Bridging the Gap

Exploring the Intersection of Workforce Development and Child Care

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Contents

Acknowledgments

Executive Summary

In recent years, the changing economy has put a spotlight on the issue of helping low-wage and low-skill workers advance in the job market. New economic realities have focused attention on how to design effective workforce development strategies to help these workers succeed and to better address barriers they may face. A key barrier that affects low-income parents seeking to advance is a lack of child care, which may be caused by high costs or limited availability of suitable options. A lack of child care can make it difficult for parents to invest time in improving their work skills through training or education activities.

Although it seems obvious that child care is a critical service for some low-wage or unemployed parents, relatively little attention has been paid to the issues that lie at the intersection of child care needs and workforce development efforts. With support from the Ford Foundation, the Urban Institute is undertaking an examination of this intersection to spur a dialogue on the critical issues and solutions related to supporting the child care needs of parents in workforce development programs. This report, one of a series of papers from this project, provides an overview of each system and the issues that lie at the intersection of these two systems in the lives of families.

What Do We Know about Low-Income Parents and Workforce Development?

There is no national estimate of the number of low-income parents who want or need workforce development programs (or of the proportion of low-income parents who face child care barriers that might prevent them from enrolling in or completing such programs). However, a review of national data suggests the following key points:

1. Of the 21 million parents who are low income, almost three out of five (58 percent) have low education levels (a high school credential or less). One in six US adults has only basic or lower levels of literacy, and almost a third possess only basic or lower levels of numeracy.

2. Only about 1 in 10 low-income parents reports being enrolled in some form of education and training. A significant portion (about half) of low-income parents in education and training also work, and many have circumstances that suggest they are likely to need child care, such as being single (59 percent); having children younger than 6 years old (69 percent) or younger

than 3 years old (42 percent); or having more than one child (almost half have two or more children).

3. Low-income parents not participating in any form of education or training have even lower levels of education, are equally likely to have younger children, and are more likely to have more than one child.

4. Whether looking at national data or data from specific workforce development programs, parents are underrepresented among low-income individuals in education and training.

5. Some research suggests that parents may face challenges completing education and training activities.

Overall, the national data paint a picture of a large population of low-income parents who would likely benefit from workforce development programs, but the data also suggest that these parents may face challenges related to child care that could create barriers to their ability to access or succeed in these programs.

What Key Elements of the Workforce Development System Have Implications for Child Care?

For individuals from other systems (such as child care and early education systems) working with low-income families, the range of workforce development programs, service types, funding streams, and local program operators can be overwhelming. To better support parents seeking education and training, individuals in the child care field need to understand the following key elements of the complex workforce development system:

▪ Workforce development programs encompass the range of activities that help people prepare for jobs (such as adult education, training, and postsecondary education services) and find jobs (through job placement support). Workforce development programs also include supportive services related to these two major efforts.

▪ Many different funding streams support workforce development programs. The major funding stream for the workforce development system is the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (previously known as the Workforce Investment Act). Other sources of funding for workforce development programs include the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, the Pell Grant Program, and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, along with numerous other funding streams at the federal, state, and local levels.

- Funding may be inadequate to address the needs of the low-income parents in need of education and training. In addition, funding levels vary across different types of workforce development activities. For example, federal financial aid, which can support students in vocationally oriented programs as well as traditional education programs, dwarfs what is available through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which is considered the main funding stream for the public workforce system.

- Although child care is an allowable service with the supportive-service funds available under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, it can be quite costly, and many states and localities choose not to expend their scarce resources on child care services.

- Oversight of the workforce development system is complex. The US Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services are the primary actors at the federal level, but other federal agencies also oversee workforce development programs, and wide variation exists at the state and local levels in terms of who is responsible for setting policy, implementing policy, or delivering services.

- There is wide variation in the schedules, duration, and intensity of workforce development programs. This variability has implications for child care, as it means that there is not a single approach that will work for all individuals engaged in workforce development activities.

- The quality of workforce development programs is also relevant to child care. Some state child care agencies have made an effort to link subsidies to workforce development activities that are likely to lead to employment.

What Key Elements of the Child Care System Have Implications for Workforce Development?

Many aspects of the child care system are relevant for those in the workforce development system who are working to meet parents' needs, including the following:

- There are different types of child care—including center-based child care, family child care (care in the home of a nonrelative), and relative care—and the proportion of children in each form of care varies by age. It is fairly common for families to use more than one child care setting in any given period because they have multiple children and because they need more than one setting to cover their needs.

- The schedules of child care options vary by provider, with center-based care generally following workday schedules, prekindergarten and Head Start following part-day or school-day schedules, and home-based care (particularly care provided relatives and friends) being more likely to have flexible hours (such as care during evenings and weekends).

- The cost of child care can be high, though how much families actually spend depends on such issues as the type of care they use, how much care they use, and how many children they have in care.

- The primary funding stream for child care is the federal–state Child Care and Development Fund (also known as the Child Care and Development Block Grant), which focuses on helping low-income parents pay for care so they can work or participate in education and training. Other major sources of funding include the federal Head Start program and state prekindergarten programs focused on providing early educational experiences to (primarily) three- and four-year-old children (and some infants and toddlers through Early Head Start).

- None of the public funding streams for child care or early education are sufficient to meet the needs of all eligible families, though the gap between needs and services can vary across states.

- The extent to which Child Care and Development Fund funding is used to support parents in education and training programs is generally rather small, but varies widely across states. Little is known about the extent to which Head Start or prekindergarten programs serve families in education and training.

- In providing child care to parents in education and training, it is important to consider the quality of care in terms of supporting children's development, as well as the extent to which it supports parents' ability to work or participate in education and training.

- Various factors can shape child care needs and decisions, including parent characteristics (such as income, work status and schedule, child care preferences, transportation options, language capabilities, and number and ages of children), children's characteristics and needs, the timing and amount of care parents need, the supply of care that matches their needs, whether there are resources available to help pay for care, and whether parents know about the child care options that may be available to them.

What Are the Challenges and Opportunities at the Intersection of These Systems?

This research identified various challenges and opportunities at the intersection of child care and workforce development. Understanding these issues can help highlight potential strategies for meeting the child care needs of low-income parents in education and training. The following observations and concerns emerged:

- The workforce development and child care systems have shared goals and serve overlapping populations.

- The two systems face common challenges that create barriers to working together, including separate, complex, and disconnected systems; a diverse set of funding, services, local service providers, and possible places of intersection; and funding levels that allow only a fraction of eligible families to be served.

- Low-income parents who need child care to participate in education and training are not a priority of either system.

- Each system appears to have some policies and incentives that can create barriers to meeting the needs of these families.

- Particular aspects of the intersection of the systems appear likely to be especially problematic for families. These challenges include arranging child care for the diversity and complexity of workforce development program schedules; financial constraints and limited access to subsidies or free care, which make it difficult for parents to afford care; the limited supply of appropriate child care options overall, with an even more limited supply of high-quality stable care; and limited information about child care options.

Various strategies may be effective in beginning to address some of these challenges. They include the following:

1. Identify and address systemic barriers within the workforce development and child care systems (such as funding, policy, and implementation practices) that create additional challenges to meeting the child care needs of parents seeking education and training. Examine what leverage points within each system could be used to facilitate better support for these parents, and, conversely, what barriers exist in each.

2. Identify and evaluate promising practices that child care and workforce development programs can undertake to help low-income families with their child care needs to support education and training. These strategies include, for example,

   » helping participants develop a child care plan and focusing on the coordination of child care services as a part of case management, counseling, or advising services, whether provided directly or in partnership with other service providers;

   » providing information and referral services to help parents understand their child care options and choose good care that meets their unique needs;

   » reducing the costs of child care by linking families to financial assistance or free care, providing subsidies to directly defray the costs of child care, funding slots with local child care providers to provide care, or directly providing low-cost or free child care and early education services; and

   » adopting innovations for workforce development programs that accommodate parents, such as distance and online learning, self-paced curricula, and alternative scheduling.

In identifying promising strategies, it is essential to examine circumstances that are likely to shape the effectiveness of any effort. What strategies would work for different stakeholders, different program models, or different families? What barriers may impede implementing such strategies more widely? Working together, child care and workforce systems and stakeholders can provide specific combinations of these services, depending on funding restrictions, population served, available resources, and capacity.

Conclusion

For low-income parents seeking increased family economic security through education and training, child care is critical. Lack of adequate support will not only impede these parents' ability to make important changes in their lives, but will also have negative ramifications for their children, who will likely continue to live in poverty. Failure to meet the child care needs of parents directly undercuts the stated goals of both workforce development systems and child care systems.

Given the complexity of low-income parents' lives and the systems that support them, no single solution is likely to meet the needs of this group. Solutions must be flexible, and a variety of options must be available to meet parents' needs. Initial findings from this project suggest that meeting the needs of low-income parents facing child care barriers is an issue of urgency to individuals working on

the front line to support parents' ability to obtain education and training. Further investigating policies and strategies that can support these efforts, and identifying ways to share information and promising strategies, will provide important resources to child care and workforce development stakeholders who are working for these families.

Introduction

In recent years, the changing economy has put a spotlight on the issue of helping low-wage and low-skill workers advance in the job market. New economic realities have focused attention on how to design effective workforce development strategies to help these workers succeed. Part of this shift has included a growing interest in exploring the complex needs that can make it challenging for low-wage and unemployed individuals to successfully access and complete workforce development programs, especially postsecondary education and training designed to support their progress in the labor force.

One emerging area of interest involves the family and contextual barriers that can make it difficult for low-wage workers to participate in workforce development programs, and the importance of supportive services to overcome these barriers. A key barrier is the lack of child care, which may be caused by high costs or limited availability of suitable options. A lack of child care can make it difficult for low-income parents to invest time in improving their work skills through training or education activities. Although relatively little is known about this issue, common sense tells us that whether child care is a barrier depends on many factors, including the nature of the workforce development activity; the parent's own circumstances, including their work and family situation; the child's needs; and the extent to which child care that meets their needs is available in their community.

That child care is a critical service for some low-wage or unemployed parents may seem obvious, yet relatively little attention has been paid to the issues that lie at the intersection of child care needs and workforce development efforts. One exception is research by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, which has highlighted the child care issues faced by parents pursuing postsecondary education.[1] However, more research is needed on the broad array of policies and practices—in both child care and workforce development initiatives—that can impede or support parents' ability to access and succeed in workforce development programs.

With support from the Ford Foundation, the Urban Institute is undertaking an examination of this intersection to spur a dialogue on critical issues and solutions related to supporting the child care needs of parents in workforce development programs. This report, one of a series of papers directed toward bridging the gap between the fields of child care and workforce development (see box 1), focuses on providing an overview of each system and of the issues that lie at the intersection of these two worlds. Although the issues explored in the report are relevant to a broad group of low-income parents, we focus primarily on parents who are not in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) system and are not teen parents, because child care support for these populations is more readily available.

Bridging the Gap: The Intersection of Workforce Development and Child Care

With the support of the Ford Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Urban Institute is currently undertaking a phased set of studies examining the intersection of child care and workforce development. Papers published thus far for this project include this paper, as well as

- an overview of national survey data on low-income parents and education and training efforts (Eyster, Callan, and Adams 2014), and

- an overview of Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) eligibility and services for families in education and training (Adams et al. 2014).

The second phase of the project focuses on identifying a range of challenges, barriers, and policy solutions related to meeting the child care needs of low-income parents seeking workforce development supports. It includes a deeper focus on policy barriers and strategies to support a more coherent and comprehensive interface between the child care and workforce development systems. Findings from the second phase are forthcoming in 2015.

This report opens a discussion on the intersection of the child care and workforce development systems by offering preliminary answers to the following questions:

- **What do we know about low-income parents and workforce development?** This section provides a brief overview of data that can provide insights into low-income parents' need for and involvement in workforce development efforts.

- **What key elements of the workforce development system have implications for child care?** This section introduces workforce development policies and practices, focusing on those aspects that individuals in the child care field need to understand to better support parents seeking education and training.

- **What key elements of the child care system have implications for workforce development?** This section discusses child care policies and practices, focusing on aspects of child care that those in the workforce development field need to understand to better meet parents' needs.

- **What are the challenges and opportunities at the intersection of these two systems?** The final section examines challenges and opportunities in how these two areas intersect in the lives of

families and provides a brief overview of several strategies that could help meet the child care needs of parents seeking education and training.

The report concludes with a brief description of some important questions that still need to be examined and of further work that the research team is undertaking in this area.

What Do We Know about Low-Income Parents and Their Need for Workforce Development Programs?

There is no national estimate of the number of low-income parents who want or need workforce development programs, or of the proportion of these parents who face child care barriers that might prevent them from enrolling in or completing a program. However, important insights concerning the potential need for such services and the extent to which child care may be a constraint can be gleaned by examining national data from various perspectives.[2]

A review of these data suggests the following major points:

1. **The majority of low-income parents have low education levels (high school credential or less).** Unpublished data from the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation show that of 21 million low-income parents ages 18 to 50 surveyed in late 2008 through early 2009, almost three out of five had a high school credential (diploma or its equivalent) or less. Specifically,

   - 26 percent (5.3 million) had less than a high school credential;

   - 32 percent (6.6 million) had a high school credential with no college;

   - 33 percent (6.9 million) had some college but no degree; and

   - the remaining 9 percent had a college degree.

   Further, recent data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development show that one in six US adults has only a basic level of literacy or lower, and that almost a third of adults possess only basic levels of numeracy or lower (OECD 2013).

2. **Only about 1 in 10 low-income parents reports being enrolled in some form of education or training.** Of the 21 million low-income parents identified in the authors' analyses of the Survey of Income and Program Participation, about 1 in 10 (or 1.8 million) reports being enrolled in some type of education and training activity to improve their economic prospects (Eyster, Callan, and Adams 2014).[3] When looking at the characteristics of these 1.8 million low-income parents, we find that

- A significant proportion of low-income parents in education and training also work. About half the low-income parents in education and training combined these activities with work, and half of these working parents worked full-time. More than half of low-income parents enrolled in education activities were enrolled full-time (Eyster, Callan, and Adams 2014).

- Many low-income parents in education and training programs had family situations that suggested they may need child care. A majority (59 percent) of low-income parents in education and training were single. Many also had young children—69 percent reported having at least one child younger than age 6, and 42 percent reported having a child younger than age 3. Almost half had two or more children. Over two-thirds of low-income parents in education and training were ages 26 to 50, making them older than traditional students (Eyster, Callan, and Adams 2014).

3. **Low-income parents not participating in any form of education or training have low levels of education and may face child care challenges.** Compared with low-income parents who participate in education and training, low-income parents who do not participate have lower levels of education, are equally likely to have young children, and are more likely to have more than one child (Eyster, Callan, and Adams 2014).

4. **Parents are underrepresented among low-income individuals in education and training.** There are two ways of looking at this issue:

- Only about a quarter of all low-income individuals ages 18 to 50 who were identified in the Survey of Income and Program Participation as participating in any form of education and training were parents, although parents make up almost 43 percent of all low-income individuals in this age group.[4]

- When focusing on the major public workforce programs—rather than on education and training overall—it appears that parents make up a relatively small proportion of individuals being served (though they are slightly more likely to be represented in college-related programs). For example,

  » About 15 percent of individuals receiving adult intensive services and training through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in program year 2012 were single parents (Social Policy Research Associates 2013).

  » About 9 percent of individuals served by WIA's dislocated-worker services in program year 2012 were single parents (Social Policy Research Associates 2013).

» About 9 percent of individuals enrolled in postsecondary career and technical education programs and 11 percent of those enrolled in adult career and technical education programs in program year 2010–11 were parents (US Department of Education 2014a).

» About 36 percent of Pell grant recipients in program year 2012–13 were independent students with dependents (US Department of Education 2013a).

5. **Some research suggests that parents may face challenges completing education and training activities.** College completion rates are low for all students: only about 20 percent of students seeking a certificate or degree at two-year, degree-granting, public institutions complete a credential within three years or less, and only 55 percent of students in public baccalaureate programs complete within six years or less (US Department of Education 2013b). The evidence is somewhat mixed on the extent to which being a parent is associated with these low rates, though several studies suggest that parents face particular difficulties.[5]

Overall, the national data paint a picture of a large population of low-income parents who would likely benefit from workforce development programs, but the data also suggest that challenges related to parenthood could create barriers to these parents' ability to access or succeed in these programs.

What Key Elements of the Workforce Development System Have Implications for Child Care?

For individuals from other systems who work with low-income families, the range of workforce development programs, service types, funding streams, and local program operators can be overwhelming. The complexity can present a significant challenge to individuals in the child care and early education systems who are interested in developing strategies and identifying partners to help support families who are working toward economic stability through education and training. To help bridge the gaps between the workforce and child care worlds, this section discusses key features of workforce development programs.

What Do We Mean by "Workforce Development Programs"?

Workforce development programs generally encompass the range of activities that help people prepare for (through education and training) and find (through job placement support) jobs. Education and training can include services to help people with the greatest skill deficiencies (i.e., those lacking a high school credential or basic skills) as well as programs to help participants attain more advanced skills needed for jobs. Job preparation can occur in the classroom or the workplace and can often lead to a certificate or a degree. A key focus of the public workforce system and many workforce development programs is assistance finding and securing jobs. Workforce development programs can also include supportive activities, such as child care or transportation assistance to help people stay in training and get a job as well as services provided after a participant secures a job.

Understanding the range of workforce development programs and their different services is important on multiple levels, not only because they provide insights into the kinds of services families need to get ahead and for which they may need child care, but because they can be used in setting eligibility requirements for child care subsidies.

Box 2 describes the major categories of workforce development program activities, which include adult education, training, postsecondary education, job placement services, and supportive services.

However, a complicating factor in understanding the workforce development landscape is the lack of clear definitions of (or distinctions between) the categories of adult education, training, and education (Pindus and Isbell 1996). For example, vocationally focused postsecondary education programs, such as nursing or teacher education programs, may be considered both education and training. Similarly, adult education is sometimes considered education and sometimes considered training. Finally, many initiatives combine education and training, further blurring distinctions between these kinds of activities. Our companion analysis of child care subsidy policies found that states often define these terms in different ways when setting policies about what activities qualify for child care subsidies (Adams et al. 2014).

BOX 2

Basic Workforce Development Activities and Terms

Although there is variation in how these terms are used, "workforce development" generally encompasses the following:

- **Adult education.** Adult education programs include adult basic education programs for those whose basic skills are assessed to be below the high school level, adult secondary education programs for those at the high school level seeking a certificate of high school equivalency (through the GED or other test), and English language programs (also called English as a second language and English for speakers of other languages programs).

- **Training.** Training consists of programs that teach people skills to get a job, keep their job, or advance in their career. Many training programs are characterized by their short-term nature, although vocationally focused postsecondary education programs are sometimes considered training. Training can occur in the classroom, in the workplace, or on the job, and often can lead to a certificate or other credential. Sometimes training participants are paid as they learn, as is the case with Registered Apprenticeship, on-the-job training, and many transitional jobs programs, but this is not common.

- **Postsecondary education.** Postsecondary education programs typically lead to a traditional college credential (e.g., associate's degree or bachelor's degree), but they also may include shorter certificate programs. Postsecondary education programs are not always considered part of the workforce development landscape, although educating students for careers is one of the many functions of higher education. For example, postsecondary education programs can include career and technical education programs that lead to a degree but also prepare students for work in a particular field.

- **Job placement services.** Workforce development typically encompasses the range of services that help individuals get jobs, such as job search and job placement assistance. Job placement services are a large focus of federally funded workforce development programs.

- **Support services.** Workforce development can sometimes include supportive services, such as child care or transportation assistance, linked to finding or holding a job.

What Are the Main Funding Streams and Levels of Funding for Workforce Development Programs?

Funding for workforce development programs comes from an array of federal, state, and local sources. Some funding goes directly to students in the form of financial aid or training vouchers; other funding goes to systems and institutions (e.g., state governments or community colleges). In addition, many students pay for programs out of their own pockets either directly or through loans from public or private sources. Understanding funding for workforce development programs and the policy context for funding streams, as well as what other resources may (or may not) be available to pay for child care, can help individuals in the child care field who are working to address families' child care needs.

When people think about workforce development funding at the federal level, they primarily think of the programs authorized under WIA—now the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), passed in July 2014. WIOA includes adult education programs; employment services; adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs; the Job Corps; and other programs. In addition, a range of other federal funding streams support workforce development programs and services. A 2011 US Government Accountability Office study found 47 workforce programs being overseen by nine federal agencies (GAO 2011). Table 1 provides an overview of selected federal funding streams for workforce development to illustrate the variation in federally funded programs, funding levels, and oversight.

TABLE 1

Selected Federal Employment and Training Programs and Budgets

Program title	Description	Agency or office	FY 2014 funding in millions of dollars[a]
Pell grant program[b]	Funds direct grants to low-income students to attend credit-bearing programs (primarily undergraduate) at eligible institutions of higher education	US Department of Education	$32,958[c]
Unsubsidized Stafford loans	Loan program for college students to attend undergraduate and graduate programs generally leading to a degree or certificate at eligible institutions	US Department of Education	$54,663[d]
Subsidized Stafford loans	Subsidized loan program for low-income students to attend undergraduate programs generally leading to a degree or certificate at eligible institutions	US Department of Education	$26,226[e]
Workforce Investment Act (WIA)/ Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)[f]			
Job Corps	Residential training program for youth	US Department of Labor	$1,578
WIA Dislocated Workers Program	Employment and training services for people who have lost their jobs	US Department of Labor	$1,222[g]
WIA youth activities	Employment and training services for youth ages 16 to 24[h]	US Department of Labor	$820
WIA Adult Program	Employment and training services for adults	US Department of Labor	$766
Wagner-Peyser–funded Employment Service	Services for unemployed workers	US Department of Labor	$684
Adult education grants to states	Adult education programs including adult basic education, adult secondary school education, and English language literacy	US Department of Education	$564
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) grants	Employment and training programs for TANF recipients and other low-income populations	US Department of Health and Human Services	$1,517[i]
Perkins grants to states	Grants to states to support career and technical education in secondary and postsecondary programs	US Department of Education	$1,118
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) employment and training	Employment and training for SNAP recipients	US Department of Agriculture	$416[j]
Trade Adjustment Assistance training	Employment and training for individuals who have experienced job loss or been affected by competition because of foreign trade	US Department of Labor	$306

Sources: US Department of Agriculture (2014); US Department of Education (2014b, c); US Department of Health and Human Services (2014); US Department of Labor (2014).

Note: This table includes a selection of the major agencies and funding streams available for workforce development programs, with a focus on resources available for education and training. Other agencies involved in workforce development programs include the US Departments of Justice, Veterans Affairs, Interior, and Defense. For a complete analysis of the programs supporting workforce development, not including financial aid programs or other education-focused programs, see GAO (2011).

[a] Figures are rounded to nearest million, are in nominal dollars, and represent enacted budget authority unless otherwise noted.

[b] We have included the largest federal grant program and the two largest federal loan programs to illustrate the amount and kinds of funding available for workforce development programs and activities through federal financial aid programs. The US Department of Education oversees other financial aid programs, including other grant, loan, work-study, and tax credit programs. For further information see US Department of Education, Student Aid Overview, Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Request at http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget15/justifications/p-saoverview.pdf.

[c] Figure is aid available to students in 2014. Pell grants are used to support career and technical education programs as well as programs not typically considered career-focused programs (e.g., liberal arts programs).

[d] Aid available to students in 2014.

[e] Aid available to students in 2014.

[f] We have included the largest six programs under WIA/WIOA with the exception of vocational rehabilitation programs for people with disabilities overseen by the US Department of Education. Funding levels for vocational rehabilitation training programs were approximately $3 billion in 2014. Additional programs that fall under WIA/WIOA target special populations (e.g., youth, Native Americans, and farmworkers), although several WIA programs were eliminated or consolidated under WIOA. For information on funding for other WIA/WIOA programs, see US Department of Education (2014c) and US Department of Labor, Budget in Brief 2015, Excerpts for Employment and Training Administration (http://www.doleta.gov/Budget/docs/FY2015_BIB_ETA_Excerpts.pdf).

[g] Includes formula funding to states and the National Reserve fund, which includes the National Emergency Grant program.

[h] WIOA raised the eligibility age for youth programs from 16 to 21 to 16 to 24.

[i] Expenditures in FY 2013 for nonassistance activities classified as "work-related activities and services."

[j] Enacted appropriation for FY 2013.

The largest grant program for low-income students is the Pell grant program, which had a funding level of about $33 billion in 2014. Although not typically considered a workforce development funding stream (and not included in the 2011 GAO report), Pell provides an important source of support in preparing low-income students for the workforce. Federal loans for higher education are also a major source of funding for students (Stafford loan funding totaled more than $80 billion in 2014), but in contrast to grants, loans are resources that students will eventually have to pay back. Funding levels for WIA/WIOA programs are much lower than for federal financial aid programs. For example, in 2014, funding for the six major WIA programs that appear in table 1 totaled about $5 billion. Other major programs at the federal level include TANF; the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, which funds career and technical education in secondary and postsecondary institutions; and SNAP employment and training.

Determining the total number of people served by these programs is difficult because services and populations served may overlap, and because each program defines and reports enrollment differently. However, there is evidence to suggest that funding may be inadequate for meeting the needs of low-income parents who need education and training. Eyster, Callan, and Adams (2014) show that only 10

percent of the 21 million parents who are low income are enrolled in education and training. Similarly, only a small percentage of individuals who seek services through American Job Centers, the locus of services under WIA and WIOA, receive training (Social Policy Research Associates 2013). WIOA urges states and localities to place a greater emphasis on training through sector- and career pathway–based programs, attempts to address systems alignment and duplication issues, and increases overall funding. However, funding is still likely inadequate since the law merely restores cuts that have been made to the program since 2010 (National Skills Coalition 2014).

States help fund workforce programs through their contributions to federal programs like TANF and WIA/WIOA programs, and also through their support of public higher education, state grant and scholarship programs, and other state workforce programs. Funding also comes from local governments and private sources such as foundations and employers.

To What Extent Do Funding Streams Pay for Supportive Services Such as Child Care?

Supportive services such as child care are addressed in widely differing ways across federal programs. Only TANF has an explicit policy about providing child care services to families: most states have designated TANF clients who need child care to participate in work activities as a priority group for subsidies under their CCDF programs (see the next section for more information on CCDF), and proactively refer families to those services. In addition, many states use federal TANF funding for child care by spending it directly on child care, transferring it to their CCDF programs, or using state TANF maintenance of effort (MOE) funds (see table 3 on page 23 for more details).[6] The other group of clients somewhat more likely to be able to get CCDF subsidies is teen parents in high school, as many states also make them a priority for subsidy eligibility.

Other workforce development programs provide some resources for supportive services to help participants stay in training and obtain jobs. For example, WIA has allowed funding to be used for "supportive services," defined as "transportation, child care, dependent care, housing and needs-related payments that are necessary to enable an individual to participate in activities authorized under this title, consistent with the provision of this title."[7] However, offering support services like child care has been a local policy decision, and many states and localities choose not to expend scarce resources on such services. WIA performance reports show that in program year 2012, about 7 percent of adult program participants overall and 22 percent of the subset who received training or intensive services

were reported as receiving "other supportive services." (Data are not available on the types of services received or related expenditures, so it is not possible to parse out whether these funds were used for child care.) The newly authorized WIOA also allows funding to be used for supportive services, but, as under WIA, much discretion is given to state and local governments and boards in determining what supportive services are available and how they are delivered.[8] The new orientation toward career pathways and services to the disadvantaged under WIOA may mean a different approach to supportive services, but, with limited resources available, it is unclear to what extent state and local programs will focus on supportive services.

Pell grants and other forms of financial aid are possible sources of funding for child care. In the case of Pell, funding typically goes directly to the institution to pay for tuition and fees, with any remaining money returned to the student to pay for expenses such as child care. However, with a maximum annual award of $5,730, there are likely to be few resources left to pay for child care. Student loans may provide another source of funding for child care. But funding can be inadequate, and many students are not enrolled in institutions or programs that make them eligible for federal aid. Therefore, many parents in education and training programs will likely have to rely on other sources of funding for child care, as we discuss later in this report.

Who Administers and Implements Workforce Development Programs?

A broad range of agencies are involved in setting and implementing policy for workforce development programs at the federal, state, and local levels, which can be challenging for those individuals working to identify points for policy change. At the federal level, as shown in table 1, the primary workforce programs are administered by the US Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services, but smaller programs are found in other federal agencies, such as the US Departments of Agriculture, Justice, and Energy. With much discretion given to states in setting policy and implementing programs, the agencies responsible for operating programs at the state level can vary. Some states, such as Florida, have aimed to combine oversight of workforce development programs (such as WIA/WIOA, TANF, and adult education) under a single administrative agency instead of having them administered by separate agencies. Table 2 provides an overview of the varied types of agencies that might oversee workforce development at the state and local levels by setting policy and administering, funding, designing, and operating workforce development programs.

There is also variation in the mix of service providers at the local level. Larger cities tend to have a stronger presence of community-based organizations in the delivery of workforce services. Smaller cities or rural areas might be more reliant on community colleges for the provision of education and training programs. The type of workforce development provider can matter for many reasons, including what services they offer, the quality of the program, flexibility in scheduling, the funding available to pay for training, the support services available to program participants, and the location of the program.

Workforce development is hardly a unified system. The complexity of workforce development programming, policies, and resources can be difficult for child care practitioners and low-income individuals to navigate.

TABLE 2

State and Local Actors and Roles

	Actors	Roles
State departments and actors administering workforce development programs	■ Departments of labor, employment, workforce development ■ Departments of economic development, small business development ■ Departments or boards of education or higher education; community college or university systems ■ Departments of human services, social services, social welfare ■ State Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs)	■ Set policies for and administer federal programs and funding (e.g., WIA/WIOA, TANF, Perkins, SNAP education and training, Trade Adjustment Assistance) ■ Fund, set policies for, and administer state programs (e.g., training programs, state financial aid, public college and university funding)
Local departments and actors administering workforce development programs	■ Local workforce development agencies ■ Local human service agencies ■ Local departments of education ■ Local WIBs	■ Have some discretion in setting policies for federal programs ■ Responsible for administration, oversight, data collection, and reporting ■ Some funding provided for workforce programs at the local level
Local providers of workforce development programs	■ Public colleges and universities (including community and technical colleges) ■ Private nonprofit and for-profit colleges and universities, including proprietary schools ■ Nonprofit community-based and faith-based organizations ■ Departments of education that can offer programs directly (e.g., adult education through adult learning centers) or through other local service providers ■ American Job Centers (formerly called One-Stop Career Centers)	■ Provide adult education, training, postsecondary education, job placement, and support services
Other funders and stakeholders	■ Employers ■ National and local foundations ■ Intermediaries such as industry associations or labor-management partnerships	■ Employers fund training programs directly, but are also the beneficiaries of workforce development programs and can be key partners in the administration, design, and delivery of programs. ■ National and local foundations can play a significant role in supporting workforce development efforts as well as spurring innovative practices. ■ Intermediaries can play a role in coordinating workforce development services locally and may also fund programs.

Note: This list represents just a selection of the larger federally funded workforce programs that states administer. States are not involved in administration of Pell grants or Stafford loans, through which funding flows to higher education institutions and the individual students who are recipients of grant funds.

What Do We Know about the Scheduling, Duration, and Intensity of Workforce Development Programming?

Scheduling can make a big difference for parents seeking access to workforce development programs, especially when they combine these activities with work, as many parents do. Scheduling can have particularly significant implications for parents who have to figure out child care solutions to accommodate their work and education or training demands.

The schedules of workforce development programs can vary widely depending on the type of provider, type and length of program, and needs of the parent:

- **Schedules during any particular day or week.** College-based programs have been known to follow traditional workweek schedules, although more attention is being paid to make programs more flexible and accessible by offering evening or weekend options or online programs. Training program schedules can vary widely, from occurring during the workday to being offered during evenings and weekends, and from requiring an investment of just a few hours a week to requiring a full-time commitment.

- **Predictability and stability of schedules.** These schedules may not be predictable and can vary over time; for example, college-based program schedules vary from semester to semester. Certain programs combine classroom and work-based learning activities (such as internships or clinical requirements) that involve different time demands over the duration of participants' involvement.

- **Duration of the commitment.** Programs can range from a short-term commitment (e.g., a training program that lasts only a few weeks) to a long-term commitment (e.g., a bachelor's degree program that may take six or more years to complete on a part-time basis). The length of the program can depend on whether the students attend full- or part-time, and on the skill level of the students participating. Students with lower basic skills at entry are likely to take much longer to gain the skills needed to support successful employment.

- **Additional time commitments.** Some activities demand additional commitments of the participants beyond the actual time participating in the training or education activity, such as homework, study groups, meeting with advisers, additional commuting time, or gaps between activities (e.g., classes) in a given day.

The implications of these factors vary for participants. Scheduling challenges increase when a participant is engaged in education or training activities while working. Parents who have to combine these activities with employment must find schedules that are acceptable to their employers. Low-wage parents often have little control over the regularity of their schedules, and their employers may not be willing to accommodate their needs (Ben-Ishai, Matthews, and Levin-Epstein 2014).

How Is Workforce Development Program Quality Relevant to Child Care?

The quality and effectiveness of workforce development programs have attracted the interest of policymakers concerned with ensuring that individuals get services that are likely to result in improved skills and employment. The public workforce system under WIA (and now WIOA), for example, has made efforts to address issues of quality by creating lists of eligible training providers, making data on the participant outcomes of programs funded with federal training dollars available, and only allowing training dollars to support training for occupations that are in demand. Some states tie eligibility for child care subsidies for families in education and training activities to activities of a particular quality or activities that will lead to employment (Adams et al. 2014). This focus on employment outcomes and program quality suggests that some states may use state-generated lists of in-demand occupations or eligible training providers in the determination of eligibility for child care subsidies.

However, implementation of program quality measures in the workforce system is uneven, and information on the quality and effectiveness of workforce development programs is not always available. For example, although colleges and universities must collect data on graduation rates, these data are not always high quality or readily available to students, and data by program of study or on labor market outcomes for students are not typically available. As a result, low-income parents seeking workforce development programs may not have the information they need to make informed decisions about which program to pursue, and child care policymakers may not be able to determine whether parents receiving child care subsidies are enrolled in programs that are likely to lead to employment. Recent efforts to develop score cards that could be used to compare colleges or programs across colleges represent a step toward better access to information about program quality. Such tools could be useful to policymakers and practitioners as they think about how scarce resources should be used to support the child care needs of parents in workforce development programs.[9]

What Key Elements of the Child Care System Have Implications for Workforce Development?

Like child care stakeholders trying to understand workforce development programs, individuals in the workforce development system who seek to address the child care challenges of their clients may find the complexity of the child care field confusing and overwhelming. To help bridge the gaps between the workforce and child care worlds, this section discusses key features of child care that may be useful for individuals in the workforce development system to understand. Specifically, it describes

- where children are cared for;
- schedules of different settings;
- the cost of child care;
- different approaches to public funding for child care;
- major funding streams and their funding levels;
- what we know about whether funds are available to pay for child care for parents in education and training;
- major actors involved in child care at different levels;
- why the quality and stability of care matters; and
- some of the factors that shape child care needs and decisions.

Where Are Children Cared for?

It is important to first understand the basic questions of what child care is and where children are cared for. Families use varied child care settings, including center-based options (including school-based care), family child care homes (which provide care by nonrelatives in a home-based setting), and care in home settings by friends or relatives. In 2011, 35 percent of children younger than 5 years old with employed mothers were in center-based programs, 8 percent were in family child care homes, and 42 percent were cared for in home settings by other caregivers such as nannies, friends, and relatives (Laughlin 2013). These proportions differ by the age of the child, as families are somewhat more likely to rely on family- and home-based settings for infants and toddlers, to move toward a greater reliance on center-

based settings for preschoolers, and to use a wide range of settings (including school- and community-based programs, self-care, and family-based options) for their school-age children. Many families use more than one child care setting in any given period because they have multiple children or because they need more than one setting to cover their needs. In 2011, for example, more than a quarter of children under age 5 with an employed mother were in more than one arrangement (Laughlin 2013).

What Are the Schedules of These Programs?

Generally speaking, center-based options tend to operate on traditional workday schedules (i.e., 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.), on a full-year basis. The main exception to this pattern for center-based programs is that a number of state prekindergarten programs and Head Start programs operate on a part-day (either half-day or school-day) school-year basis, though this varies (Barnett et al. 2013; Wallen and Hubbard 2013). Family child care homes tend to be more flexible in terms of timing, and informal care by other caregivers such as family, friends, and neighbors is the most flexible (Bromer and Henly 2009).

How Much Does Child Care Cost, and How Affordable Is It?

Although the question of how much child care costs is seemingly simple, the issue is actually quite complex. There are a number of ways to look at this topic.

One way to assess the affordability of care is to look at how much child care programs charge for their services. For example, data from a 2014 survey of child care costs across the country showed that in 2013 the average annual price of full-time, center-based care for an infant ranged from $5,496 in Mississippi to $16,549 in Massachusetts. The average annual cost of care for a four-year-old in a center ranged from $4,545 in Tennessee to $12,320 in Massachusetts. Costs were somewhat lower for children cared for in family child care homes. This study found that child care costs can rival the cost of four-year college, rent, or food for families. For example, the average price of child care for a four-year-old in a child care center is higher than public college costs in 20 states and the District of Columbia (Child Care Aware of America 2014). Although this survey only examined the amounts charged by center-based care and family child care homes, research suggests that care provided by friends and relatives is significantly less costly (or free).

A different question is how much any particular family has to spend to purchase child care. This cost is likely to differ from the average costs described above and is unique to each family, as it depends on factors such as which provider parents choose, the type and quality of the care, how much care a family uses, how many children a family has in care, the ages of children, and whether financial assistance is available or the care is provided for free (such as Head Start or state prekindergarten or care by relatives). The most recent data (from the 2011 Survey of Income and Program Participation) found that families with children younger than five who reported paying anything for child care paid an average of $9,300 a year. Families with incomes below the federal poverty level who paid for care paid an average of 30 percent of their income for care (compared with an average of 8 percent for families with incomes above the federal poverty level) (Laughlin 2013).

What Are the Main Approaches to Public Funding for Child Care and Early Education?

Public funds to directly pay for or provide child care and early education services are mostly used in one of two ways. First, some funds are used to help defray the costs of child care for low-income parents who need child care to work or participate in education and training (though states vary in how they define these activities[10]). These funds are primarily administered through vouchers that families can use to purchase child care in their communities, though some are paid directly to programs to purchase slots that eligible families can use. Second, some funds are used to directly support programs to provide early care and education services (for example, by funding a classroom or an entire program). These programs often focus on serving preschool-age children, most commonly 3- to 4-year-olds, and they often support services on a part-day or school-year basis (though local providers can blend these funds with other funds to provide full-day and full-year services).

In addition to these two approaches, some public funds support activities related to child care and early education, such as strategies to support the quality of care, funds to support licensing, efforts to provide parents with information and referral services, and other related activities.

What Are the Major Funding Streams and Levels of Funding for Child Care and Early Education?

Understanding the funding and administrative structures of the child care and early education field can help policymakers and practitioners in the workforce development field who are working to address the child care needs of the families needing their services. This understanding includes knowing the policy and programmatic contexts that shape available services. Funding context is also important, as it affects access and service quality. However, funding across child care and early education programs is usually not sufficient to serve all eligible children, so administering agencies must make difficult trade-offs in allocating funds. Table 3 provides an overview of the major funding streams.

The CCDF, also known as the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), is the main program providing assistance to help parents pay for child care through vouchers (the first of the two funding approaches described on the previous page). The CCDF provides child care assistance for low-income families needing child care to work or participate in education and training. States have significant latitude in setting policies for this program, as funds come to states as a block grant with federal guidelines. In 2012, $11.4 billion was spent using the CCDF, including funds transferred from TANF and $2.8 billion spent directly from TANF. Although data are not available on the number of families and children served by funds spent directly from TANF, the $8.6 billion spent through the CCDF (including TANF transfer funds) served a monthly average of 1.5 million children (Matthews and Schmit 2014). In the most recent data, from 2009, the CCDF was estimated to serve about 18 percent of children who were eligible under federal guidelines, and about 28 percent of children eligible under state-defined rules (ASPE 2012). (See the companion report by Adams and colleagues [2014] for more information on the CCDF and workforce development.)

A small federal initiative administered by the US Department of Education provides funds for child care programs on college campuses through the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program. In 2014 the federal government spent over $15 million for this program.[11]

TABLE 3

Major Federal and State Funding Streams Providing Child Care and Early Education Assistance or Services

Program	Description	Agency or office	Funding in millions of dollars (fiscal year)
Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) or Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)	Federal-state funds that states use to provide child care subsidies for eligible low-income families who need child care to work or participate in education and training; also provides some funds to support the quality and supply of child care Note: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds can be transferred to CCDF or spent directly to support these child care services	US Department of Health and Human Services	$11,400 (FY 2012) Note: This amount reflects CCDF spending rather than funding levels, as states can spend funds in years after they are awarded. Of this spending, $8,600 is from state and federal CCDBG funds; $2,800 is from TANF funds, including $1,200 in federal TANF funds spent directly on child care; and $1,600 is additional state TANF maintenance of effort (MOE) funding.[a]
Head Start and Early Head Start	Federal funds that flow directly to local community agencies (including nonprofit, for-profit, and public agencies) and school systems that provide early education services for eligible low-income children from birth to age 5	US Department of Health and Human Services	$8,600 (FY 2014)[b]
State prekindergarten	State funding for prekindergarten services through school systems, Head Start programs, and community-based child care programs, depending on the state	State departments of education	$5,400 (FY 2013)
Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program	Federal funds that flow directly to public, state, and private institutions of higher education to support student parents	US Department of Education	$15.134 (FY 2014)

[a] Data from Matthews and Schmit (2014). Their footnotes clarify, "states also transferred $1.4 billion in federal TANF funds to CCDBG. Once transferred, these TANF funds are subject to CCDBG rules and may be spent over several years. When spent, they are reported as CCDBG spending; therefore, we do not include these dollars in our sum of total year spending. Also, states may claim spending towards both TANF and CCDBG MOE. This figure excludes approximately $978 million that may be 'double counted' as CCDBG MOE and TANF MOE. Total TANF MOE spent on child care was $2.43 billion in 2012."
[b] Data from Office of Head Start (2014).

There is also significant activity at both the federal and state levels in early education services. At the federal level, funds are provided directly to local community agencies to provide early education through Head Start (serving eligible low-income 3- and 4-year-olds) and Early Head Start (serving eligible infants and toddlers). Funding for Head Start and Early Head Start was $8.6 billion in the fiscal year 2014 (Office of Head Start 2014). In that year, Head Start served over 880,000 3- and 4-year-olds, and Early Head Start served over 193,000 infants and toddlers (Office of Head Start 2014). The most recent estimates available find that Head Start serves about 42 percent of eligible children and that Early Head Start serves less than 4 percent of eligible children (Schmit et al. 2013).

At the state level, 41 states invested in state-funded and state-designed prekindergarten services in 2013 (Barnett et al. 2013). These programs are usually administered by state departments of education and predominantly serve 3- to 4-year-old children, with a majority of states targeting lower-income children or children considered to be at risk of school failure (Barnett et al. 2013). State investments in prekindergarten initiatives in 2013 totaled nearly $5.4 billion dollars and served an estimated 1.3 million children. Nationally, 28 percent of all 4-year-olds and 4 percent of all 3-year-olds were estimated to be enrolled in state-funded prekindergarten during the 2012–13 school year. However, states vary: some have invested sufficient funds to serve a significant proportion of eligible children, but others serve relatively small numbers. For example, in 2013, 8 states and the District of Columbia served over half of all 4-year-olds, 10 states served fewer than 10 percent of all 4-year-olds, and 10 states did not have a state prekindergarten program. States also vary in the extent to which they serve 3-year-olds, if at all; for example, in 2013, Florida served 78 percent of all 4-year-olds but did not fund prekindergarten for any 3-year-olds (Barnett et al. 2013).

Although these federal and state efforts are the largest sources of direct funds for child care and early education services, smaller federal, state, and local initiatives; philanthropic investments; and local program funding can sometimes provide limited assistance to some families in some communities. Finally, as noted earlier, some funds support efforts to improve access to or quality of care. For example, states are required to spend a proportion of their CCDF to support quality activities, which can include efforts such as licensing, supporting child care resource and referral efforts, professional development strategies, and so forth.

Are Funds from These Programs Available for the Child Care Needs of Parents in Education and Training?

There has been relatively little examination of the extent to which families in education and training are served by the major child care and early education funding streams, although some information is starting to emerge.

First, low-income parents needing child care for education and training may be able to get child care subsidies through the CCDF, though such subsidies depend on state eligibility policies, state priorities for which eligible families should get assistance, and availability of funding to serve eligible applicants. Recent analyses from a companion report for this project found that the extent to which families can get CCDF funds for education and training varies significantly across states (Adams et al. 2014). Many states allow parents in education and training to be eligible, but impose additional requirements that families must meet. These variations (along with variations in funding levels and other policies) result in significant differences across states in the proportion of the CCDF caseload in education and training. Program data from 2011 show, for example, that though nationally about 12 percent of non-TANF families on CCDF were getting child care subsidies to support at least some education and training, the proportion ranged from less than 5 percent in eight states to over 25 percent in three states. This variation likely results from the significant discretion states have in setting eligibility rules and priorities as well as other policies that can shape whether an eligible family is actually able to get care. (Our research team is undertaking an in-depth analysis of such policies; the findings will be published in a forthcoming report.)

Second, parents in education and training can certainly enroll their children in other early childhood programs (such as Head Start or state prekindergarten) if there are available spaces in their community. However, the schedules of these programs may be challenging to coordinate with education and training activities, and slots are often only available to children within a narrow age range (most commonly four-year-olds, with some three-year-olds). Although still small in number, there are growing efforts to build "two-generation programs" designed to deliver services simultaneously to children and parents. These programs help children get high-quality early education services (such as Head Start) while their parents get education and training (see, for example, materials from the Ascend Project at the Aspen Institute[12] and from the Annie E. Casey Foundation[13]).

Who Are the Major Actors in the Child Care and Early Education Arena?

The array of child care and early education programs means that a variety of actors are involved at the federal, state, and local levels. This diversity can create challenges for individuals in the workforce development system who wish to identify partners to work with to meet the child care needs of parents.

Major actors and their roles vary across federal, state, and local levels. For example, at the federal level, the US Department of Health and Human Services is responsible for administering Head Start, Early Head Start, and the CCDF, and the US Department of Education administers the small CCAMPIS program. The role played by the federal agencies varies across these programs. For example, the CCDF is a block grant for which the federal government gives states significant discretion in setting policies within federal parameters. In contrast, the federal Head Start program provides funds directly from the federal government to local grantees, with clear requirements for the services that need to be provided with those funds.

At the state level, state departments of social services and education are likely to be major players in effecting service delivery for all these programs. As described, actors at the state level are responsible for setting many policies for the CCDF (within the parameters set by the federal government), as well as for determining the level of state funding contributed to the program. As a result, state governments shape access, eligibility, services, and many of the subtle policies that can determine whether a parent in education and training is able to get child care assistance through CCDF (some states delegate some of these decisions to the county level). States also design, fund, and implement state prekindergarten programs, so they have significant control over those initiatives. Finally, states also have significant discretion in choosing how to spend CCDF funds (and any additional state funds) to support various quality-related activities, as well as in choosing whether, how, and for what purposes to allocate state funds for state-determined child care and early education efforts.

At the local level, a range of important players—including local departments of social services and education, local schools, child care and early education providers, and community organizations—play a diverse set of roles. Some of these entities are involved in administering and implementing their state CCDF programs, which can be administered at the local level by local departments of social services or contracted out to local community-based organizations. Similarly, local education authorities can be responsible for implementing state prekindergarten services, though states vary in whether these services are provided only in schools or also in community child care programs. Other local agencies can play important roles in supporting families; notable among these are child care resource and referral

agencies, which can provide parents with information and referral services to find child care and child care assistance. However, these services do not exist in every community, and they are not funded at levels sufficient to meet the needs of all families. Table 4 provides a brief overview of state and local actors and their roles in the child care and early education system.

TABLE 4

State and Local Actors and Roles in Child Care and Early Education

Organizational level	Actors	Roles
State departments and actors administering child care programs	■ Departments of social services ■ Departments of early education ■ Departments of education	■ Set policies and administer funds from the federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) program, including subsidies and other activities to be supported by CCDF funds (i.e., activities to support efforts such as licensing, quality improvement activities, and resource and referral efforts) ■ Establish and administer state prekindergarten programs ■ Provide funding for other services at state discretion ■ Responsible for other systems related to child care and early education (e.g., state Head Start Collaboration efforts, state child care licensing systems, and activities for other federal initiatives such as Race to the Top)
Local departments and agencies administering or implementing public child care and early education programs	Local governments (that may fund special initiatives) Local human service agencies Local departments of education, local education authorities, and schools Private and public institutions of higher education Community agencies contracted to administer child care assistance programs in some states (e.g., child care resource and referral agencies and other community organizations)	■ Implement the state CCDF program (e.g., determine and monitor eligibility and authorize subsidies) ■ Implement or provide state prekindergarten services ■ Manage and administer public funds for child care in colleges and universities ■ Administer and implement any local initiatives
Local service providers and stakeholders	Child care and early education service providers (including nonprofit and for-profit organizations, center-based and home-based programs, local schools operating child care and early education programs, and other child care providers) Programs providing information and referral services to families (i.e., child care resource and referral programs, case management or navigator services associated with colleges or workforce agencies, and assorted community organizations)	■ Provide direct services to families and children ■ Provide parents with information and referral services to find child care and child care assistance

Why Is Stable, High-Quality Child Care Important to Parents and Children?

Research is clear that the quality of children's early learning experiences is critical in setting a strong foundation for future success (Heckman 2011; Center on the Developing Child 2007; Kilburn and Karoly 2008). It is also clear that children need stability and continuity in these early experiences to get a strong start (Adams and Rohacek 2010). Stability and quality are also essential for parental success, as unstable child care arrangements can jeopardize participation in education, training, or work, and instability and low-quality care can create significant stress for parents.

Unfortunately, research is equally clear that the supply of high-quality care is inadequate to meet the needs of children and parents (Adams, Zaslow, and Tout 2007). It also shows that many children experience instability in their child care arrangements because of a range of factors, including instability that can be caused by their parents' irregular work patterns and schedules (Adams and Rohacek 2010; Sandstrom and Huerta 2013). As a result, it is important that children's need for quality, stable child care experiences is considered while working to address child care barriers for parents seeking education and training.

What Factors Shape Child Care Needs and Decisions?

One challenging aspect of trying to reduce child care barriers for families is the number of factors parents face that can shape their child care needs and decisions.[14] These factors include the following:

- **The parents' own circumstances and characteristics** can shape the child care options available to them, as well as the decisions they make about child care. These personal factors include, for example,

  - » parents' financial resources,
  - » whether they are working,
  - » what kind of care they prefer or want for their children,
  - » whether they have access to transportation,
  - » their English-language capabilities, and
  - » how many children they have and the children's ages.

- **The child's characteristics and needs**, including age, personality (e.g., whether the child struggles with or adjusts easily to new situations), and whether the child has special needs can also influence parents' decisions about child care.

- **The timing and amount of care parents need** is affected by their work schedules (plus any other activities, such as education and training and commuting) and the extent to which those schedules are predictable or vary from week to week.

- **The supply of child care that meets the particular needs of the parent and child in their community** is a decisive factor. One of the biggest challenges low-income parents face is the overall inadequate supply of affordable quality child care; in particular, gaps exist for infants and toddlers, in rural areas, for families needing nontraditional-hour care, for school-age children, and for children with special needs (Adams, Zaslow, and Tout 2007). Another variable is whether parents have access to (and interest in using) family members or friends who are available and willing to provide care. Some parents need multiple providers to cover their schedules, as finding any single type of care that meets a family's needs can be challenging.

- **Whether there are other resources to help parents pay for child care** can also make a difference in shaping child care use. These resources include the federal and state programs described in this report (i.e., the CCDF, Head Start, or state prekindergarten), other state or local resources that may be available in a particular community, or resources from family or friends.

- **Whether parents know about child care options or have help finding care** affects child care use. Many parents do not know what kinds of options are available in their communities or how to find out about them. They may rely on information from friends and relatives. Although some communities have child care resource and referral agencies to help parents navigate options, such services are not available in all communities, or, because of funding constraints, to all families in communities where they exist. Parents who live in states that have invested in quality rating and improvement systems have access to easily available information to help them identify which child care options in their communities are of better quality.

What Are the Challenges and Opportunities at the Intersection of These Systems?

The preceding sections provide separate overviews of the two systems low-income parents must navigate if they are to seek education and training for future advancement while ensuring the safety and well-being of their children. However, these systems intersect directly in the lives of parents trying to secure a stable future for themselves and their children. A few key issues that emerged as being particularly important for further attention suggest promising areas for strategies that can begin to address parents' challenges. Box 3 illustrates how these issues can play out for families, and the remainder of this section examines the intersection of the two systems and what could be done to help parents navigate them successfully.

BOX 3

Intersection of Workforce Development and Child Care at the Family Level
Hypothetical Family Stories

Although data and research are necessary for understanding the scope of the issue, they do not show the human side of how parents' interest in pursuing education and training interacts with their child care needs. Consider the following hypothetical families:

- *Jane*, a 30-year-old single mother, works part-time answering phones for a doctor's office near her house. Her three-year-old is in a Head Start program nearby, and her 10-year-old is in school most of the day and takes care of herself after school on the days her mother works. Jane likes working in the doctor's office but would like to work full-time to earn more money and get health benefits. Jane has learned about a medical assistant program at a private college that offers classes in the evenings and on weekends, but the Head Start program is not open during these hours. She is also worried about her 10-year-old, whom she cannot leave alone during evening hours or for extended periods of time. In addition, because of her work schedule, Jane would probably have to attend the medical assistant program part-time, which may mean almost two years of training.

- *Sandy* is a high school dropout with a 2-year-old at home. She is unemployed and having difficulty finding work without a high school credential. Luckily, her husband George found work as an on-call security guard, but his hours are unpredictable and he often works in the evenings. Sandy wishes she had tried to finish high school or even earned her GED through the city's adult education program, which offered child care. But now that she is 22, she is no longer eligible for these free services. A local community-based organization offers GED preparation and job training services for free, but Sandy and George are not sure what to do about child care during the hours Sandy would be in school and George would be working. Sandy's cousin can provide child care for their son for a few months, but not for the 12 months Sandy will need to complete her GED.

- *Andrew* is a 42 year-old single father. He used to work as an assembler for a local manufacturer, but three years ago he was laid off when the factory moved its operations overseas. He has been out of work since then and relying on Trade Act and Unemployment Insurance benefits to support himself and his five-year-old son Ronnie, of whom he has full custody. Now those benefits have run out and he has been getting help from family to survive. Recently, a new company located its operations in Andrew's town, but the available jobs require computer and technical skills Andrew lacks. He would like to become a computer numeric control operator because he hears that work can command a good wage. But there is competition for seats in the local community college's training program, and he would have to go full-time, as well as take occasional classes in the evening. Andrew is not sure how he would pay for child care. It helps that Ronnie is now in school, but Andrew must still pay for after-school care, and he does not know what he would do during summer break

Emerging Issues and Concerns

Some of the key themes that emerge when considering the intersection of the workforce development and child care and early education systems include the following:

- **The systems have shared goals and serve overlapping populations.** The workforce development and child care and early education systems share goals in their efforts to help families move toward self-sufficiency. They also serve overlapping populations, in that parents are a sizable subset of low-income individuals needing education and training. As a result, the failure to

address the child care needs of parents needing education and training undercuts the goals of both systems.

- **The systems face common challenges that create barriers to working together.** Common challenges include the following:

  » The two systems operate separately and do not appear to actively work together to meet the needs of low-income families who need both sets of services to move ahead.

  » Each system is complex, involving a diverse set of services, local service providers, funding streams, different levels of government, and a broad range of possible places of intersection. This complexity creates challenges for individuals in each system who may be interested in working together to identify solutions.

  » Low funding levels mean that only a fraction of eligible individuals receive services. This lack of funding creates additional disincentives to address the sometimes more challenging needs of families needing child care to obtain education and training.

- **Low-income parents who need child care to participate in education and training are not a priority for either system.** Initial insights from our ongoing research suggest that the needs of parents in education and training (other than parents in TANF and some teen parents in high school) are often not a high priority or well understood by policymakers in either system.

- **Each system appears to have policies and incentives that can create barriers to meeting the child care needs of parents seeking education and training.** For example, a companion paper for this project (Adams et al. 2014) identified a number of CCDF eligibility policies that may inadvertently undercut the ability of families seeking education and training to obtain child care subsidies. Similarly, performance targets in the workforce system may lead programs to avoid enrolling individuals with barriers, including child care, although recent changes to the nation's workforce system reflect an effort to encourage local systems to do a better job at serving individuals with barriers to employment. (Further investigation of the policies and practices in each system that may create additional challenges for parents in education and training is currently underway for this project; findings are forthcoming.)

- **Specific aspects of the intersection of the systems seem likely to be particularly problematic for families.** Specifically, families may face challenges trying to match their work and workforce development schedules with available child care options. One area that emerges as particularly challenging for parents is finding child care that meets their full range of needs. Some of the

specific issues that shape the kinds of care parents can use and whether they must use multiple providers include the following:

» Finding care that meets the needs of all the family's children (including infants and toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children) can be challenging.

» Finding care that addresses parents' overall schedules can be difficult. A significant portion of parents combine education and training with work, and they need child care for both activities. They also need child care coverage for any time they spend commuting to and from work and school, gaps between education and training activities (e.g., time between classes), and homework or study time. (See, for example, the discussion by Reichlin and Gault [2014] on scheduling challenges for community college students.)

» Parents must consider whether the duration and stability of an education and training schedule supports (or requires) finding a new long-term child care option or necessitates patching together shorter-term options. They must also weigh the trade-offs of making their children deal with the challenges of transitioning to a new child care setting. These issues also affect whether parents are able to ensure the quality and stability of their children's care, as well as whether providers are willing to serve them (many providers may not be willing to serve children with varying schedules).

▪ **Low-income parents' financial constraints can be a significant barrier to accessing child care to support participation in workforce development activities.** As noted above, the cost of child care can be prohibitive for parents seeking to enroll in education and training activities. Education and training can also come with costs; even when tuition is covered, students may have to pay to get to school or pay for books and other fees associated with programs. As a result, financial assistance and free options—for either child care or education and training—can be essential.

▪ **Parents can face challenges in finding care that meets their needs because of an inadequate supply of options.** Parents seeking education and training can face various gaps in the supply of child care, including gaps in the availability of care that meets their scheduling needs (described above), of care that is of decent quality, or of care that is convenient to their particular needs for location and transportation. One particular challenge that can be common for parents in education and training is finding care for nontraditional hours, such as evenings and weekends. Providers may also be unwilling to accept children on a part-time basis or children whose hours vary from day to day.

- **Parents can face challenges in finding care because they do not know about available options.** Parents may also find it challenging to find out about the availability of local child care options that might work for their particular needs, as well as possible financial supports.

- **Parents can face challenges in finding care that meets their child's (or children's) need for high-quality, stable care.** Despite the growing understanding of the importance of both quality care and stable care to children's healthy development, finding such care can be particularly difficult for parents who face all the challenges laid out above.

These issues affect not only whether parents can find care that allows them to enroll in education and training, but also whether the choices they make are likely to work for them and their children, or will instead be choices that fall apart and create challenges to their ability to enroll in or complete an education or training program. These factors also affect whether parents are able to find care that meets their children's developmental needs for high-quality, stable care.

Strategies to Consider

Faced with such clear challenges, exploring possible strategies to move forward is essential. To start to identify possible strategies to address these issues, our team has been undertaking several related efforts. We first conducted an internal review of the published literature on workforce development programs and learned that child care is often not even discussed; when it is discussed, it is simply mentioned as a barrier to participation, with little additional information as to the precise issues or what was done to resolve the problem. We also reviewed recent initiatives aimed at making workforce development programs more accessible to nontraditional students, particularly adult students. (Examples of such initiatives include the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grants, Health Professions Opportunity grants, and Accelerating Opportunity.) Although not aimed at serving parents in particular, these efforts have embedded strategies that could make it easier for parents to participate in workforce development programs. Finally, we interviewed experts and stakeholders for their insights. Although this information-gathering process is still underway, we have developed some initial insights concerning the kinds of strategies that might be effective in addressing some of the problems identified above. Three major strategies are as follows:

1. Identify and address systemic barriers within the workforce development and child care systems (through an examination of funding, policy, and implementation practices in each system) that create additional challenges to meeting the child care needs of parents seeking

education and training. Examine what points within each system could be used to facilitate their intersection, and, conversely, what barriers exist in each. For example, our initial work around CCDF eligibility policies highlights some policies that may inadvertently create challenges for parents' ability to obtain child care for education and training, and our ongoing deeper exploration of these issues is uncovering additional policies and practices that may create barriers.

2. Identify and evaluate promising practices that child care and workforce development programs can undertake to help low-income families with their child care needs to support education and training. These strategies include, for example,

   » helping participants develop a child care plan and including the coordination of child care services as a part of case management, counseling, or advising services, whether provided directly or in partnership with other service providers;

   » providing information and referral services to help parents understand their child care options and choose good care that meets their unique needs;

   » reducing the costs of child care by linking families to financial assistance or free care, providing subsidies to directly defray the costs of child care, funding slots with local child care providers to provide care, or directly providing low-cost or free child care and early education services; and

   » adopting program innovations for workforce development programs that accommodate parents' unique child care needs, such as distance and online learning, self-paced curricula, and alternative scheduling.

   In identifying promising strategies, it is essential to examine circumstances likely to shape the effectiveness of any effort. What strategies would work for different stakeholders, different program models, or different families? What barriers may impede implementing such strategies more widely? Different strategies are likely to work for different situations and different families. Working together, child care and workforce development practitioners and stakeholders can provide a combination of these services, with specific combinations depending on funding restrictions, population served, available resources, and capacity. (A forthcoming paper from this project will discuss these strategies in more detail.)

3. Identify strategies to inform key stakeholders in each system about the challenges parents seeking education and training face, and support cross-system dialogue, communication, and linkages for individuals working on these issues at the federal, state, and local levels. Work with

stakeholders to identify what cross-system information would be useful for individuals in each system who are working to address these problems, and identify mechanisms to support dialogue and sharing among those who are working on these issues so that promising strategies can be identified and disseminated.

Conclusion

The purpose of this report has been to provide an initial exploration of the issues that lie at the intersection of the workforce development and child care systems. For low-income parents seeking increased family economic security through education and training, child care is critical. Lack of adequate support will not only impede these parents' ability to make important changes in their lives that can help them get ahead, but will also have negative ramifications for their children, who will likely continue to live in poverty. Failure to meet the child care needs of parents directly undercuts the stated goals of both workforce development systems and child care systems.

Given the complexity of low-income parents' lives and the systems that support them, no single solution is likely to meet the needs of this group. Solutions must be flexible, and a variety of options must be available to meet parents' needs. Recent initiatives have aimed to change education and training programs to better serve adults, and they have likely made important steps in serving low-income parents. However, more needs to be learned about how child care needs are being addressed to identify promising approaches and determine whether additional efforts targeted at low-income parents are necessary.

Initial findings from this project suggest that meeting the needs of low-income parents facing child care barriers is an issue of urgency to individuals working on the front line to help these parents obtain education and training. Further investigating policies and strategies that can support these efforts, and identifying ways to share information and promising strategies, will provide important resources to child care and workforce development stakeholders who are working for these families.

Notes

1. See Boressoff (2013) and Firlein, Gault, and Nelson (2013).

2. Many of the findings in this section are based on our analyses of the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation, a nationally representative survey that includes more than 50 million parents and provides the most recent available data on education and training and low-income parents. Some of these data were released in a companion brief from this project (Eyster, Callan, and Adams 2014), and some are from our unpublished analyses.

3. Although participation in education and training might have been higher during this time period because of the recession, these data still provide an interesting picture of parents' participation in such programs.

4. These figures are based on unpublished Urban Institute analyses of 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation data.

5. For example, one study found that single parents were much less likely to complete four-year degrees; 5 percent complete within six years, compared with 30 percent of average students (Goldrick-Rab and Sorenson 2010). Another study found that having younger children in the household significantly suppressed rates of college completion for parents (Taniguchi and Kaufman 2005). As several authors have noted, the differences in graduation rates may be attributed to the part-time attendance patterns of many parents, who often hold jobs while they are in school; they may complete programs, but not within the time frames in which college graduation rates are measured. Other factors that might contribute to low college completion rates include the lack of financial resources for college; the stress of combining work, school, and family; and the lack of supports, including child care, to help single parents be successful (Goldrick-Rab and Sorenson 2010; Taniguchi and Kaufman 2005).

6. For information on CCDF spending levels, see Matthews and Schmit (2014). As Matthews and Schmit note in footnotes 5 and 6, "states also transferred $1.4 billion in federal TANF funds to CCDBG. Once transferred, these TANF funds are subject to CCDBG rules and may be spent over several years. When spent, they are reported as CCDBG spending; therefore, we do not include these dollars in our sum of total year spending. Also, states may claim spending towards both TANF and CCDBG MOE. This figure excludes approximately $978 million that may be 'double counted' as CCDBG MOE and TANF MOE. Total TANF MOE spent on child care was $2.43 billion in 2012."

7. Workforce Investment Partnership Act of 1998, H. R. 1385, 105th Cong. (1998).

8. At the writing of this report, proposed regulations regarding WIOA had not been released. New regulations may provide additional guidance to states about the use of WIOA funding for supportive services.

9. For more information on an effort to pilot score cards at the federal level, see https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/higher-education/college-score-card. California has one of the most developed score card systems. For more information on California's score cards, see "Student Success Scorecard," California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, scorecard.cccco.edu/scorecard.aspx, and Paul Fain, "Scorecards Get an A," Inside Higher Ed, April 10, 2013, https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/04/10/california-community-colleges-release-completion-scorecards.

10. A companion paper from this project, for example, recently examined the variation in state CCDF eligibility policies for families in education and training (Adams et al. 2014).

11. "Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program: Funding Status," US Department of Education, last modified January 5, 2015, http://www2.ed.gov/programs/campisp/funding.html.

12. See the Ascend website (http://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/) for more information.

13. See the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2014a, b).

14. For more information on the complex factors that shape parent decisionmaking and child care selection, see recent publications on these issues at http://www.researchconnections.org/child care/resources/26725.

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