

A Dual Generation Approach: Examining the Impact of the CCDBG 12-Month Eligibility Period on Child Care Continuity and Parental Employment for Families Receiving Wisconsin Shares

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Project Description

As the Lead Agency for administration of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) provides child care assistance to approximately 45,000 families each month through the Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014 (CCDBG) has resulted in substantial policy changes to Wisconsin Shares, including implementation of 12-month authorizations and increases in subsidy generosity. The purpose of this project is to understand how these policies have impacted families' access to high-quality care, continuity and stability of care, and parental employment.

The Phase II project will result in two long-term outcomes. First, we will improve CCDBG policies and programs to better meet the needs of families in Wisconsin Shares by evaluating the impact of key CCDBG policies through rigorous research and by developing an integrated data system with an accessible data universe and visualizations for ongoing data-driven decision making. Second, we will build capacity for conducting research and using data to inform policy by strengthening and leveraging our partnership with a university research affiliate and by engaging in activities to facilitate collaboration among researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders.

Research Questions

Access to High Quality Care

- Do changes in authorization length and generosity predict the likelihood that children receiving Wisconsin Shares will attend 5 Star programs?

Child Care Continuity

- Does continuity of care, as measured by child care subsidy spell length, differ after implementation of the 12-month authorization period and increase in generosity?
- Does stability of care, as measured by the total number of provider changes per child, differ after implementation of the 12-month authorization period and increase in generosity?
- Post implementation of the 12-month authorization period, do continuity and stability of care differ for special populations as compared with other children?

Parental Employment

- Does the length of employment differ for parents in Wisconsin Shares after implementation of the 12-month authorization period and increase in generosity?
- Do earnings differ for parents in Wisconsin Shares after the implementation of the 12-month authorization period and increase in generosity?

Sample

Our sample will be drawn from our state's administrative data system and will include all children and families served by Wisconsin Shares

before and after CCDBG policy changes. Cohort 1 will capture any family served in the 18 months prior to CCDBG changes, while cohort 2 will capture any family served in the 18 months after the policy changes.

Methods

Access to High Quality Care

We will use multivariate logistic regression to test whether cohort membership, as well as changes in authorization and subsidy amount, are predictive of high quality care. Exploratory models will consider whether the associations differ across key child and family subgroups (e.g. rural residence, homelessness, parents working non-standard hours, and children in out-of-home care).

Child Care Continuity

A Kaplan-Meier estimation model will be used to determine median spell length (i.e., length of care) before and after CCDBG implementation. Cox regression will be used to test our hypothesis that children will have greater continuity of care after CCDBG policy changes. Multiple Ordinary Least Squares regression will be conducted to assess the relationship between total number of provider changes and cohort membership. We will also conduct analyses to estimate differences for children in special populations as compared to other children.

Parental Employment

A Kaplan-Meier estimation model will be used to describe patterns of employment spells. Median earnings will be calculated before and after the CCDBG implementation. A regression will be performed to assess the relationship between monthly earnings and covariates (i.e., ethnicity, age of child, provider type, provider location, county unemployment rate, and parent educational attainment).

Progress Update

Our Workgroup for Researchers and Policymakers (WRAP) is currently conducting requirements gathering sessions with our Business Intelligence

team to build a data universe which will contain the necessary data elements to complete our analyses.

Implications for policy/practice

The Phase II project will result in ongoing benefits for Wisconsin. The insights we gain from our research will help us improve CCDBG policies and programs to better meet the needs of families participating in Wisconsin Shares.

Implications for research

The project will build the internal capacity of DCF's Division of Early Care and Education to conduct rigorous, policy-relevant research and to connect the results of research to policy decisions. The data universe developed as part of this project will combine administrative data from multiple sources allowing for more streamlined data access. This data source will be available to DCF for research and analyses beyond this grant to ensure high-quality child care for Wisconsin's low-income children.

For more information:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/rptplangrants>

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