

Scrambling for stability: The challenges of job schedule volatility and child care ^[1]

Author: Matthews, Hannah; Ben-Ishai, Liz & Levin-Epstein, Jodie

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AVAILABILITY

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Description:

For Karen, a part-time package delivery person and mom to a one-year-old, making child care arrangements is a weekly exercise in scrambling. That's because Karen receives notice of her schedule only one week in advance, and her shifts fluctuate. The volatility of her schedule makes everything harder. Karen struggles to find friends and family to care for her baby on short notice. And when she can't work the magic necessary to arrange child care on the fly, she is disciplined at work for being late or missing a day. Karen's story, recounted in a 2011 report from the Institute for Workplace Innovation and Workplace Flexibility 2010, highlights how job scheduling and child care challenges can prevent workers from advancing in their jobs and ensuring their children are well-cared for.

Today, CLASP released a new brief that explores the relationship between job scheduling and child care. *Scrambling for Stability: The Challenges of Job Schedule Volatility and Child Care* lays out the difficulties many low-income parents face as they navigate the mazes of volatile job schedules and child care simultaneously. A growing number of workers have hours that fluctuate from week to week, unpredictable schedules, and minimal control over their hours. These workers are disproportionately earning lower wages. They work in sectors like retail and food service, which are among the fastest growing fields in our economy. At the same time, it is challenging for child care providers to accommodate parents with volatile schedules. As a result, parents like Karen are left to piece together a patchwork of care arrangements, resulting in instability for their children.

Parents facing scheduling and child care challenges experience heightened economic insecurity when these two issues collide. They may have difficulty getting and keeping child care subsidies and may risk their jobs when problems securing child care force them to miss work.

The new CLASP brief offers a list of potential action steps, including public policies to increase job schedule predictability and stability and create more flexible child care subsidy options among others. Moreover, while *Scrambling for Stability* highlights important existing research, it also identifies the need for more research and data collection to better inform future policy work and advocacy.

Scrambling for Stability brings together several often disparate policy and advocacy worlds: those that address issues related to job quality and worker fairness and those addressing child care and early education. Together, we can work towards improved policies that better support families' economic stability and advancement while fostering children's healthy development.

Region: United States ^[3]

Tags: work/life balance ^[4]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/14/04/scrambling-stability-challenges-job-schedule-volatility-and>

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