

# Child Care & Early Education RESEARCH CONNECTIONS

## Child Care Decision-Making

Child care plays an important role in supporting families, from children's development to parents' employment. The complex process by which families find child care arrangements is informed by their preferences for features of care arrangements and constrained by such factors as availability, accessibility, affordability, and awareness of supply. A recent comprehensive literature review and accompanying webinar discuss research on multiple dimensions of the child care decision-making process, structured within the framework of a child care decision-making conceptual model. This **Topic of Interest** highlights that review, webinar, and conceptual model, as well as data sets, reports, journal articles, projects, and bibliographies from the *Research Connections* collection.

Access the literature review, webinar, and conceptual model:

- Forry, N. D., Tout, K., Rothenberg, L., Sandstrom, H., & Vesely, C. K. (2013). *Child care decision-making literature review*. (OPRE Brief 2013-45). Washington, DC: U.S. Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation.
- Forry, N. D., Vesely, C. K., Sandstrom, H., & Wheatley, E. (2014). *Child care decision-making: Emerging findings and policy implications*. Washington, DC: U.S. Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation.
- Weber, R. (2011). *Understanding parents' child care decision-making: A foundation for child care policy making*. (Research-to-Policy, Research-to-Practice Brief OPRE 2011-12). Washington, DC: U.S. Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation.



## Patterns of Child Care Arrangements

Several large-scale nationally representative data sets, such as the National Household Education Survey (NHES), Early Childhood Longitudinal Study: Birth Cohort (ECLS-B), and Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), include questions about parents' child care arrangements. Researchers have used these questions to explore parental child care preferences and other factors associated with various patterns of child care arrangements.

Explore data sets:

- NHES, ECLS-B, and SIPP (available from ICPSR <https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/>)

See reports and papers:

- Belfield, C. R. (2010). *Early childhood care and education: Enrollment patterns and expenditures over the decade 1995-2005*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.
- Laughlin, L. L. (2013). *Who's minding the kids?: Child care arrangements: Spring 2011*. (Current Population Reports, P70-135). Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- Miller, P., Votruba-Drzal, E., & Coley, R. (2013). Predictors of early care and education type among preschool-aged children in immigrant families: The role of region of origin and characteristics of the immigrant experience. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35(9), 1342-1355.

## Child Care Decisions Among Special Populations

The Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation of the U.S. Administration for Children and Families has funded a number of research projects that examine aspects of the child care decision-making process among various populations, including immigrants, refugees, English language learners, and child care subsidy-eligible families.

Explore projects:

- Tout, K., Forry, N. D., Halle, T., Susman-Stillman, A. R., Davis, E. E., & Carlin, C. (2010). *Early Care and Education Choices, Quality and Continuity for Low-Income Families: A Maryland-Minnesota Research Partnership*. Child Trends.
- Vesely, C. K., Roy, K. M., & Hofferth, S. L. (2010). *Child Care Decision-making, Subsidy Use, and the Development of Economic Self-sufficiency among Immigrant Parents of Young Children*. University of Maryland.

Read project reports:

- Chaudry, A., Pedroza, J. M., Sandstrom, H., Danziger, A., Grosz, M., Scott, M., & Ting, S. (2011). *Child care choices of low-income working families*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Forry, N. D., Blasberg, A., Tout, K., Isner, T. K., Carlin, C., & Davis, E. E. (2011). *Minnesota Child Care Choices: Child care decision-making and perceptions of quality*. Minneapolis, MN: Child Trends.
- Holod, A., Johnson, A. D., Martin, A., Gardner, M., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2010). *Child care preferences and satisfaction: An examination of New York City subsidy recipients*. New York: Columbia University, National Center for Children and Families.
- Marshall, N. L., Robeson, W. W., Tracy, A. J., Frye, A., & Roberts, J. (2013). Subsidized child care, maternal employment and access to quality, affordable child care. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 28(4), 808-819.
- Montes, G., & Halterman, J. (2011). The impact of child care problems on employment: Findings from a national survey of US parents. *Academic Pediatrics*, 11(1), 80-87.
- Sandstrom, H., & Chaudry, A. (2012). 'You have to choose your childcare to fit your work': Childcare decision-making among low-income working families. *Journal of Children & Poverty*, 18(2), 89-119.
- Ward, H. D., Erin Oldham, L., & Atkins, J. A. (2011). *New Americans: Child care decision-making of refugee and immigrant parents of English language learners*. Portland, ME: Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service.

## Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

There are numerous ways that states can help parents when they are making decisions about child care. One important way is through a state child care quality rating system (QRIS). A QRIS aims to improve access to high-quality child care, in part through publicly-available ratings of program and provider quality that are intended to help guide parents' child care decisions. Several state QRIS evaluations examine parents' awareness and use of QRIS ratings in their decision-making.

Read evaluation briefs and reports:

- Anderson, T., & Elicker, J. (n.d.). *Does Paths to QUALITY help Indiana parents find quality child care?*. (Evaluation Brief No. 4). West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University, Center for Families.
- Starr, R., Tout, K., Albertson-Junkans, L., Moodie, S., Rothenberg, L., & Soli, M. (2012). *Kentucky STARS for KIDS NOW process evaluation: Findings from the Kentucky Early Care and Education and School-Age Care Household Survey*. (Evaluation Brief No. 8). Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- Tout, K., Starr, R., Isner, T. K., Cleveland, J., Albertson-Junkans, L., Soli, M., & Quinn, K.

(2011). *Evaluation of Parent Aware: Minnesota's quality rating and improvement system pilot: Final evaluation report*. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Early Learning Foundation.

## **Additional Resources**

Explore resources in the *Research Connections* collection related to the topic, including a Key Topic Resource List, as well as other recent additions.

- Child Care & Early Education Research Connections. (2009). *Child care decision-making: a Key Topic Resource List*. New York: Child Care & Early Education Research Connections.

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