

***Child Care Centers, Child Care Subsidies, and Faith-Based Organizations:
Preliminary Findings on Five Counties in 2003***

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Faith-based organizations (FBOs) undisputedly play an important role in the provision and support of child care services. However, few recent studies have quantified the nature and extent of this role.¹ Further, although Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) rules have always allowed parents with child care vouchers to choose faith-based child care programs, few studies have examined how many faith-based providers participate in the voucher subsidy system and whether they face any barriers to participation.

This fact sheet presents a *preliminary* analysis examining these issues. With the support of the Child Care Bureau in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Urban Institute is conducting a comprehensive study of child care providers and the subsidy system in five counties across four states.² The results presented below rely on data collected for the comprehensive study, including a phone survey with a random sample of child care centers that serve children age 5 and under for at least 40 hours a week (conducted in 2003), as well as qualitative data on subsidy policies, implementation practices, and the experiences of providers with the subsidy system.³ Final results from this project are forthcoming.

This fact sheet focuses on two issues in the five focal counties: the role of FBOs in the provision of center-based child care services, and whether faith-affiliated child care providers appear to face any barriers to participating in the CCDF. These findings accurately describe a range of conditions found in the focal counties. However, there are several caveats to consider when interpreting the results. First, these findings are preliminary. Second, although the survey samples are representative of the population of child care centers in each of the five counties, the results from each county are not representative of the state within which it is located or of the nation as a whole. Finally, population estimates based on a sample are always subject to uncertainty owing to sampling error. In these analyses, the range within which we expect the actual population proportion to fall is typically plus or minus 6 to 8 percentage points (at a 90% confidence level). In one county, the sampling error is smaller, generally plus or minus 3 percentage points.⁴

Preliminary findings

FBOs play a significant role in the provision of center-based child care: There are many ways that FBOs can be involved in supporting child care centers. We examine three overlapping roles including whether center directors report being affiliated⁵ with an FBO (*faith-affiliated*), being housed by an FBO (*faith-housed*), and/or providing religious instruction or organized prayers or worship services (*faith-infused*). When looking at all roles together, the share of centers reporting at least one of these connections to an FBO is between 23 and 38 percent in four counties, and is approximately 67 percent in the fifth county.

The role of the faith-based community in supporting child care varies widely within and across counties: When looking at each of the three roles separately, we find the following:

- *Faith-affiliated:* The share of centers reporting an affiliation with an FBO ranges from about 16 percent in two sites to 44 percent in one site. How many of these providers are affiliated with private religious schools, as opposed to non-school FBOs, also varies.

- *Faith-housed*: The share of centers reporting being housed in a building belonging to an FBO ranges from about 19 percent in one county to approximately 41 percent in another. Across all counties, the majority of centers affiliated with FBOs are faith-housed.
- *Faith-infused*: The share of centers reporting religious instruction or organized prayer or worship services ranges from 11 percent in one county to 54 percent in another. Not surprisingly, the data suggest that most of the faith-infused centers are also faith-affiliated. However, while it is rare (in most counties) to find faith-infused providers that are not faith-affiliated, a substantial minority of providers in one county reports this status.

Faith-affiliated providers appear to face few barriers to subsidy participation: Our analysis looks at the question of subsidy participation for faith-affiliated centers in two ways. First, we examine actual participation patterns from survey data. Second, we analyze data collected through interviews with subsidy staff and experts on faith-based child care, including some faith-based providers. We find the following:

- In all five counties, more than half of faith-affiliated providers care for at least one child receiving a voucher-based subsidy; in three counties, at least two-thirds do so. When comparing rates of subsidy participation among faith-affiliated and non-faith-affiliated centers, three of the five counties have no evidence of a lower rate of subsidy participation among faith-based providers. Two counties have some evidence of lower participation among faith-affiliated centers. A preliminary exploration of these two counties suggests the results may be related to demographic factors rather than policies or barriers within the subsidy system.
- Respondents across our sites suggested that faith-affiliated centers generally do not face many barriers to subsidy participation *specifically* because of their faith status. However, some respondents suggested that *some* faith-affiliated centers may have certain characteristics—such as insufficient administrative capabilities, concerns about government intrusion, or not seeing service to low-income children as part of their main mission—that may lead them to limit their participation. These factors are likely to also play a role in participation for non-faith-affiliated centers with similar characteristics.

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Endnotes

¹ The Brookings Institution, “The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Child Care.” Transcript from *Sacred Places, Civic Purposes* forum, Washington, D.C., March 14, 2001.

² The study counties are Jefferson, AL; Monterey and San Diego, CA; Hudson, NJ; and King, WA.

³ The larger study surveyed both centers and family child care homes, though the analysis presented here is only for child care centers. For center directors, the survey had a sample size of 407 and a response rate of approximately 82 percent. Additional information on study methodology will be available in forthcoming reports.

⁴ More precise estimates are found in counties with large sample sizes relative to the population size and on variables that have estimates closer to 0 or 100%, rather than 50%.

⁵ This includes respondents who reported an affiliation with a church, synagogue, temple, mosque, or other faith-based organization or group.