Reconceptualizing Quality, Affordable Child Care as Public Utility: Family, Child, and Economic Developmental Perspectives

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Overview

• Introductions and genesis of this collaboration
• Child care theoretical perspectives
• NCRCRD needs assessment
  – Method / results / findings
• Reconceptualizing child care theoretical perspectives
• Next steps
  – Grant proposal, output, aims
• Acknowledgements
• Q&A
Introductions

The Team:

Bradford B. Wiles
Holly Hatton-Bowers
Alison Brennan
Jessie Piper

&

SEVERAL COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Poll Question 1

• Insert poll 1 here

• What is your best guess as to the average yearly cost for an infant to attend center-based child care in Nebraska?
  – A) $9,731 / year
  – B) $ 10,689 / year
  – C) $ 11,747 / year
  – D) $12,272 / year
  – E) $13,211 / year
Genesis and roles in this work

- Holly and Bradford - as a result of North Central Region Program Leaders supporting Extension Specialist meeting
- Jessie - Bradford’s GRA and “can-do” team member
- Alison – data analysis, reports, graphics

ALL OF US CONTRIBUTED EQUALLY TO THE DESIGN AND EXECUTION OF THIS WORK!!!

Kansas and Nebraska

- KS – Pottawatomie County Task Force – Chaired by Erin Tynon, with Pott. Co. Econ Development and multiple community partners
- NE – Started from scratch
  – Benefit from KS lessons learned (there were several)
  – Wider scope and more flexibility
  – Herculean effort in partnership with NE Extension
Theoretical Perspectives

- Historic approach to child care has been “it’s for the children”
- Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1994) informs our view of individuals, families, and communities in context
- Community Capitals Framework (Emery & Flora, 2006)

Affordable and Quality Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Quality</th>
<th>Low Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affordable</td>
<td>Optimal economic and human development condition for children, families, and communities</td>
<td>Optimal economic condition for communities, but not human development condition for families and children.</td>
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- Access considerations cannot be ignored!
• **Quantitative Measures (CBPR)**
  – Four Surveys:
    • Adults with care
    • Adults seeking care
    • Child care professionals
    • General Public

• **Qualitative Measures**
  – Four Focus Group samples
    • Same as above
    • About 65-75 minutes each

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**Insert Poll Question 2 here:**

• What do you think is the most important factor for those looking for child care?
  – A) Cost
  – B) Schedule
  – C) Location
  – D) Trust
  – E) Activities for children
Adults Seeking Care (N=65)

- Median household income - $60,000-$69,999
- Race/ethnicity: 98.5% White, 98.5% non-Hispanic
- Age: 78.4% ages 22-42, mode 28-32

Top Three Barriers
- Cost
- Matching work schedule / operating hours
- Location of care

Preferred Type of Care
- Child Care Center (N=29)

Adults With Care (N=138)

- Median household income - $90,000-$99,999
- Race/ethnicity 98.6% White, 97.8% non-Hispanic
- Age 97.8% ages 22-42, mode 33-37

Top Three Barriers
- Cost
- Quality of Care
- Location of care

Preferred type of care
- Child Care Center (N=86)

Average number of barriers encountered: 4.28
Median number of barriers encountered: 4
Nebraska Results
Adults Seeking Care and Adults With Care

- **Adults Seeking Care (N=54)**
  - Median **household income** – $50,000-$59,999
  - Race/ethnicity: 92.6% White, 94.4% non-Hispanic
  - Average age: 28-32
- **Top Three Needs**
  - Infant Care
  - Summer Care
  - Reliable Care
- **Preferred Type of Care**
  - Child Care Center (N=27)

- **Adults With Care (N=120)**
  - Median **household income** – $80,000-$89,999
  - Race/ethnicity 93.3% White, 95.8% non-Hispanic
  - Average age: 33-37
- **Top Three Barriers**
  - Cost
  - Quality of Care
  - Matching work schedule / operating hours
- **Preferred type of care**
  - Child Care Center (N=86)

Average number of barriers encountered: 2.99
Median number of barriers encountered: 3

Kansas Results – General Public
(N=110)

In general, families in our community have access to and an adequate supply of child care services.
53% Disagree (N=62)

Access to quality, affordable child care is an economic development issue.
71% Agree (N=83)

Federal and/or state government should make child care services more affordable than they are at present.
57% Agree (N=67)

County government has a role to play in access to quality, affordable child care.
57.2% Agree (N=67)

Churches have a role to play in access to quality, affordable child care.
45.3% Agree (N=53)
Nebraska Results – General Public

In general, families in our community have access to and an adequate supply of child care services. 65.4% Disagree (N=49)

Access to quality, affordable child care is an economic development issue. 68.9% Agree (N=51)

Federal and/or state government should make child care services more affordable than they are at present. 73% Agree (N=54)

County government has a role to play in access to quality, affordable child care. 51.4% Agree (N=38)

Churches have a role to play in access to quality, affordable child care. 47.2% Neither agree or disagree (N=32)

Themes from Qualitative Findings

• Planning pregnancies around Child Care access / lack of options
• Cost is important, but rurality is a barrier regardless of cost
• Facebook / Craigslist as ways to secure child care (unlicensed)
• Balancing “we just figured it out” with shared understanding of need
• Communities want to support access to quality affordable child care but get stuck with the “how”
Poll Question 3

• Have you ever even thought that people need to plan pregnancies around child care?

• A) Yes, I have seen this movie before
• B) No, not until this presentation
• C) Seen this movie? Heck, I starred in it!

Findings – In the Words of the Participants

• “When I became pregnant with my first child, I contacted 10 centers and in-home providers and everything was full or the hours did not work with my schedule; 2 hours after giving birth, someone contacted me through Facebook that they were going to start doing in-home child care (not licensed) because she couldn’t find care for her 4 children.” (Rosemary - NE)

• “Adequate numbers of childcare facilities in small towns is an issue. Cost was not an issue. When you have to plan pregnancies around provider openings, that’s an issue.” (Annie - KS)

• “It is so incredibly difficult to find infant care in general here if you do not already have a child enrolled in daycare. The costs of daycare are astronomical. When we have our 2nd child in January, our monthly daycare costs will equal our monthly mortgage cost. That is a big pill to swallow.” (Stella - NE)

• “‘Large’ communities have much more access to care, despite high cost. Small communities have almost no access to care, even expensive care.” (Bertha - KS)
Key considerations:

- The cost of child care is more than tuition at either UNL or KSU
- Family, child, and economic development considerations are crucial
- Unlicensed care does not always mean bad care, but odds are not good
- “It’s for the children” does not work
- Balancing individual responsibility with community vitality

Our work has led us to reconceptualize child care:

- Thinking of access to quality, affordable child care with the same level of importance as Internet/Phone/Electricity for rural communities
- Pursue efforts fixed on building Community Capital with public funding support (e.g. community conversations, Community Coaching)
- Leverage the benefits of economic and family development beyond child development benefits
Next Steps

Expand data collection to Cherokee and Wichita Counties, KS
Expand data collection in Nebraska - Spanish translations
Submit a proposal to USDA for funding informed by these data

Successes to Date

• Child care center opening in Onaga, KS (Pottawatomie County) as a direct result of this work!
• Month of June in D.C. for USDA/NIFA Visiting Scholars Program (B. Wiles)
• Presentations to NCFR and UGA consortium on methods and tools
• $5,000 in support from Pott. County Econ Development Corp.
• NE data is being used to inform larger statewide needs assessment
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Questions?

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