

Child care subsidies: Choices and challenges for Sacramento County families ^[1]

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Abstract

Child care is one of the largest expenses for working families. When parents cannot afford child care, they must make difficult decisions about their personal finances and participation in the workforce. Due to a fragmented history of child care policy, there are limited funds available for child care subsidy programs and very few eligible families have access to vouchers to help them pay for child care. Previous research has demonstrated that the process of applying for child care subsidy assistance and finding a suitable provider is challenging for working parents. In Sacramento County, Child Action, Inc. is a resource and referral agency that administers a child care subsidy program, helps families find child care, and supports child care providers. The objective of this research project was to investigate how parents experienced the subsidy application process and search for a provider, and how access to affordable child care impacted their employment. Five semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents who had recently applied for child care subsidies; they were recruited via convenience sampling. Results showed that Child Action's staff mitigated parents' negative application experience, but parents felt they had limited choice of child care providers, primarily because of their scheduling needs. Access to child care subsidies improved parents' ability to maintain employment. These findings exemplify the effectiveness of Child Action's resource and referral program and can be used to inform future professional development and advocacy efforts. Recommendations include better supporting child care providers to meet parents' specified needs and increasing funding and capacity for child care subsidy programs.

Region: United States ^[4]

Tags: child care ^[5]

subsidy ^[6]

family resource programs ^[7]

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