

Even a conservative think tank finds that daycare choices blow for workers with nonstandard hours ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

That child care is expensive and often hard to line up comes as no surprise to anyone with small children who works. But there is a particular type of worker who suffers disproportionately from both expense and lack of choices: employees whose hours are “nonstandard”—either widely varying week to week, or assigned as night shifts.

Yes, there are often government subsidies, but many of the most hard-hit workers don’t qualify, as Shane Ferro, a business reporter at the Huffington Post, explains:

“There is a government subsidy for child care, for which anyone is eligible if he or she has a kid under 13 (or 19 in certain cases) and qualifies as low income. However, in order to use the subsidy, the child has to be enrolled in a center that accepts government benefits. Most of those day care centers have standard hours and are open from the early morning to mid-evening.

Even the American Enterprise Institute, not exactly a bastion of liberal social welfare advocacy, has issued a report deploring the hardship the current system is exacting from some of the lowest-income (and often single-parent) workers. After all, there is a reason centers are labeled as “day care,” and not “24-hour” or “night care.”

As the abstract from the AEI report explains:

Research suggests that mothers with nonstandard work schedules use relative care more and day care centers less than those with standard work schedules. Research also shows that child care subsidies are disproportionately used for day care centers. This suggests that mothers who work nonstandard schedules are less likely to receive child care assistance, but little empirical work addresses this question directly. Using data from a cohort of urban mothers, this study explores the direct and indirect relationship between work schedule and receipt of child care assistance. The findings suggest that nonstandard work schedules reduce the odds of receiving child care assistance; a relationship mediated entirely by less day care center use among nonstandard schedule workers. The results imply that more flexibility is needed in the child care assistance system, which better meets the needs of mothers who work nonstandard schedules.

While specific policy recommendations are not advised in the paper’s conclusions, there definitely is an acceptance—from a neoconservative think tank!—that government most certainly has a role in remedying the hardship. “The existing government child care assistance program,” the concluding sentence of the report reads, “needs to offer more variety in type of child care, as well as more flexibility for nonstandard schedule workers, especially when the child is older than age one.”

You know a situation has to be horrific when AEI is advising what amounts to expanding a government program.

-reprinted from Daily Kos

Region: United States ^[3]

Tags: workforce participation ^[4]

shift work ^[5]

non-standard hours ^[6]

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