

Child care assistance in the United States and nonstandard work schedules ^[1]

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Abstract

Child care is a necessary work support for many American families, but can be prohibitively expensive for those with low incomes. The federal government provides assistance through direct child care subsidies, but only a fraction of eligible families are in receipt. One factor that may limit access to child care assistance is work schedule. 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.

Region: United States ^[3]

Tags: work/family balance ^[4]

women ^[5]

non-standard hours ^[6]

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