

Hidden fragility: Closure among child care services in BC ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Paper in pdf ^[2]

Excerpts from the paper:

This article examines the stability of the child care sector in British Columbia, Canada. The province makes an interesting case-study because net figures suggest there is relative stability, if not modest expansion, in its child care sector. There were 4,117 licensed providers in 1997. The figure in 2001 was 4,498. This 9 per cent increase in facilities produced a 10 per cent gain in the number of licensed spaces in the province (from 65,726 to 72,608).

Hidden behind the net figures, however, is a dramatic level of facility instability and closure. Nearly one-third of the 1,844 centres and one-half of the 2,273 family child care facilities that operated in 1997 closed by 2001.

In this article we aim to explain some of the turnover in BC child care by linking facility closure information with two additional data sources. The first is the 1997 provincial survey of child care operators, which allows us to identify correlations between programs that continued to operate after four years and factors such as receipt of provincial government funding, enrolment, fees, and auspice. The second data source is Canadian Census information from 1996 and 2001 about unemployment, median income and the child population in BC towns, cities and local health areas. This information facilitates analysis of the relationship between regional socioeconomic or demographic trends and closure of child care services.

Results from the child care centre models tell a very powerful policy story. Public expenditure matters for stability, and hence quality, in this part of the sector. Centres that received provincial wage assistance and cared for children from families who had provincial fee assistance were less likely to close after four years compared to those that did not enjoy these forms of public support.

Related link: Human Early Learning Partnership ^[3]

Region: Canada ^[4]

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