

# How Employment Constraints Affect Low-Income Working Parents' Child Care Decisions

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Child care decisions are complex and multifaceted for low-income parents because they often must incorporate multiple employment-related factors into their decisions. These decisions are often paired, either simultaneous or sequential, whereby families make child care decisions that fit within the realities of their employment contexts. These realities include generally low earnings, workplace inflexibility and limited paid time off, and high job instability. In addition, low-wage jobs are disproportionately more likely to have nontraditional and irregular work schedules as well as inflexible work policies. These employment realities further complicate the limited care options parents face due to supply, information, and cost constraints. The low wage levels of most low-skilled jobs limit the care options that parents working these jobs can afford. The available supply of some types of care options is often very limited in low-income communities. In addition, parents often have to make child care decisions with limited information about available options or the actual quality of care options. Many times, they do so with little time to find and arrange care.<sup>1</sup>

In this brief, we draw from a larger study on child care choices to describe how low-income parents' employment experiences shape their child care decisions. The brief summarizes and builds on findings from a larger research report that discusses how low-income working families in two study sites make child care decisions, and how these families' decisions are shaped or limited by key contextual factors. After we describe the research methods and sample in the two study sites, we present summary findings regarding the employment contexts of participating parents and the challenges that their employment posed for making child care choices. Then, we explore some potential policy implications. By

identifying how work constraints interact with the complexities of child care, we provide a basis that can help researchers and policymakers identify policy changes that may improve the child care choices available to low-income working families.

## Family Study

For the *Child Care Choices* study, we collected in-depth qualitative data from low-income working families in two low-income communities, in Providence, Rhode Island, and Seattle-White Center, Washington. The study included two rounds of interviews with 86 parents of young children (43 in Providence and 43 in Seattle) approximately one year apart. See box 1 for a description of how the sample was constructed and table 1 for sample characteristics.

We conducted initial interviews during fall and winter 2008–09 and follow-up interviews in fall and winter 2009–10.

## Findings

### *Parents' Employment Characteristics*

Parents' jobs across both sites broadly reflected those typically found in low-wage labor markets. Overall, parents worked an average of 33 hours a week. Thus, the average working parent across the two sites was working just less than full-time, making a little less than \$400 a week, and living at or near the poverty level. Many worked in administrative and paraprofessional service positions in the education, health, and social service sectors. Some were nursing assistants in health centers, teacher's aides in schools, and staff at WIC clinics. Some parents provided services, ranging from cleaning services, hairdressing, and



*BOX 1. Study Sites and Sample*

We selected sites with socioeconomic and demographic profiles that would allow us to examine the child care choices of low-income families and immigrants. When making our site selection, we looked to the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Making Connections initiative, a community improvement program in 10 low-income urban communities across the United States. Among the 10 communities, those in Providence and Seattle-White Center were best suited for our study because both sites had a high concentration of low-income households and immigrant populations.

To be included in the study, families had to have a household income of less than 250 percent of the federal poverty level, work or attend training at least 20 hours a week, and have a child under age 5 in nonparental child care at the time of recruitment. We were particularly interested in targeting three specific subpopulations: immigrant parents, parents with limited English proficiency, and families that had children with special needs. These subpopulations often face additional challenges arranging child care, so we purposely recruited more families with these characteristics,

We recruited the 86 participants in several ways. First, we recruited from the pool of respondents to a household survey previously conducted for the Making Connections initiative, and recruited 19 eligible families who expressed interest in participating. Second, we recruited 41 families with the assistance of local Making Connections partner organizations and other key community-based organizations. Lastly, we worked with local programs and participating families to recruit additional families and distributed recruitment fliers with a toll-free phone number for eligible families to call if interested in participating. These efforts resulted in 26 additional families.

The in-depth, semistructured, qualitative interviews were approximately 90 minutes long. We gathered information on family background and characteristics, employment, and child care arrangements and preferences. We analyzed the data from the parent interviews to identify key themes discussed by respondents across the two study sites.

landscaping. Others were doing factory work, retail work, and office or sales work for large companies and small businesses. A few were self-employed.

**Wage levels and incomes.** Parents’ wage levels and incomes were similar across both sites (table 2). In both Providence and Seattle, respondents’ average hourly wage was between \$11 and \$12 an hour, and the median wage level was a

little lower. In both sites, most parents worked full time, though nearly a third in Seattle worked part-time hours while only a seventh in Providence did. Very few worked multiple jobs concurrently.

**Employer benefits.** Most parents had no paid time off, vacation time, or sick leave. Only 37 of the 86 parents (43 percent) were in jobs that had some paid time off in the form of sick leave and/or vacation time, which ranged from

TABLE 1. *Characteristics of the Family Study Sample at Initial Interview*

Respondent or child characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Focal child age (years)		
< 1	14	16
1	26	30
2	18	21
3	18	21
4	10	12
Single-parent household	41	48
Extended household	23	27
Foreign-born	52	60
Limited English proficient	40	47
Latino	49	57
Had special-needs child	23	27
Child care subsidy recipient	33	38

TABLE 2. *Employment Characteristics of the Study Sample at Initial Interview*

Parental employment characteristics	
Median hourly wage	\$10.50
Average hourly wage	\$11.50
Average total weekly work hours	33
Worked multiple jobs	7%
Worked part-time (less than 30 hours a week)	23%
Worked standard hours (within M–F 8am–6pm)	40%
Worked nonstandard hours	60%
Worked evenings/nights regularly	23%
Worked weekends regularly	19%
Worked variable/changing shifts	23%
Any paid time off (vacation and/or sick leave)	43%
Any employment benefits (health insurance, 401k)	28%

three personal days to three full weeks of flexible time for vacation, illness, or caring for a sick child. More parents in Providence than Seattle worked jobs with some paid time off. Working parents with no vacation time or sick leave had the least flexibility to balance their child care and family needs with their work demands.

Only 24 parents (28 percent) received any other type of employer benefit besides paid time off. In most cases, benefits included health care coverage or, less commonly, some retirement benefit like a 401(k) plan, life insurance coverage, or some other employment benefit. Among those who received health care coverage under an employer’s plan, most only received coverage for themselves since their children were often covered through the state child health insurance program. In a few cases, parents received family coverage from an employer. Approximately a dozen parents said they declined employer health coverage because their share of the cost of the coverage was so high, in some cases as much as 40 percent of their take-home pay.

**Work schedules, nonstandard and shift-working hours.** Only 34 (40 percent) of parents worked regularly within the range of a standard work week, which we defined as weekdays between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. Fifty-two participants (60 percent) worked at least some nonstandard hours regularly, including 20 during evenings or nights, 16 on weekends, and 23 with variable shifts that regularly included weekends, evenings, and/or nights. Parents’ jobs were also very inflexible in terms of scheduling and time off, especially for parents working nonstandard or changing work schedules.

### *Employment Challenges and Constraints*

#### **Parents had limited employment opportunities, took any available work they could find, and prioritized holding on to their jobs.**

Respondents discussed the general scarcity of jobs, which they said had significantly worsened with the widespread job loss and insecurity associated with the Great Recession. This led many to enter and remain in less desirable positions, fully aware of the lack of better alternatives. Natalie, a mother in Providence, worked in customer service for a bank, and suggested that “people complain about their jobs, but they don’t leave because they know if they go out there, they don’t find nothing.” Many respondents relayed that they—or close family and friends—had difficulties trying to find work. This difficulty often motivated parents to do what they could to keep their current employment, and they were willing to make other aspects of their lives, like child care, fit around their work needs. Bouphe, a mother living in Seattle, was one of several parents who admitted she would like to change jobs but could not, because there were no available job opportunities: “Right now I have no choice, so I have to stick in my job.”

**Lack of steady work meant parental employment and income was unstable.** Some parents could not rely on steady, predictable wages, which worsened for many as the economic downturn deepened. Maricela, a Mexican mother and hairstylist at a salon in Seattle, worked variable hours and was paid based on the number of clients she served. She wanted a steadier job and considered adding part-time work in the evenings at a fast-food restaurant. She reasoned, “I need

a job that, although it pays me little, it will be dependable.” Similarly, Serafina worked at a fish-processing factory and often went without work and pay in the off seasons: “Last week I picked up a check of \$98 because there was nothing. Those two weeks I worked no more than two days.” The lack of steady work and fluctuating wages prevented parents from seeking care arrangements with predictable schedules and made it difficult for parents to plan ahead for child care needs.

**Transportation challenges between home, work, and child care added to the constraints for some families.** Several parents discussed their daily struggles getting to and from work and child care locations. Many families lacked access to a personal vehicle, relied on public transportation, or had long and complicated commutes. Grace, a mother in Seattle who was working at a food bank, explained that she had to call into work if she was going to be late for any reason, including transportation issues; this, too, was difficult for her:

First of all we don't have a cell phone. That's just not something we can afford right now, so if I think the buses are running late, I'll try to call in from the airport [near the bus stop] and say, “You guys, I'm running ten minutes late. Please work with me.” There was one time when the bus broke down and I was twenty minutes late and I got written up. . . . maybe once or twice a month something really bad will come up with the bus.

### *Job and Employer Inflexibility*

**Parents commonly experienced very inflexible scheduling and time off policies at the workplace.** Parents were often unable to miss a shift or leave work in the middle of their shifts without losing pay or even their employment. Their jobs tended to have strict shift start times, and even tardiness had serious consequences. Parents who had paid time off often mentioned that it was tightly controlled or discouraged. Nonstandard schedules and regularly shifting schedules compounded the difficulties.

### **Natalie's Family Struggles to Maintain Work and Child Care**

Natalie and Nelson are a two-parent family with three children. Their youngest child, Norberto, was 6 months old when we first met the family and had serious speech complications along with developmental delays. Natalie worked as a customer service representative at the nearby branch of a large commercial bank, a job she had applied for online, which she referred to as her ladder (“fue como mi escalera”). She earned over \$12 an hour. Natalie worked 40 hours a week, including work on Saturdays; while her schedule did not allow her to spend much time with her children, she was glad to have a good job opportunity. She used to have more unstable, often temporary work in a cosmetics factory and in a hotel for less money and with no health or retirement benefits. She liked her job at the bank because it was easy to get along with her coworkers, there was a professional work atmosphere, and the employer offered good benefits, which included a 401(k) plan and Blue Cross/Blue Shield medical insurance for her and her children. She also received paid time off and paid sick days, which she used to meet Norberto's special health needs. After using all her paid time off, Natalie had to use unplanned medical leave and did not get paid for the time.

One year later, Natalie was no longer working at the bank and had been looking for a job for several months. She said that she had had to stop working six months earlier because “my little one is sick.” Because of Norberto's many doctor appointments and visits, Natalie had to miss an average of 12 hours a week of work. At first, her pay went down because she was not paid for the hours she had to miss. She finally left her job because of the “pressure” of the situation with her boss. She was trying to keep her job while still going to the doctor visits and appointments, and her boss would regularly threaten to fire her for missing work. She said it was a “very stressful” time. The stress gave her severe migraines, which she attributed to multiple sources, including concerns about her child's health, her employment issues, the family's economic situation and not being able to pay bills, and “needing to depend on my husband's earnings [only] and I don't like it.”

Because of Nelson's work, it was even harder for him to help better coordinate work, child care, and their child's health needs. He worked the night shift 45 minutes away, and his job had fewer benefits and no flexibility. Nelson usually slept during the day and could not pick up the children.

In the end, with Natalie's income reduced, the cost of the family child care provider they were using was too great relative to what Natalie was earning. It was the best decision for the family for Natalie to stop working and stay home rather than work limited hours and pay for child care.

**Workplace inflexibility was sometimes associated with specific types of work as well as employer practices.** For some parents, the kind of work they did was inherently limiting. In services like hairdressing or working in a fish factory, the work depended on client demand or was traditionally organized in a way that limited the employees' flexibility. In other cases, employers' inflexibility and insensitivity to child care and family demands created challenges. As parents described it, supervisors would begrudge workers' requests for time off despite formal work flexibility and leave policies. Such employer practices increased stress for parents and led to greater anxiety about employment stability. As a result, parents sometimes lost their jobs or quit because of the pressures of constant work inflexibility.

**Job inflexibility and lack of benefits made it hard for parents to address child care needs.** Many parents worked in jobs with inflexible scheduling and no paid time off. Such constraints made balancing work and family life, particularly child care, more difficult. The inflexibility of some jobs prevented parents from taking time off for family emergencies or to provide care for a sick child. Amparo, a single mother living in Seattle, worked for a national retail chain. She explained that if she had to take time off because her children were sick, it affected her job. Her biggest complaint was how her employer handled leave policies:

Well, sometimes they want you to come in even though you're really sick . . . and [leaving work early is] a big problem with them. . . . I'm like, if you need to go, you need to go, right? They're like, "Oh, you have to wait until somebody else gets here." I'm like, "My son can't wait. What if he dies right now and then you guys are gonna be responsible for it? You want that to happen to you guys?" They don't care.

After Amparo had taken time off to care for her sick son, her employer cut her work hours. She said she thought it was a combination of the economy and her taking time off. Amparo felt her employer cutting her hours was an effort to control her by keeping her on her toes. Parents like Amparo rarely feel secure in their jobs or feel that it would be okay for them to respond to their child's care needs or a family emergency without jeopardizing their employment. Many parents across the two sites said that they knew that at some point they would not be able to continue their jobs due to strict schedules and their employers' inflexibility.

### *Work and Child Care Fit*

Parents struck a delicate balance between the work constraints described above and the child care options at their disposal. Parents did their best to pair their care and work schedules. Frequently, however, families only considered and sought care options within the constraints imposed by their work obligations; they rarely had the luxury of choosing a job or negotiating their work conditions to accommodate a care arrangement. Once parents managed to match their work and child care schedules, the fit could still fall apart. When employment and child care arrangements shifted or conflicted with each other, parents sometimes had to adjust or change care arrangements quickly. Other parents did not have multiple child care providers or backup options and could not make it to work if their schedules changed. The stability of their arrangements could break down due to changes in work, child care, or other family obligations.

**Most often, parents prioritized work requirements and fit their child care around job constraints.** Given many parents' difficulties finding and keeping jobs, they selected child care arrangements from more limited options that would work within employment circumstances. Honor succinctly stated the case: "Most of the time, you have to choose your child care to fit your work, 'cause if not . . . [then] I don't think you would have a job." Some families compromised substantially on their choice of care. Frances, a single mother from Seattle, began working a 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. shift after losing her daytime schedule. The auto sales company where she worked gave Frances only a week's notice. Consequently, she was forced to withdraw her daughter Fiona from her child care center because it was not open that late. Frances viewed the center's hours as unrealistic: "I don't like their hours. Nobody has a typical 9-to-5 job. . . . Centers should be open until 8 p.m." Although Frances preferred center care, it was impossible to find a center that would accommodate her new schedule, so she ended up moving Fiona to her sister's care.

While most parents made child care decisions that fit with their work schedules, a few arranged their work around child care. Gail, who was participating in a Seattle WorkFirst job search program, said it was difficult for her to find work that would fit with the child care she preferred. A single mother of four, Gail had only found positions with schedules that conflicted with her preference for center-based care, and so had yet to accept one. Gail explained, "It would

### Inflexible Work Frays María's Work and Child Care Balance

María left the Dominican Republic at 27, leaving behind an abusive ex-husband and a well-paying office job. When we met her, she was a single mother living in Providence with her son Martín. She had trouble finding stable work or work that fit her skills, and the transition to temporary factory work was particularly difficult:

Over there I have my career. I have a good income there, more or less, and I'd be with my two kids. I wouldn't have to ask for my daughter [to come to the U.S.]. Here I don't earn a good income, I work standing up, under pressure. . . . Just imagine that I was used to working in an office, in front of a computer, in an air-conditioned office, . . . and then I came here where I have to be subjected to this and under the direction of people who you know are less educated than you are.

She worked for a temporary staffing agency, receiving \$7.40 an hour for sporadic work hours and no benefits. One factory where María was placed was very inflexible: the bosses would take her "off the floor" for two weeks as punishment if she missed a shift because Martín was sick, and they would limit her work hours to a day or two when they called her back: "You pray to God that your kids don't get sick, that you don't get sick, so that you don't have to miss work." There was no flexibility for leaving work early for an emergency either, and they could not take breaks during shifts without harassment.

There was no flexibility even to go to the bathroom. You can't go to the bathroom more than twice a day. And they yell at you, "Where were you?!" "Move it!"—it's incredible. And they watch you when you go to the bathroom and they follow you to the bathroom. [They say] "Move it! Move it! Are you tired? You can't be tired here!"

If she arrived late, she faced strict consequences: "They deduct my pay and eat me alive."

María soon lost her job and did not regain job and child care stability for another nine months. Eventually, she successfully enrolled Martín in an afternoon Head Start program after she advocated for him by visiting multiple providers and organizations in the community. By then, she had also enrolled Martín in a subsidized center-based care in the morning, which took care of his transportation between the center and the Head Start program. María said this latest mix of arrangements provided much-needed stability for the family. Plus, it covered her full-time working hours, once she found work again through another temporary staffing agency at another factory. She found this work environment better than the last one, though it still had low pay and limited flexibility.

be nice if [the centers] were open a little later, because it's really hard to find a day job within that time frame."

Working parents with nonstandard schedules or varying shifts face especially challenging circumstances when trying to balance work and child care. Some families working nonstandard hours had some flexibility in the care available to them or did their best to work around their work schedule constraints. Despite changing hours, Frances said she was only able to keep her job because her sister was extremely flexible as a provider, even at night. If not for her sister, Frances would not have been able to find a provider that could accommodate her work schedule, and was not sure what she would have done.

**Many parents sought greater flexibility in their child care arrangements.** Given their work constraints and inflexible work situations, parents often sought flexible child care providers. Hazel, a single mother of five in Providence, began

working as an insurance agent about four months before our first interview, after previously piecing together multiple part-time jobs to earn enough to support her family. Hazel's schedule varied regularly, and having an understanding child care provider was central to Hazel's decisionmaking:

I like that she understands my schedule. And that's the problem—it's hard to find a good child care provider that understands the situation. Like me, I don't have a legitimate 9 to 5. My schedule can change anytime. Having child care providers or day care centers that only open in the daytime whereas for the people that work at night or like a job like mine that my hours vary [does not work well]. I have to find someone that's gonna be flexible, that's gonna understand my schedule, that's gonna work with me.

Making child care and work schedules fit was a common challenge. Since parents had less control over their work schedule, they sought

and relied upon the flexibility of care providers. Flexible child care drop-off and pick-up times allowed parents to make their child care decisions around their work needs. As a result, many parents used relatives and family child care providers to accommodate less flexible work environments. Vega's children were cared for by a family child care provider who was also a family member, because "If you have relatives, they give you a little bit of hours if you have some hard time, or if you don't have a car or something like that, they might wait for you." Vega contrasted this arrangement with other child care providers that charged a fee when the parent was late.

**The fragile fit between work and child care often falls apart.** Many parents discussed having to rearrange their child care to fit changing work contexts in order to keep their jobs. Even when parents could find an initial fit, it was hard to maintain a balance when work or child care changed or became inflexible. For example, Fern and Fred, two parents in a Seattle family, were working and both enrolled in a vocational training program in an effort to seek better job opportunities. The only arrangement they could find to fit their early morning training schedule was with a family child care provider, who was inconveniently located 30 minutes in the opposite direction from their training program. Two months into this arrangement, the family child care provider changed her operating hours and told them that she could no longer accommodate their early morning needs. The training program administrators were unsympathetic: "Oh well—guess you're not going to school." Fred explained they had already taken loans and paid their full tuition for the program, and that was all the school cared about. Fern and Fred decided they needed to change care arrangements once more.

When the balance between work and care broke down, many said they had no choice but to quit or be fired. For example, Nina quit a previous job because she could not be available whenever her boss wanted her to work: "If I did not have a child, I could be here 100 percent of the time that you want, but I have a child and I have a family."

Udele, a single mother in Providence, decided to quit a previous job after her older son became ill and was in the hospital:

I was out without pay, because they don't give sick time and things like that, and I didn't have any help, and they were calling me at the hospital to come into work, "Leave your son there, come into work, we need you." So I just said, "It's not working out. . . ." I took a temporary job . . . I said

you know what? Leave it in God's hands, but I can't stay in a place where they're not going to understand that I have a child that's sick.

It was a risky decision at the time for Udele. She was pregnant with her younger child, and she accepted lower pay at a temporary position. However, despite the lost income, it was important to Udele that her employer understood her parental responsibilities.

## Conclusions and Implications

Families' child care decisions are very strongly shaped by parental employment contexts and particularly the constraints they impose on care choices. Most parents considered their work constraints fixed, and because they prioritized keeping their jobs, they sought to make child care fit around these constraints. Parents who worked nonstandard schedules or had inflexible work situations faced significant barriers and ongoing challenges arranging child care. Fewer of these families were able to use their preferred child care arrangement. Limited child care options coupled with the challenges of balancing care and work over time often resulted in frayed and unstable work and care arrangements.

Most low-income working families are not able to access quality early care and education opportunities because of broad contextual constraints that include parental employment. In other words, while the availability and affordability of care options also significantly constrained parents' options, for many parents, work schedules and workplace inflexibility further limited their options and prevented them from accessing some available options. The findings summarized here provide insights into how these barriers operate. The findings also suggest policy strategies that might help parents better manage their roles as parents and workers, as well as improve children's access to early childhood development opportunities.

**Expand the supply of publicly funded early childhood care and education programs in low-income communities, and make these options consistent with parents' employment contexts.** This study and others document the parents' challenges securing early learning and development opportunities for their children. Federal, state, local, and community leaders should evaluate and respond to early care and education needs by significantly increasing resources and strategically integrating these resources to provide a stronger continuum of child care opportunities from birth to age 5

that meets families' needs and preferences, and that also is consistent with the employment constraints faced by low-wage working parents. Further, these efforts need to be targeted where the supply and integration of services is most limited. This will require significantly new and larger investments in Head Start, Early Head Start, child care subsidies, and state prekindergarten funding as well as greater and fuller integration of these resources to support more seamless and stable early learning programs for children.

A great many parents with young children, like the ones in this study, need much more support and resources to meet the dual needs of economically supporting their children through work and nurturing, developing, and educating their children. Because of complex and inflexible work contexts and constraints parents were required them to make care decisions that were primarily based on accommodating these constraints, and within a context of limited available or affordable options. One reason employment so deeply constricts care decisions is the very limited support for children's early care and education in the United States, especially in low-income communities. If developmentally appropriate early care and education was universally provided for all children in the United States as a core building block for children's development with opportunities that were also consistent with parental employment, then the adverse and mutually harmful relationship between work and child care could be much less concerning. Parents could make early care decisions and construct early learning pathways for children that are more independent of some constraining and unstable employment contexts.

Moving toward more universal early care and education opportunities and targeting young children in low-income communities could help reduce working parents' stress about finding a primary care provider. However, given the findings presented here about the challenges of finding care compatible with nonstandard hours and inflexible work situations, it is also critical important to improve the fit between parents' work contexts and child care.

**Give greater attention to the work-care fit of low-income families with nonstandard and shifting work schedules.** Most formal care options do not meet the scheduling needs of low-income families with nonstandard hours. Any significant investments in Head Start, Early Head Start, and child care subsidies must incorporate extended hours to meet the actual needs of many working families. Public funding could encourage center-based care providers to extend

their hours in the mornings and early evenings to accommodate more families' work schedules. Much greater integration of early childhood resources from Head Start, state prekindergarten, and child care subsidies can help promote more seamless full-day program options for children age 3 and 4.

Several other policies could improve work-family balance among low-income working families:

- **Improve parents' flexibility to balance work and family care needs by providing families a minimum number of paid sick days that employed parents can use to care for their own or dependent family members' illness or emergency care needs.** A few state and local governments have implemented policies mandating that employers provide a minimum number of paid days for illness, and to care for children or other dependent family members. Federal legislation has also been introduced in Congress, but it has failed to advance very far (Boushey 2011; Lovell 2004).
- **Establish employee-financed paid family leave programs to ensure that parents have some financial and employment security to address family needs.** A few states, including California, New Jersey, and Washington, have established paid family leave programs to help parents manage their caregiving needs, particularly those arising from childbirth, in early infancy, and for care of children with acute or long-term health conditions (Appelbaum and Milkman 2011; Fass 2009).
- **Implement demonstration efforts in the United States to measure the potential impacts of instituting right-to-request policies.** The United Kingdom established the right of workers to request flexible working arrangements in the Employment Act of 2002. This act makes it possible for working parents with children under the age of 6 (or under the age of 18 if the child is disabled) to request flexible work arrangements from their employers. Employers are required to consider and either accommodate workers' requests or document reasons for denying them. Early results have shown that most employees' flexibility requests have been granted (Boots et al. 2008; Hegewisch and Gornick 2008).

Taken together, these efforts can help parents better balance work and child care responsibilities, thus supporting their job retention and advancement as well as child and family well-being.

For more information, see the full research report, “Child Care Choices of Low-Income Working Families,” at <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=412343>.

## Note

1. See Sandstrom, Giesen, and Chaudry (2012) for a discussion of how child care supply, cost, and information limit care choices.

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