

# Clients' recommendations for improving the child care subsidy program <sup>[1]</sup>

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**Source:** Urban Institute

**Format:** Report

**Publication Date:** 25 Jun 2015

## AVAILABILITY

Brief in PDF <sup>[2]</sup>

## Summary

The stability and continuity of child care arrangements are important for parental employment and positive child development (Adams and Rohacek 2010). Yet the lives of many families, particularly low-income families, are often characterized by instability (Dubay and Zarabozo 2013; Sandstrom and Huerta 2013). Sudden job changes and residential moves, for example, may lead to disruptions in child care; conversely, unstable child care can negatively affect parents' ability to work.

Child care subsidies, funded through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), are designed with the dual goals of helping low-income parents maintain employment and supporting children's safety and development while in nonparental care. As such, child care subsidies can contribute to stability for children and parents alike. Many research studies have shown a positive relationship between subsidy use and several employment outcomes, such as a greater likelihood of employment, increased hours and earnings, and greater job retention (Ahn 2012; Baum 2002; Crawford 2006; Danziger, Ananat, and Browning 2003; Goerge et al. 2009; Lee et al. 2004; Tekin 2007).

Evidence suggests, however, that low-income children's participation in subsidized care is often short-lived, lasting only six to eight months on average, and many participants cycle off and back on after a temporary break (Davis, Krafft, and Tout 2014; Ha, Magnuson, and Ybarra 2012; Meyers et al. 2002). Short subsidy spells raise concerns about the ability of the subsidy program to support child care continuity. Available research on the determinants of subsidy stability, however, is limited.

This research brief presents a selection of findings from a four-year, mixed-methods study of a cohort of new entrants to the child care subsidy programs in four selected sites in Illinois and New York. The broader study includes an analysis of data from a telephone survey with subsidy clients, in-depth interviews with a subset of survey respondents, and state administrative records that track subsidy participation over an 18-month period. This brief reports findings from the in-depth interviews related to the following questions: What do clients recommend to improve the subsidy program to better support families? Are there subsidy program characteristics and job characteristics that parents perceive as hindering subsidy stability and child care continuity? We conclude with a discussion of how these findings align with subsidy policies in the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014.

**Region:** United States <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** affordability <sup>[4]</sup>  
subsidies <sup>[5]</sup>

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/15/08/clients%E2%80%99-recommendations-improving-child-care-subsidy>

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