

A review of the literature on home-based child care: Implications for future directions ^[1]

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Full report in PDF ^[2]

Introduction:

Home-based child care-regulated family child care and family, friend, and neighbor care-is a common arrangement for many young children in the United States, especially those from low-income families and families of color. Research suggests that home-based care may be the predominant form of nonparental care for infants and toddlers (Brandon, 2005). It also represents a significant proportion of the child care for children whose families receive child care subsidies (Child Care Bureau, 2006). Parents use these arrangements for a variety of reasons, including convenience, flexibility, trust, shared language and culture, and individual attention from the caregiver. Parents may also turn to home-based child care if they have very young children-infants or toddlers- because there are few spaces in child care centers.

Regulated family child care has been an issue for research and policy since the 1980s, when states actively began to invest in efforts to expand the supply of child care options and improve its quality. In contrast, family, friend, and neighbor child care did not emerge as a focus of research and policy until the mid-1990s, after the enactment of welfare reform when data began to emerge about significant proportions of child care subsidy dollars expended on this type of care (Porter & Kearns, 2005a). In the past decade, growing recognition of the role that these unregulated settings play in the child care supply has prompted a growing number of studies (for example, Anderson, Ramsburg, & Scott, 2005; Brandon, 2005; Capizzano, Adams & Sonenstein, 2000; Porter, 1998) and an increasing number of initiatives that aim to support these caregivers.

Although there are more studies that examine quality in family child care than studies that examine this question in family, friend, and neighbor care, information about the quality of homebased care is fairly sparse and presents a mixed picture. Some research suggests that home-based child care environments are relatively safe and that caregivers are affectionate and responsive (Layzer & Goodson, 2006; Paulsell et al., 2006; Tout & Zaslow, 2006). These studies also found that little time is spent on learning activities, such as reading or higher-level talk and engagement with children (Layzer & Goodson, 2006; Paulsell et al., 2006; Tout & Zaslow, 2006).

Child care serves a dual purpose of supporting children's development and their parents' ability to work. Most measures of child care quality, however, focus solely on structural features of child care settings and interactions between caregivers and children that are associated with supporting children's developmental outcomes. This literature review-particularly Chapters VI and VII- points to ways in which initiatives to support home-based caregivers may be able to support both children's development and parent outcomes. For example, home-based caregivers may be able to support parents in fulfilling their family and work responsibilities by offering flexible scheduling, information about parenting and other resources, and other supports.

Many state and local agencies and foundations, as well as the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), have explored ways to improve quality in home-based child care settings (see Porter & Kearns, 2005a for examples of state initiatives funded with Child Care Development Fund quality set-aside dollars and O'Donnell et al., 2006 for examples of those that are supported by private philanthropy). These efforts have potential for promoting positive child outcomes and school readiness among children who spend a significant amount of time in home-based child care. Relatively little is known about the effectiveness of these initiatives, however, making it difficult for states to make informed policy and program decisions about how best to support home-based caregivers. To begin a process for filling this knowledge gap, the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) within ACF contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, along with its subcontractor, Bank Street College of Education, to carry out the project Supporting Quality in Home-Based Care.

Region: United States ^[3]

Tags: quality ^[4]

regulated family childcare ^[5]

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/14/12/review-literature-home-based-child-care-implications-future> [2] https://www.mathematica.org/~media/publications/PDFs/earlychildhood/HBCC_lit_review.pdf [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7865> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/quality> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/regulated-family-childcare>