-Stakes Testing and Assessment: Quality and Children's Outcomes

The context for this plenary was as follows: There is a push from many fronts to link program data with child outcomes. For example, Head Start mandates that child assessment data be collected as one indicator of program performance. In addition, the Office of Special Education requires all States to report child outcome data for early intervention and early childhood special education. States are taking very different approaches in terms of responding to these mandates, and extending those mandates to other programs such as public pre-kindergarten. Leading this plenary were Toni Porter, Martha Zaslow, Beth Rous, and Jennifer Park. Highlighted were innovative approaches taken by States to address the challenges of including child assessments in accountability efforts, the challenges and pitfalls of such approaches, and implications for children, programs, and providers. Key themes included the importance of understanding the larger system that assessments are part of, knowing how assessments and results will be used, and making sure that assessment results are provided to policy makers, parents and practitioners in ways that are understandable.

Concurrent Breakout Sessions, Thursday October 29, 2:15 pm to 3:45 pm

Breakout B-1: Appropriate Linking of Data for Purposes of Examining Child Outcomes

Researchers can play a role in working with administrators and other stakeholders in designing systems of data collection and in linking data that can help address research and evaluation questions for a variety of purposes. Session leaders included Wendy Robeson, Rolf Grafwallner, Nicole Forry, Carolyn Drugge, Rod Southwick, and Diana Tester. Speakers discussed approaches for appropriately linking child outcome data with other data, such as program-level or state-level data. The importance of identifying specific research and evaluation questions in advance, selecting appropriate measures for various research and evaluation purposes, selecting appropriate measures for various populations, linking data across different data collection systems, and using data for the purposes for which they were collected were examined. States often face challenges in terms of costs and the need to work across departments.

Breakout B-2: Subsidy Policies: What We Know about Effects on Continuity of Care, Parent Decisionmaking and Child Well-being—How Sure Are We?

This cross-cutting breakout session explored what we know about subsidy participation and continuity of care for children with particular emphasis on the effects of subsidies on children. Session leaders included Roberta Weber, Ellen Scott, Chris Herbst, and Yoonsook

Ha. Among the questions addressed were: Do subsidies and subsidy policies influence the child care decisions made by parents? What happens when subsidies end? Do children stay in the same arrangement? Return to the same arrangement? Is there evidence that subsidies and subsidy duration influence child outcomes? What research is needed to improve our understanding of subsidy dynamics and their implications for children? The moderator and speakers led a discussion about the importance of these questions, what we are learning from recent studies, the challenges and limitations of current methods, and promising directions for the future. Key themes were the recognition that subsidies are only one piece of a complex set of inter-related dynamics affecting children in low-income families and the need for more research about the extent to which linkages exist between subsidies, quality and child outcomes.

Breakout B-3: Strengthening Concepts and Measures of Engagement with Families

This breakout session: 1) identified key elements of a comprehensive concept of family engagement, emerging to replace the limited, older concept of parent involvement; 2) shared components of a related, newly defined dimension of child care quality, family sensitivity; 3) discussed issues involved in measuring family engagement and sensitivity in care and education settings; and 4) discussed the range of family outcomes associated with sensitive, engaged caregiving. Session leaders included Martha Zaslow, Juliet Bromer, Linda Halgunseth, and Jay Fagan. Themes included the need to think in terms of reciprocal relationships and strengths-based approaches in which all families bring things to programs and programs give to families; how early childhood settings support child development, not just actions, but what's in people's heads that makes them sensitive; the complexity of families and the complex inter-relationships among families and programs; the need to clarify theoretical issues so that we can get closer to understanding measurement issues; and, finally, the importance of looking at both child and parent outcomes.

Breakout B-4: Unionization in Child Care

This session: 1) examined key research questions of interest regarding unions; 2) explored how information might be gained from ongoing research activities to inform CCDF policy-makers and practitioners and researchers; and 3) examined research conducted on K-12 unionization that could inform early childhood education policy. Session leaders included Richard Brandon, Susan Johnson, and Linda Saterfield. Specifically, education researchers presented research and discussed what is currently known about the impact of unionization on educational organizations. A State CCDF administrator provided a State perspective on unionization including emerging research questions. Similarities and differences between K-12 and early childhood education were discussed as well as the importance of being attentive to bargaining agreements (including who is doing the bargaining); recognizing the complexity that exists in early childhood education at the family, state and national levels; and the importance of studying the variations and interplay in contracts, levels, rates, tiered reimbursement, and other financial issues across different settings and levels.

Thursday, October 29, 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm

Plenary 3: Understanding Parental Decisions about Children's Care: Theoretical, Methodological, and Practical Insights

Parents play a pivotal role as decision makers in their child’s care and early education. Accurate understanding of the decision making process can provide a foundation for child care policy making. This overview of research on parent child care decision making began with a discussion of relevant policy which was followed by an overview of multiple theoretical perspectives that are available for studies of decision making. Session leaders included Roberta Weber, Julia Henly, Ajay Chaudry, Elizabeth Davis and Ann Collins. Key themes included the importance of testing what we are doing and using more experimental and quasi-experimental designs, grounding empirical research in a conceptual framework or integrated set of frameworks, and thinking beyond employment outcomes in examining the use of child care subsidies.

Friday, October 30, 8:45 am to 10:15 am

Plenary Session 4: Early Childhood Workforce—Assessing and Measuring Readiness for Change

States and local communities must make difficult decisions about how to allocate limited funds for quality improvement in early care and education. An emerging conceptualization raises the possibility that funds for professional development approaches might be utilized more efficiently and effectively if instead of using the same approach with all caregivers, professional development could be tailored to their “readiness to change.” Session leaders included Marty Zaslow, Shira Peterson, Diane Paulsell, and Carolyn Layzer. The session started with a presentation about the conceptualization and measurement of readiness to change for early childhood caregivers that included the theoretical and empirical basis from health research, why and how this conceptualization has been adapted to early learning, evidence from its use with both center-based and home-based early childhood caregivers, and possibilities for tailoring professional development approaches for caregivers at different stages of readiness to change. The session ended with perceptions about the relevance of the readiness to change conceptualization, possible next steps for its application in practice and policy, and important next steps for research. Key issues included that quality measures are rarely individualized or tailored to specific caregiver needs or characteristics; that individualization and tailoring of efforts should allow for change and maintenance of change over time; and that readiness to change approaches will likely result in altered expectations about the timeline of change and how professional development studies are run, but also allow for more responsive and tailored professional development programs.

Friday, October 30, 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.

Plenary Session 5: Outside Forces Affecting Child Care Markets

This session explored multiple perspectives on the economic recession including how the recession may be influencing child care markets, parent child care decisions and well-being, and state policies. Session leaders were Richard Brandon, Roberta Weber, Gina Adams and Shannon Rudisill. There is the widespread perception that the recession is influencing the supply of care and decisions parents are making, and yet most of the information we have is anecdotal in nature. The intent was to identify research questions, data sources, and research methods that might be used by states and researchers interested in pursuing this topic. Presenters shared their insights about the economics of the current recession, trends in State child care funding and policies, influences on the child care market, and how providers make business decisions—and what these insights suggest about the possible effects of the

recession on child care supply and demand. Issues that emerged included: the impact of the economy on child care is enormously complex and it is essential to consider contextual influences; the Child Care Bureau is interested in suggestions about how best to track jobs saved or created due to ARRA spending; the possibility of examining past data on child care markets to explain some of what we are observing; and the differential effects of the recession on male versus female employment.

Concurrent Breakout Sessions: Friday, October 30, 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Breakout C-1: Quality and Children’s Development in the Earliest Years

This session provided the context for a general discussion about research on the relationship between the quality of child care and children’s development during the earliest years through brief presentations on: 1) the quality of child care that infants and toddlers in the U.S. experience, using data from the ECLS-B; 2) results from the Educare implementation study; and 3) emerging approaches to analyzing data on the relationship between quality and child outcomes. Session leaders included Marty Zaslow, Nicole Forry, Noreen Yazejian, and Rebecca Ryan. Among the issues discussed was the value in looking at the national picture; the need to intervene early with at-risk children; promising early findings from Educare; and new methods for analyzing the effect of non-randomized treatments, such as subsidy receipt and quality of care.

Breakout C-2: How Parents Use Child Care Information: The Known and Unknown

Numerous public and private investments are built on the assumption that provision of information to parents will have a positive impact on parents’ child care decisions. During this session, panelists and participants explored what is known and not known about the impact of information on child care decision making. Session leaders included Bobbie Weber, Cherie Rains, Shannon Williams, and Kathryn Tout. Presenters shared findings from several studies that provide insight about how parents use information in making child care decisions as well as a framework for examining what we know about the use of quality information in child care decision making. Presenters and session participants discussed research that is needed to inform efforts to provide information to parents. Key themes emerging from this session included that we are building QRIS with limited understanding of how parents make child care decisions and the role of information in supporting that process. Research on both topics is of high relevance. Also, we need to know more about how parents use information, including what information and formats are most useful, while acknowledging that how parents define quality may vary, other factors will affect a parent’s decision, and choices may be limited by the supply of care.

Breakout C-3: Measuring Implementation in Research and Practice

This session focused on measurement and evaluation of implementation, an essential factor in evaluating child care quality and its effects on children, parents, and families. Session leaders included Kate Tarrant, Sandra Naoom, Ann Collins, and Carolyn Layzer. Specifically, fidelity measurement and evaluation was addressed—determining whether an initiative or intervention as a whole, the staffing and the services they offer, or a particular component such as a curriculum, is delivered in a way that is “faithful” to the initial intent and its anticipated outcomes. This is important because replication of a model--or taking it to scale—depends on a true understanding of its results. This session provided a conceptual

model for the measurement of fidelity of implementation and addressed quality interventions at two levels: 1) professional development targeted at improving teaching, and 2) curriculum models targeted at improving learning. Among the issues that emerged were: interventions do not happen in a vacuum, we need to pay attention to contextual issues and consider that we work in a dynamic context; the feasibility of fidelity measures varies depending on the intervention and tensions sometimes exist between fidelity and adaptation; evaluating efficacy is important, but evaluating implementation may be more useful to the field (allowing us to learn lessons around real world implementation); if implementation isn't documented, it makes it difficult for others to replicate the intervention; large evaluation projects should include thoughtful attention to fidelity measures; a venue for sharing best practices is needed--CCPRC should think about short documents to advise policymakers on fidelity measures and their importance in "scale up" and "implementation" projects.

Breakout C-4: Assessing School Readiness in Special Populations

Are school readiness assessments adequately measuring children's development among special populations such as Dual Language Learners (DLL), English Language Learners (ELL), recent immigrants, and children with special needs? Session leaders included Wendy Robeson, Kathleen Hebbeler, Dina Castro, and Tamara Halle. During this session, researchers discussed measurement considerations that need to be addressed with special populations. Also discussed was the need for subgroup analyses of school readiness assessment results to highlight differences by risk factors (e.g., poverty status, etc.). Themes included the need for new assessment instruments, the importance of knowing why the assessment is being conducted, the value of naturalistic observation tools in assessing young children, and difficulties with standardized tests (unless they are developed for a special population, they may not be culturally sensitive in assessing that population of children).

Friday, October 30, 2009, 2:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.,

Plenary 6, Big Issues and Small Insights: A Discussion with ACF Leadership

This session focused on themes from the opening plenary by ACF leadership and identified how the presentations and discussions at the 2009 CCPRC Annual Meeting reflected these themes. Session leaders included Marty Zaslow, Naomi Goldstein, Shannon Rudisill and Mark Greenberg. After an opening summary by Marty Zaslow, ACF Leaders shared their thoughts about the issues and insights raised, how the Consortium might support key ACF priorities through policy-related research, and new areas where research is needed.