

Future steps to bridge the gap^[1]

Ideas to meet the child care needs of low-income parents pursuing education and training

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AVAILABILITY

Full report PDF^[2]

Introduction

Removing the barriers that prevent low-income parents in education and training from accessing child care is an important step in supporting the economic well-being of these families. Research shows a clear association between educational attainment and economic stability and security, and college graduates have higher incomes on average than nongraduates. Short-term training can also yield labor market returns for program graduates (Carnevale, Rose, and Hanson 2012).¹ Further, there is evidence that improving the economic well-being of low-income parents is one of the best ways to improve the lives of their children (Duncan et al. 2011; Milligan and Stabile 2008; Dahl and Lochner 2012). Good early childhood care and education can help give children a strong start toward success (Heckman 2011; Center on the Developing Child 2007; Kilburn and Karoly 2008).

However, low-income parents can face barriers to accessing child care services that would allow them to participate in education and training to improve their employment prospects and give their children that strong start (Adams et al. 2014). This paper is part of the larger Bridging the Gap project, funded by the Ford Foundation and Annie E. Casey Foundation, which examines the systems, policies, and practices that affect access to child care for this population. We have used our research to develop a framework for a broader conversation about strategies to reduce and remove these barriers.

On April 29, 2016, the Urban Institute hosted a convening, funded by the Ford Foundation, of a broad range of stakeholders to discuss this issue and develop an agenda to inform future conversations. Participants included representatives from four federal agencies (the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Labor, Department of Education, and Department of Agriculture), the White House, national advocacy and membership organizations, state agencies, state membership organizations, postsecondary institutions, philanthropists, and community-based organizations and other local service providers. A full list of participants is included at the end of this brief. This brief summarizes some of the ideas discussed by this diverse group in the areas of research, policies, resources, and practices to support the child care needs of low-income parents in education and training.

Meeting participants identified three interrelated research strategies needed to better understand and support the needs of this population:

- Better collection of data and use of data.
- Improved tracking of participants across and beyond program participation.
- Rigorous research to understand the problem and identify effective or promising strategies.

Region: United States^[3]

Tags: inequality^[4]

training^[5]

low-income^[6]

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