

# Research on day care finds few timeouts [US] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

Children from low-income families who spend long hours in child care may be better off than children left in a home environment, a new study reports, countering some previous findings that suggested long periods of child care had a negative effect.

With increasing numbers of young children in poor communities spending more hours in child care as a result of welfare-to-work programs, researchers are offering evidence that center-based care is having a positive effect on children's intellectual and social development.

While some previous research has shown positive effects of high-quality care on children's intellectual development, this is one of the first studies to examine the effect of the quality of child care available to the poor.

"I think the results should soothe parents' worries since our findings show pretty remarkable cognitive skills in pre-reading levels and language skills for children in child care," said Dr. Bruce Fuller, a researcher on the study, who is a professor of education and public policy at University of California at Berkeley. "And this is good news because we also found that there are no negative effects on their behavior."

The new study, being published today in *Child Development*, the journal of the Society for Research in Child Development, was led by Dr. Susanna Loeb, an assistant professor of education at Stanford.

Children display stronger intellectual growth when people caring for them are more sensitive and responsive and stronger social development when the people providing child care are educated beyond high school, the study found. Meanwhile, children cared for in a family setting showed slightly more behavioral problems, but no differences in learning skills.

Over all, researchers found children significantly benefited from their participation in center-based programs in all aspects of learning, compared with children who were cared for by individual family members. Children in San Jose and San Francisco showed a greater increase in skills than children in Florida, especially on school readiness measures, but the difference may have been a result of higher quality centers in California, the study notes.

Children in family-based care exhibited, on average, more aggressive behavior, but there was no difference in their learning skills. Researchers found no correlation between the quantity of child care and behavior problems.

In quality preschools, children are more closely supervised and engaged in a variety of activities, researchers say. In homes where there may be an aging grandmother or an inattentive baby sitter, the supervision may not be as close and socialization may not be as intense, Dr. Fuller said. Children in quality settings did show better readiness for school and fewer behavioral problems.

- reprinted from The New York Times

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