



RESEARCH REPORT

Local Workforce Development Boards and Child Care

Insights from Five Sites

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Cover image: On the second day of a weeklong job training program, Angelica Dunn heads toward home with her son after being asked to leave the class during a quiet test-taking time on Tuesday, May 1, 2018, in Omaha, NE. Photo by Jahi Chikwendiu/The Washington Post via Getty Images.

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Executive Summary

Many low-income Americans face challenges in the job market because of inadequate education and job skills, including almost three out of five low-income parents with a high school credential or less (Eyster, Callan, and Adams 2014). These people need additional education and training to help them gain better employment. Low-income parents, however, face particular challenges enrolling in activities to improve their skills and education levels because of the lack of affordable, quality child care (Adams, Spaulding, and Heller 2015). As a result, lack of available child care can be a major barrier for efforts to support improved employment prospects for low-wage and unemployed parents.

Local workforce development boards (LWDBs) set policies for and oversee a set of workforce programs and services funded under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). As such, they are the front line for low-income parents who need education and training, and they can play a critical role in helping parents address child care barriers. Yet relatively little is known about how LWDBs address child care needs.

This report provides insights into how LWDBs can help address these child care barriers by presenting findings from interviews with administrators from five LWDBs across the country. It is part of a two-phase project that explores the role of LWDBs in meeting the needs of parents seeking education and training. The first phase involved a survey of local workforce boards (Spaulding and Gebrekristos 2018). This report builds on that survey with findings from semistructured phone interviews with administrators from five LWDBs that are actively supporting the child care needs of the parent clients they serve. The sites we interviewed were Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development in Colorado, CareerSource of Broward County in Florida, Northern Indiana Workforce Board, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas, and North Central SkillSource in Washington. For the sake of brevity, we refer to these programs as Larimer County, Broward County, Northern Indiana, Central Texas, and North Central Washington in this report.

Our goal was to explore what these LWDBs do to address the child care barriers faced by their clients to help other workforce boards interested in helping families facing child care challenges. The findings gleaned from these interviews provide important insights into how LWDBs can support parents needing child care assistance and why child care is important. However, these findings should not be taken as representative of the actions of all LWDBs, and we have not formally evaluated these efforts and cannot say they are “best practices.” Nonetheless, they provide a useful glimpse into some of the diverse strategies that LWDBs can use to meet the child care needs of their parent clients.

The report provides information on the basic characteristics and administrative structure of each site, how child care fits into their vision and what motivates their child care efforts, how they help families with their child care needs and which kinds of families are able to get assistance, which partners sites work with, and what data they gather on their parents and their child care needs. The report concludes with a brief discussion of how LWDBs can help reduce child care barriers for low-income parents seeking education and training. Key insights into the role LWDBs can play in meeting the child care needs of their parent clients, and some of the challenges LWDBs face, include the following:

- Meeting the child care needs of parent clients is central to LWDBs achieving their mission of helping clients overcome barriers to work, supporting their local workforce, and meeting the needs of employers.
- LWDBs can take steps to reduce child care barriers for their clients by working with agencies administering Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds, actively seeking local partners, and using WIOA funds for supportive services to help address some child care needs.
- Various LWDB administrative structures and approaches can support the child care needs of parent clients. Some states build coordination and collaboration into their required approach for LWDBs at the state level, while other LWDBs take ownership of this issue at the local level. Key findings about core elements of administrative approaches include the following:
 - » Local leadership and vision is critical and can result in focused efforts for families in varied administrative contexts and using varied approaches.
 - » State leadership can be very helpful in facilitating coordination of child care and workforce development, but LWDBs can support the child care needs of parents even in states that do not make this a priority.
 - » Partners play a central role in helping LWDBs meet the child care needs of their parent clients, and LWDBs can identify and recruit a broad range of partners.
- All five sites had a broad vision of the importance of child care, understood the multifaceted benefits of child care across generations and how it fit their mission, and discussed the role child care plays for employers and the economy. LWDBs can be strong allies in helping expand support for and awareness of the importance of child care, to support not only work but the success of parents, families, the future workforce, and the economy.

However, these LWDBs face constraints in meeting the child care needs of their parent clients. The most common challenge was inadequate funding for child care and workforce development supportive

services. Many sites have waiting lists for child care assistance and are limited in what they could offer with WIOA funds alone. Restrictions were visible in several ways:

- Eligibility for child care assistance was limited in Larimer County, where only parents on TANF can get child care assistance for education and training and parents leaving TANF cannot continue to get assistance unless they left TANF because of increased earnings.
- Waiting lists for child care assistance existed in all sites (though are not a consistent presence in two sites), and non-TANF families often face delays in getting assistance and sometimes cannot get assistance at all even if they are eligible.
- The WIOA funding available per person for supportive services child care was restricted in Larimer County and North Central Washington.

Many respondents also noted the challenges of the larger child care market, which is characterized by an inadequate supply of good-quality affordable care overall, particular challenges in finding care during nontraditional hours, and a dearth of options for adolescents and youth.

Funding limitations came from various sources. In addition to overall constrained funding levels that only allow states to serve a fraction of the families eligible for child care assistance (Chien 2015), some states reported having inadequate funds to implement the new requirements of the 2014 CCDBG reauthorization. The 2014 law requires states to provide 12 months of assistance to eligible families unless they experience a nontemporary loss of employment. In these cases, states can terminate assistance with a three-month phaseout. (See Adams and Heller 2015 for more information on the requirements of the new law.) Before the new law, states could authorize care for shorter periods, which contributed to very short subsidy spells that created significant problems for both parents and children (Adams and Rohacek 2002, 2010). States are now required to place a higher priority on continuity of care for children and parents, which, given that the reauthorization did not come with significant new funds, seems likely to have been a factor in the national drop in CCDBG caseloads in recent years (Matthews and Walker 2016). Respondents in our Central Texas site said they had to implement waiting lists as a result of the new law and constrained funds, and they were concerned about their ability to meet the needs of their families. Since our interviews, however, Congress has passed new funding for the CCDBG, which may help at least partially alleviate this issue (though states face many competing demands for these funds).

In some sites, the limitations on the funds LWDBs can use for child care are the result of both federal funding levels and state decisions about how to allocate their resources. For example, the Florida requirement that 50 percent of WIOA funds be spent on training reduced the flexibility LWDBs

had to provide funds for supportive services. Respondents from other sites also mentioned state decisions to allocate WIOA funds to other priorities and state decisions about how to use TANF funds. One respondent discussed how much easier it had been in the 1980s, when they did not have to use as many resources to identify and braid different funding sources.

Local workforce development boards can play an important role in meeting the child care needs of their parent clients and supporting child care in their communities, but they are constrained by funding limitations and an inadequate child care market. Nonetheless, the commitment these five sites demonstrate to supporting parents and partnering with the child care and early education community shows the potential impact that LWDBs can have if they make meeting the child care needs of their clients a higher priority.

Local Workforce Development Boards and Child Care

Many low-income Americans face challenges in the job market because of inadequate education, literacy, and job skills, including almost three out of five low-income parents with a high school credential or less (Eyster, Callan, and Adams 2014). These people need additional education and training to help them find better employment. Low-income parents, however, face particular challenges in enrolling in activities to improve their skills and education levels because of the lack of affordable, quality child care (Adams, Spaulding, and Heller 2015). As a result, lack of available child care can be a major barrier for efforts to support improved employment prospects for low-wage and unemployed parents.

Local workforce development boards (LWDBs) set policies for and oversee a set of workforce programs and services funded under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Congress passed WIOA in 2014 to help millions of Americans obtain education and training to improve their job prospects. LWDBs and their partners provide career guidance, skills assessment, job search assistance, job placement, education, training, and supportive services to serve people with barriers to employment, including low-income parents (Spaulding 2016). As such, they are the front line for low-income parents who need education and training, and they can play a critical role in helping parents address child care barriers. Yet relatively little is known about how LWDBs address child care needs.

This report is part of a two-phase project that explores the role of LWDBs in meeting the needs of parents seeking education and training. The first phase of the project involved a survey of local workforce boards (Spaulding and Gebrekristos 2018). This report builds on that survey with findings from semistructured phone interviews with administrators from five LWDBs that are actively supporting the child care needs of the parent clients they serve. The sites we interviewed were Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development in Colorado, CareerSource of Broward County in Florida, Northern Indiana Workforce Board, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas, and North Central SkillSource in Washington. For the sake of brevity, we refer to these programs as Larimer County, Broward County, Northern Indiana, Central Texas, and North Central Washington in this report.

Our goal was to explore what these LWDBs do to address the child care barriers faced by their clients to help other workforce boards interested in helping families facing child care challenges. The findings gleaned from these interviews provide important insights into how LWDBs can support parents needing child care assistance and why child care is important. As discussed below, these findings should

not be taken as representative of the actions of all LWDBs, and we cannot say that they are “best practices.” Nonetheless, the findings provide a useful glimpse into the diverse strategies that LWDBs can use to meet the child care needs of their parent clients. This report is part of the Bridging the Gap Project at the Urban Institute (box 1).

BOX 1

Urban Institute’s Bridging the Gap Project

The Urban Institute, with the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Ford Foundation, is examining how child care intersects with postsecondary education and workforce development for low-income parents. We are looking at the systems, policies, and practices that affect access to child care for low-income, low-skilled parents seeking education and training. Our work falls into the four areas below and has laid a foundation for a broader conversation about the child care needs of low-income parents seeking economic security for themselves and their families by improving their education and skills.

- exploring and documenting challenges
- supporting the development of effective policies
- supporting the development of effective practices
- supporting collaboration and access to resources

A full description of the project and related reports can be found at www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/building-americas-workforce/about.

Methodology

This report builds on a survey of LWDBs that examined how local workforce systems meet the needs of parents seeking their services. (For more information on the methodology and findings from the survey, see Spaulding and Gebrekristos 2018.)

We first identified the subset of LWDBs whose survey responses suggested they are active in addressing their clients’ child care needs. We then selected five geographically diverse sites that appeared to have varied approaches to supporting parents. These sites were Larimer County, Broward County, Northern Indiana, Central Texas, and North Central Washington.

We conducted a semistructured phone interview with between one and three administrators or staff members from each LWDB. We supplemented these interviews with contextual data from the

prior survey and with information on the geographic and demographic characteristics of the service area from each site's local WIOA plan and Census, Current Population Survey, and American Community Survey data. Finally, we requested additional information from each site during their review of this report.

Our findings provide important insights into how LWDBs can address the child care needs of their parent clients. But these strategies are not representative of practices being implemented across the country, nor should they be considered model programs, as we did not have all the information needed to select sites based on the effectiveness of their strategies. Further research is needed to determine what approaches are most effective and to collect more detailed information through site visits, program data analysis, and so on; these activities were outside the scope of this project. Consequently, the information presented in this report is an initial exploration into these questions and provides a useful foundation for future work. Boxes 4 through 8, placed throughout the report, are short profiles of each LWDB. The appendix (page 27) lists contact information for the people we interviewed.

Findings

Respondents provided a wealth of information about their efforts to address child care barriers. We summarize this information in the following areas:

- basic characteristics and administrative structure of the site
- how child care fits into their vision, and what motivates their child care efforts
- how they help families with child care needs, and which kinds of families are able to get assistance
- the partners they work with
- what data they gather data on their parents and their child care needs

Context and Administrative Structure

The basic characteristics of LWDBs provide context for how they address child care issues. This section provides a quick overview of the sites, first focusing on the characteristics of each LWDB and then discussing the different administrative approaches to providing workforce development services, including the approach to providing child care and serving recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Although provision of child care was the focus, we asked about TANF because

its recipients are often a priority for scarce child care subsidy resources and TANF funding is often leveraged to pay for child care for other groups (Hahn et al. 2016). Further, TANF is a mandatory partner in American Job Centers, and TANF agency representatives are often members of LWDBs. Box 2 lists more information on WIOA, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), and TANF.

BOX 2

Key Federal Programs

Many federal programs support families who need child care to access education and training. The three programs most commonly involved are the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.^a

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

WIOA is the primary law authorizing programs under the workforce system. It was signed into law in 2014, replacing the Workforce Investment Act. WIOA provides federal funding to states and localities for workforce development services; it also includes requirements for a collaborative infrastructure to allow partners to use other funding to support the needs of job seekers. Key partners include workforce programs, adult education programs, employment services for unemployed workers, and vocational rehabilitation programs, as well as community and technical colleges, TANF, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. For workers, services provided through the workforce system include help with job searches, job placement, education, training, supportive services, and other services provided through a network of career centers called American Job Centers. State and local workforce development boards set priorities and oversee the services delivered to job seekers and employers. WIOA puts a greater emphasis on serving people with barriers to employment, such as low-income parents, than the Workforce Investment Act did (Spaulding 2015).^b

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)

The CCDBG, also known as the Child Care and Development Fund, is the primary source of financial assistance for child care for low-income parents. In 2014, \$11.3 billion was spent on this program using funds from the CCDBG as well as funds spent both directly and transferred from TANF (Matthews and Walker 2016). Though data are not available on the number of families and children served by the funds spent directly from TANF, \$8.4 billion spent through the CCDBG (including TANF transfer funds) served a monthly average of 1.4 million children. The funds are largely targeted to lower-income families who need child care for work, education, or training, though states have significant discretion (within federal guidelines) to determine which families to serve, and many prioritize parents who are employed. Many states give high priority to families on TANF who need child care assistance to meet the program's work requirements. CCDBG assistance is primarily provided as vouchers that parents use for the child care service of their choice (with some constraints).^c

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

TANF is a flexible federal block grant to states that helps needy families achieve self-sufficiency. While one of its main functions is to provide time-limited cash assistance to families—about 1.6 million very low-income families with children receive small cash assistance payments averaging \$378 a month—resources are also used to promote job preparation, work, and marriage, as well as for other statutorily defined purposes. TANF adults are required to engage in work or work activities, with some exceptions and exemptions, making child care subsidies critical for supporting their employment and their children’s healthy development. TANF families are a priority for child care assistance in many states. Access to child care subsidies and workforce development services is also important as parents and children transition off TANF.^d

^a For an overview on additional programs that support workforce development and education or support child care and early education, see Adams, Spaulding, and Heller (2015).

^b This information is taken from Spaulding and Gebrekristos (2018). Also see Spaulding (2015).

^c This information is taken from Adams and colleagues (2014). Also see Adams and Heller (2015) and Matthews and Walker (2016).

^d This information is taken from Hahn and colleagues (2016).

BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

The five sites varied in their geographic and demographic characteristics (table 1). They represent various states and regions, including both rural and urban areas. Two of the sites cover one mostly urban county each, and the remaining three cover five or more counties ranging from mostly urban to completely rural. The population of the service areas ranged from approximately 268,000 for North Central Washington to 1,864,000 for Broward County.

We also explored characteristics of the population each LWDB serves, including unemployment rates, poverty rates, and education levels. Unemployment rates ranged from 2.4 to 5.8 percent, and poverty rates ranged from 13 to 15 percent. Similarly, sites varied in the share of adults with less than a high school diploma (5 to 22 percent) and the share with a bachelor’s degree or higher (7 to 39 percent).

Each site had two or more job centers operated by the workforce board, a governmental unit, or a private company or business. Most sites could not provide the number of parent clients they serve because they either refer customers who need child care to other entities and do not track that information or do not track the information clearly and reliably. However, North Central Washington was able to provide this information: 158 participants reported that they were single parents, and an additional 8 enrolled as WIOA youth (but age 18 or older) were parents or pregnant (table 1). Other information, including the number of job seekers enrolled in services, referred to training, and placed in jobs per year, is also available.

TABLE 1

Basic Characteristics of the Five Local Workforce Development Sites

	CareerSource Broward	Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development	Northern Indiana Workforce Board	North Central SkillSource	Workforce Solutions of Central Texas
Geographic area					
Region	South	West	Midwest	West	South
State	Florida	Colorado	Indiana	Washington	Texas
County/COUNTIES	Broward	Larimer	Elkhart, Fulton, Kosciusko, Marshall, and St. Joseph	Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, and Okanogan	Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, Milam, Mills, and San Saba
Population	1,863,780	325,228	615,042	267,791	470,282
Urban-rural classification ^a	Mostly urban	Mostly urban	Mixed: Fulton and Marshall mostly rural; Elkhart, Kosciusko, and St. Joseph mostly urban	Mixed: Okanogan mostly rural; Adams, Chelan, Douglas, and Grant mostly urban	Mixed: Hamilton, Lampasas, and Milam mostly rural; Mills completely rural; Bell, Coryell, and San Saba mostly urban
Population characteristics					
Unemployment rate	3.9%	2.4%	3.1%	5.8%	4.2%
Poverty rate	14.4%	13.2%	15.1%	14.0%	14.6%
People age 18 and older with less than a high school diploma	12%	5%	16%	22%	11%
People age 18 and older with a bachelor's degree or higher	29%	39%	21%	17%	19%
Job centers					
Number	3 (all comprehensive)	2 (1 comprehensive, 1 affiliate)	5 (2 comprehensive, 3 affiliates—all services offered in all 5)	3 (2 comprehensive, 1 affiliate)	4 (2 comprehensive, 2 satellite)
Operated by	EmpHire Staffing Company, Inc.	Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development	Northern Indiana Workforce Board	MKH	Central Texas and West Central Texas Council of Governments under Managing Director, MG (Retired) Ken Cox

	CareerSource Broward	Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development	Northern Indiana Workforce Board	North Central SkillSource	Workforce Solutions of Central Texas
	Participants served^b				
Job seekers enrolled in services, per year	1,374	555	4,708	486	25,231
Number enrolled in services, referred to training, per year	600	161	827	244	10,647
Number enrolled in services, placed in jobs per year	540	214	1,750	324	6,880
Number who are parents of young children	[not available]	[not available]	[not available]	166	[not available]

Source: Data for population, poverty rate, and education levels are from the 2012–16 American Community Survey five-year estimates. Unemployment rate data are 2017 annual averages and come from Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Data for urban-rural classification are from the 2010 Census.

Notes: Comprehensive job centers are physical locations where customers can access all WIOA programs, services, and activities. Satellite and affiliate job centers may not offer all required programs, services, and activities. MKH is a small, woman-owned business. The number of participants who are parents of young children was only reported for the North Central SkillSource site and is the number of single adults or youth ages 18 and older who are self-reported parents or pregnant.

^a The urban-rural classification is based on county-level data from the 2010 Census. In the Census, counties can be categorized as “mostly urban” (less than 50 percent rural), “mostly rural” (50 to 99 percent rural), or “completely rural” (100 percent rural). For this report, sites that cover more than one county with varying categorizations are labeled “mixed,” and each county’s urban-rural classification is described.

^b The numbers for CareerSource Broward are approximations. The numbers for Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development and North Central SkillSource are for program year 2016 (the North Central SkillSource numbers are only for adult and dislocated workers, except the number who are parents of young children). The numbers for Northern Indiana Workforce Board are for program year 2017. The numbers for Workforce Solutions of Central Texas are for calendar year 2017.

STATE AND LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The LWDBs differ significantly in how they administer their workforce and child care systems, both in the degree of state versus local control and in how child care and TANF are administered in relation to the workforce development board (table 2 lists program administration details for each site).¹ Two sites have administrative structures that formalize collaborative mechanisms, albeit in different ways:

- Since 1995, **Texas** has consolidated all publicly funded programs that have anything to do with employment under the Texas Workforce Commission. This includes WIOA, TANF, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T), and, in an unusual twist, the CCDBG. These funds are distributed to 28 local workforce boards that are charged with providing all workforce and work-related programs in their area. As a result, Central Texas manages all its child care funds, so the coordination is in some ways baked into its administrative approach. The boards have some flexibility in how they implement their programs, so there is variation in how the LWDBs do their work.
- **Florida** also established coordinating structures at the state level, though they used a different approach. In the late 1990s, employment-related programs (e.g., WIOA, TANF, SNAP E&T, and the Wagner-Peyser programs) were all put under the control of LWDBs. (Wagner-Peyser employment exchange program employees are all state employees but are managed by the local board.) The workforce boards create a one-stop center by braiding the different workforce development funding streams. In 1999, Florida passed the School Readiness Act, leading to the creation of local early learning coalitions that centralized all child care funds from the CCDBG as well as funds allocated to child care from TANF and other child care functions. By law, the president of the LWDB sits on the board of the early learning coalition and participates in strategic planning for child care and many other administrative decisions. While the child care and workforce systems are administered separately, coordination and collaboration are built into the model. In Broward County, a third coordinating entity, the Coordinating Council of Broward, includes a broad array of public and private/nonprofit community social services agencies. Both the workforce board and the Early Learning Coalition work closely with the Coordinating Council.

While both sites have administrative structures that facilitate bridging the gap between child care and workforce development, program leadership appeared to make this a high priority and went beyond the approach mandated by their states.

The other three sites do not have the same level of mandated coordination or collaboration. The mechanisms for meeting families' child care needs are instead driven by the local agencies and partners:

- **Colorado** is a locally administered state, where many decisions about funding and policies are made at the local level, resulting in wide variation from one workforce board to another. In Larimer County, the workforce agency administers the workforce programs (including WIOA, TANF and SNAP employment services, and Wagner-Peyser) but works closely with the human services agency, which manages all the social services programs, including the child care funds (called the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program or CCCAP) as well as TANF and SNAP. TANF funds employment coaches (located in the workforce agency) who work with parents using a holistic, two-generation approach (known as two-gen), which focuses on meeting the needs of parents and children simultaneously to advance the well-being and success of both. The Larimer County local workforce agency has focused on supporting families in a two-gen model even before the state prioritized such strategies, but they were clear that state leadership helped validate and support their approach.
- In **Indiana**, the local workforce board handles WIOA-funded programs. While TANF and SNAP E&T programs are not colocated, the workforce board is highly coordinated with those programs. Child care is administered by a child care resource and referral agency under contract with the state. The workforce board has also developed a strategy to meet the child care needs of its clients through a widespread and active network of community providers as well as public sources. (See the “Key Partners and What They Do” section, starting on page 22.)
- In **Washington State**, the Employment Security Department administers Title I workforce programs and Title III Wagner-Peyser programs, while the Department of Social and Health Services administers TANF, SNAP, and the CCDBG. Local workforce development boards like North Central Washington implement the adult, dislocated and youth programs. Every community college is an adult education provider, and 28 of 34 colleges offer early childhood education programs, which offer low-income parents on-campus child care while they attend class. While TANF, SNAP, and the CCDBG are seldom officially colocated in one-stop centers, electronic connections, outreach, and case management visits bring program representatives into the centers. This facilitates collaboration and joint service delivery to connect clients with CCDBG resources.

TABLE 2

State and Local Program Administration by Site

	CareerSource Broward (Florida)	Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development (Colorado)	Northern Indiana Workforce Board (Indiana)	North Central SkillSource (Washington)	Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (Texas)
CCDBG	Early Learning Coalition	Department of Human Services	Child care resource and referral agency	Department of Social and Health Services	Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (through TWC)
TANF	CareerSource Broward	Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development	Family and Social Services Administration	Department of Social and Health Services	Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (through TWC)
SNAP E&T	CareerSource Broward	Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development	Family and Social Services Administration	Department of Social and Health Services	Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (through TWC)
Adult, dislocated worker, and youth (WIOA Title I)	CareerSource Broward	Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development	Northern Indiana Workforce Board	North Central SkillSource	Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (through TWC)

Notes: TWC = Texas Workforce Commission. In Broward County, TANF allocated to child care is administered by the Early Learning Coalition. Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development does not provide eligibility determination for TANF and SNAP E&T; it only administers the employment-focused services for those programs.

Vision, Goals, and Motivation

One of the most interesting aspects of our conversations with leadership in the five sites is how they perceive child care in relation to their goals, their role, and their responsibilities to their client families. Our interviews provided insights into how child care fits into their overall vision for their services and the motivation behind their vision.

VISION AND GOALS FOR CHILD CARE

Respondents saw child care as a multidimensional benefit, helping children, parents, and the workforce:

- Child care allows parents to participate in education and training or work.** All respondents were explicit about the importance of addressing child care barriers as a core element of their efforts to help their clients find employment. They all described it as a primary barrier affecting their clients and discussed its importance to their clients’ ability to succeed. A respondent from Broward County noted that child care is a “great enabler of work” and a “necessary component

of economic development.” He also noted that investments in child care for low-income parents needing education and training allow families to fill the needs of employers and contribute to the economy. Similarly, a respondent from North Central Washington noted that child care support was necessary “indefinitely and always.” The labor market, they said, “does not pay enough money for a single parent of one or two children...to make a go of it. ...If you really want to make work pay, you have to have subsidized child care.” Northern Indiana respondents also discussed the importance of helping employers understand more about how much of a barrier child care can be for low-income, full-time working parents.

- **Child care supports children’s development.** Respondents in several sites were also clear about focusing on good-quality child care that helps children get a strong start in life. A respondent in Northern Indiana said the “number one goal is make sure it’s...a good-quality, safe environment for the child” and “not just finding anyone to watch children, it’s making sure that [children’s]...developmental needs should be met.” Respondents in Central Texas said, “We fund child care that meets the state’s health and safety standards and hopefully enhances the child’s growth and development.” And Larimer County respondents suggested, “We have got to change our language around child care. When people hear ‘child care,’ I think they equate it to daycare, babysitting, or other types of activities that aren’t seen as critical or important. ...We have to...give it the importance that it warrants.”
- **Child care meets the needs of adolescents.** In addition to focusing on child care for young children, three sites discussed the importance of opportunities available to adolescents in their community. This may reflect changes under WIOA that put a greater emphasis on serving disconnected youth. Respondents were working to identify strategies to help adolescents, but each articulated their concerns in different ways:
 - » In Larimer County, efforts to work with parents have helped them focus on the needs of 12- to 16-year-old youth, which is challenging given that the age cutoff for subsidies is 13. As a result, the LWDB received funds from a local foundation to help the adolescent children of TANF parents “engage in positive productive activities...like basketball camp, soccer—the opportunities that non-low-income kids have access to. ...They need to be positively engaged so they have a different path to choose from...in order to provide relief for the parents...engage the young people...[and] give them stronger foundations for the future.”
 - » Indiana respondents also discussed their concerns about youth who “who come in at risk because they are homeless, living in a car, with no parent, they work several jobs, take care of younger siblings. I have one student in the Elkhart area who, in order to do homework,

had to go to Taco Bell because he needs internet access and they are open latest. ...How do we help those kids?”

- **Child care helps parents be better workers.** Some respondents articulated the importance of quality child care for parents as well. Respondents in Central Texas noted that it helps parents to know their child “is coming home learning things and is bright and smart—it makes me a better worker. So, it makes a difference for me to be able to do my job.” This perspective is also core to Larimer County’s approach, which focuses on helping parents articulate their goals for their children as part of their work with their employment counselors. “It’s not about looking at a referral list and finding a provider. It’s more about what kind of care do you want for the child, what experiences do you want the child to receive—richer conversation about what’s important to the family.” The employment coaches focus on “the whole family...look[ing] beyond the adults...what you do to support kids will ultimately support adults.” Northern Indiana respondents talked about the importance of helping employers understand how child care contributes to employee attendance and productivity.

- **Child care builds the future workforce.** Broward County respondents also focused on how quality child care prepares children for the workforce. They wished “there was a greater realization that when you provide child care for a family, you are enabling someone to fill the needs of the employers.” They also discussed the importance of helping employers see child care in this light:

When...we bring [child care centers] to various events where employers are, what you get is “Aww” and “Isn’t that cute,” and they are very nice and they are going to sing a song...and everyone gets this warm, fuzzy feeling, kind of like when you look at puppies. You know? Nobody thinks of it as “Wow! We are getting these kids soft skills and to be able to learn the skills that they are going to need to be an important addition to my employee base.” ...I would change the entire perspective we have in this country about quality child care and how it enables the workforce.

- **Child care supports a well-functioning economy.** Some LWDBs also talked about the importance of child care to the overall economy. A Larimer County respondent, for example, talked about the importance of “reframing the language around child care” to represent its importance “as an economic issue.”

It is not a luxury. We need a better structure to support kids and working families. It cannot be a poor person’s issue. ...We need to elevate the issue as an economic issue and as a moral issue. If we want to have a happy, well-adjusted community, workforce, and society, we have got to put benefits and needs of kids forward when it comes to child care. Child care will not go away. Our economy cannot survive with one parent staying home, like in the ’50s. We have to make it safe and easy for families to access quality child care while they are working.

BUILDING THE SUPPLY OF CHILD CARE

In addition to this broad and multifaceted vision of the importance of child care, several sites discussed their concerns about the inadequate supply of quality care available to parents. What we had not anticipated, however, was the steps some sites were taking to address these challenges:

- Respondents from the Central Texas LWDB, which is in effect also the child care subsidy agency, were part of a concerted effort to expand the number of accredited child care programs in the community. “It impacts our economy in central Texas,” they said, “to have quality centers.” The fact that their service area includes Fort Hood Army Base also provides an incentive to expand the supply of quality care. The military does “a base realignment and closure study every 6–7 years that closes [military] bases, and one of the things they look at is, ‘Do they have the child care center quality there for the military?’ If they don’t have it, they lose points and troops to put in the area.”
- Respondents from Broward County had worked with the Early Learning Coalition to “teach child care operators how to be better business people. Because they are in the business because they like children or it’s something they can do, but they are typically not in it to make money.”
- Broward County had also commissioned a study of how employers can provide child care and make it part of their benefits package. “But child care is very expensive,” one respondent said. “When employers go talk to their attorneys about the liability involved, they shy away from it.”
- Northern Indiana respondents described working with employers and training providers in their community to support on-site child care options, with the result that such options were more available to their parent clients. This included, for example, some training providers who were training early childhood professionals and providing child care as part of the training. Broward County had also tried to have an on-site child care program at one of its workforce agency sites for parents seeking education and training but did not receive stable and consistent demand, so the program is now open to all families in the community.

Despite these challenges, increasing the supply of child care was part of the vision and goals for many sites.

MOTIVATION AND LEADERSHIP FOR THE FOCUS ON CHILD CARE

An important issue to unpack is the source of the leadership and motivation for the focus on child care. In these five sites, recognition of the importance of addressing child care needs seems to be the result of some combination of the following elements:

- the vision of the public systems involved in child care and workforce development at the state level (working in tandem with the administrative structure described earlier)
- the vision and capacity of local leadership within the local workforce board or local workforce agency
- the vision and capacity of broader community entities

While all the sites appeared to have strong local leadership in either the workforce board or their own agency that made child care a priority, they varied along the other two dimensions.

For example, the focus on and connection to child care was part of a broader administrative structure that had been in place for two decades or more in our Central Texas and Broward County sites. Respondents talked about the focus on child care as one part of a larger vision of meeting family's needs. Interestingly, when asked where the vision for their child care work had come from, respondents from both sites said this approach has been in place for so long that they could not trace back to when it had started. However, while the state structure and vision was clearly important, we sense that local leaders from both LWDBs had exerted their leadership on these issues to take them further.

In our other sites, vision and leadership were more clearly from the local level:

- Colorado has developed a strong focus on two-generational services for TANF families, but our Larimer County respondents said they had had a holistic focus on serving families before the state prioritized it. They developed their current approach by working closely with advisors from Mathematica Policy Research, who received state funding to support some local agencies. Respondents noted that these efforts were mostly led by the local agency, as their local workforce board was more focused on other aspects of workforce support.
- Northern Indiana respondents described partnerships with local agencies that were activated by the stronger emphasis on partnerships in WIOA. They characterized the focus on child care as “a constant topic. It’s across the board. It’s so universally recognized that it’s hard to say where it came from.”

Sites also varied in whether their focus on child care was mentioned or highlighted in their WIOA plan. In some sites, such as Central Texas and Northern Indiana, child care is a priority within their plan; in fact Central Texas reported that the state requires that WIOA plans address child care. However, respondents in Larimer County, Broward County, and North Central Washington reported that child care was not discussed in any particular detail in their plans; one respondent said, “I’m sure we have a

sentence somewhere, but no.” Another respondent noted that the WIOA plan is more of a compliance document and not something that reflects the dynamic process of serving families.

What Child Care Support Clients Get

While all five sites work to meet the child care needs of their parent customers, they vary widely both in the kind of child care assistance provided and in which parents can get child care support. Below, we look at these two issues and examine how they play out from a family’s perspective, which we lay out for each site in boxes 4 through 8 (pages 18–25).

WHAT KIND OF ASSISTANCE CAN PARENT CLIENTS GET?

There are different ways local workforce boards can help parents get child care. These include assessing parents’ needs, helping them get child care assistance, and helping them find appropriate programs.

Assessing the family’s needs. Under WIOA, local boards are required to do an in-depth assessment of supportive service needs, including child care, and to develop an employment plan for eligible participants that identifies employment goals and strategies as well as the services needed to achieve the employment goals (Spaulding 2015).

All the sites had some way to assess parents’ child care needs. In Larimer County and Broward County, child care needs are assessed during intake at the workforce agency, because child care is considered a key element of an employment plan. As our Broward County respondent noted, child care “is one of the circumstances that you have to take into account when you are putting in wages and looking at what kind of job it is, whether the person can get there or not, do they have the trip chain, [will] they [have to]...go across town to drop the child off at a child care center and then go to the job and have public transportation? So, it’s a huge issue that we look at.” The employment coaches in Larimer County help families identify their goals for their children and include child care as part of that process. In North Central Washington, parents can be assessed at the TANF office, the one-stop workforce agency, or a local community college. The partners reach out to each other or to the broader network of partners if they are unable to meet a family’s needs.

Sites also talked about the importance of assessing and addressing the range of barriers that families face. As a Northern Indiana respondent noted, it is critical to look at “all of...the pieces...it take[s] to make a person successful.” After child care, transportation and housing were the most commonly mentioned barriers. Respondents also discussed the importance of addressing some of these broader needs before trying to help a family with workforce development services:

If someone comes in, we consider them in triage. We figure out what is the immediate thing they need—a job quickly, training. ...One of the first things that happens at our front counter in every office: Do they have a place to stay? Do they have children and do they have transportation? That's the first and foremost. They need to be stable before they enter even the system because if they are not, it doesn't matter how hard I try to get them into gainful employment, it's not going to happen. If they don't know where food is coming from...they won't be able to do it. You have to stabilize them before getting things worked out. Frequently, child care is the biggest issue.

Vouchers, subsidies, or other forms of assistance. If a family needs help paying for child care, all sites first see if they can get child care subsidies funded by the state child care assistance program (usually with CCDBG or TANF funds). However, sites vary in whether their non-TANF parent clients are eligible for CCDBG/TANF child care and if there are sufficient funds to serve them if eligible. If parents cannot get help from the CCDBG, programs next turn to local partners or, in a few sites, use WIOA supportive service funds as a last resort.

In Broward County and Central Texas, CCDBG/TANF child care funds are the main public funds available for parent clients. (In Central Texas, many families are dually eligible for military child care subsidies under Child Care Aware.) Families who could not get those subsidies (either because they were not eligible or because there were not sufficient funds) could only get child care assistance if the agency helps them find other local sources of support. Our Broward County respondent noted that they had been able to provide some child care support with WIOA funds, but the state passed a law requiring that 50 percent of the funds be spent on training. “And so,” the respondent said, “it might cost \$500 to put somebody in a training program. It could cost \$6,000 a year for child care...that impacts our decision to be able to offer things like child care. ...We were offering limited child care before that, but when that law came into existence, we just couldn't. There wasn't enough money to do that.” The North Central Washington site has a public option that it uses in addition to CCDBG funds: a collaboration with community colleges to tap targeted state financial aid to pay child care costs.

Sites described various community options that they try to access for families, ranging from Head Start to local programs to employer-sponsored efforts. We could not ascertain whether sites were able to adequately meet the child care needs of their clients with this combination of services.

If parents cannot get CCDBG funds in Northern Indiana and Larimer County—or cannot get either CCDBG or community college funds in North Central Washington—and no other local entities can provide assistance, the local agencies in these three sites sometimes use WIOA funds to pay for child care, though with significant restrictions. In Larimer County, WIOA funds are only used to pay for child care for obvious short-term needs, such as a problem with parents' child care payment or for short-term training, and respondents were clear that they do not generally offer this option. Similarly, respondents

in Northern Indiana reported using WIOA to “fill the gap” when, for example, there is a lag in receiving a subsidy or approving the payment. North Central Washington only provides WIOA funds for parents if they cannot get CCDBG funds or support from the local community college that provides child care support. Box 3 describes how sites purchase care.

BOX 3

Site Approaches to Using WIOA Funds to Pay for Child Care

Sites paying directly for child care assistance with WIOA funds use various approaches:

- **Larimer County** very rarely uses WIOA funds for child care assistance. When it does, it pays the provider directly. The provider must be vetted and registered to receive payments through the state Child Care Assistance Program.
- **Northern Indiana** pays child care providers the prevailing rates given what seems reasonable in their area. It primarily pays licensed providers, though it very rarely will pay legally license-exempt providers such as relatives (for example, if parent needs to participate in a training program that starts in a week and licensed facilities cannot sign them up that quickly).
- **North Central Washington** pays providers directly if they are registered with the state. In previous years, it would pay family members, but now it will only pay people licensed as child care providers by the state licensing system.

Further, the amount of WIOA funds that parents can use for child care is limited by inadequate funding. In North Central Washington, for example, WIOA funds for child care are capped at a lifetime limit of \$1,000 per person. Given that costs for center-based care can reach about \$10,000 a year for a 4-year-old in North Central Washington (Child Care Aware of America 2017) and more for infants or multiple children, WIOA supportive services funding levels are clearly unable to meet the needs of families who cannot get other child care assistance except for a short time. Similarly, the supportive services cap for funding in Larimer County is \$400 per year per family, a fraction of the cost of care.

When possible, sites also helped families access child care support from other local partners. These included Head Start, local child care programs and agencies, child care resource and referral agencies, and after-school programs. Again, we do not know whether these combined resources were sufficient to meet the needs of parent clients. (See “Key Partners and What They Do,” starting on page 22.)

Helping find child care options. Sites discussed two ways they help parents find child care. First, some sites partner with local child care resource and referral agencies that help parents find child care in their community. In Larimer County, employment coaches help parents navigate the Colorado Shines website to find child care options. In Broward County, the workforce agency works with the local child care resource and referral agency (the Early Learning Coalition) and either refers families to them for help or sometimes stations staff at the workforce agency.

Second, some sites have partnerships with a range of early childhood agencies and programs. For example, respondents from Northern Indiana said they have local employers that offer on-site child care, providers who train clients to become child care workers and provide child care as part of the training, and an apprenticeship program that provides child care.

BOX 4

Site Profile: How Larimer County Families Get Child Care Support

Child care efforts for parents in education and training are in the American Job Center that serves TANF families under the Larimer County Works program (TANF). The program has a close relationship to CCCAP, which is administered by the county Department of Human Services, which also receives federal funds from the state to administer TANF.

The Department of Human Services funds the American Job Center through a memorandum of understanding to provide employment-related services to TANF parents. All TANF recipients are referred to the workforce center for employment-related services. Center employment coaches work closely with families, conduct initial assessments, identify needs, and develop individualized plans. If a family needs child care support, the coach starts the application for child care assistance and sends it to CCCAP to determine eligibility. Employment coaches sit next to WIOA staff, business services staff, and SNAP E&T staff in the American Job Center, and they refer families back and forth.

Child care is only available to TANF clients through CCCAP, though the agency will very rarely provide WIOA funds to cover short-term child care expenses. A local program called Project Sufficiency also provides child care to a small number of non-TANF single mothers engaged in training.

The agency has changed its coaching model to one that helps families set and achieve goals. Often, those goals tie into finding and securing child care. The employment coaches are extremely knowledgeable about child care and work closely with the local child care resource and referral program (Colorado Shines) to help parents select a provider and identify community resources. Coaches also serve as case managers to help families achieve their goals. The agency also works with Head Start and a program that provides before- and after-school care.

A key challenge facing LWDBs is how to serve families needing child care during nontraditional hours (hours outside the standard 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday schedule). This is a challenge because relatively few licensed child care providers are usually available for those work schedules (Henly and Adams 2018), a problem corroborated by respondents, almost all of whom noted the scarcity of licensed providers willing to provide care during nontraditional hours. Northern Indiana reported that the LWDB has shared its concern about nontraditional-hour care with employers, who are now beginning to offer parents flexible scheduling to accommodate school and child care schedules. And some facilities and child care providers are beginning to offer nontraditional hour care, but not enough to meet demand. The North Central Washington site also refers families who need nontraditional hour care to its partner agencies, but respondents noted that licensed care is not available, so clients typically use family or friends for child care during these hours. This issue can also affect parents who get child care assistance through the state child care subsidy program. The 2014 CCDBG reauthorization strengthened health and safety and inspection requirements for legally unlicensed providers, and those requirements may reduce the number of providers available to serve subsidized children during nonstandard hours (Henly and Adams 2018).²

BOX 5

Site Profile: How Broward County Families Get Child Care Support

Workforce programs (including WIOA, TANF, SNAP E&T, and Wagner-Peyser) are operated by CareerSource Broward, and all child care and early childhood programs (including funds from the CCDBG, TANF child care funds, and child care resource and referral services) are centralized under the Early Learning Coalition. By law, the president of the LWDB sits on the Early Learning Coalition board and is involved in strategic planning about child care policies and issues in the community. The LWDB also works closely with the Coordinating Council of Broward, which includes a broad range of social services agencies and funders from the community and meets monthly.

When families come into the workforce center, the staff assesses overall needs, with child care as a major focus. Families with child care needs are referred to the Early Learning Coalition for help with getting subsidies or finding care. This process is sometimes handled by staff outstationed at the LWDB site and sometimes involves parents going to a different office. There is a waiting list for child care assistance, so clients are unable to get assistance immediately unless they are in a priority category. Currently, TANF clients are first priority and can bypass the list. Families with issues of safety or other unusually urgent circumstances can sometimes bypass the waiting list as well.

When parents are involved in workforce development activities, the center staff stays in touch and, if child care issues arise, will help parents access supports through the Early Learning Coalition.

WHICH FAMILIES GET CHILD CARE HELP?

Our sites varied in which parent clients can get help paying for child care from public sources. All sites provide child care for clients on TANF, as they are a priority for child care assistance and can bypass waiting lists (in sites that maintain waiting lists). However, not all sites offer non-TANF families public child care assistance from CCDBG/TANF funds.

- In Larimer County, only TANF families receive child care assistance to participate in workforce development activities, as other low-income families needing assistance for education and training are not eligible for state child care subsidies under CCCAP. Respondents noted that TANF families can keep child care assistance if they leave TANF because of earnings. However, if they leave for other reasons, such as hitting their time limit or problems with their child support payments, they lose their child care benefits and go on the waiting list if they still need assistance. The respondents said the waiting list had been in place for two years at the time of the interview, and no one had been selected off it.
- In both Broward County and Central Texas, non-TANF families are eligible for assistance. In Central Texas, parents had to be participating in either work or education and training for at least 25 hours a week to be eligible. However, both sites had waiting lists for non-TANF families at the time of our interview. In Florida, there were 6,000 people on the state waiting list, and our respondent suggested that additional families were not bothering to seek education and training because they knew they could not get help paying for child care. (At the time of our interview, the wait time for most non-TANF families was one year.) Central Texas did not have waiting lists until recently, but respondents reported that the list had 800 people on it at the time of the interview and that no non-TANF family had been enrolled from the wait list since August 2017. (This was attributed to new requirements in the reauthorized CCDBG that provide parents with 12 months of eligibility, reducing churn and attrition as families do not lose assistance as easily.)
- The Northern Indiana and North Central Washington sites said they are able to meet at least some needs of non-TANF families needing child care for education and training. However, both sites discussed that because of inadequate funds for child care assistance, their clients who were applying for assistance would sometimes be put on waiting lists for subsidies until funds became available and allowed the child care agency to begin enrolling families again.

In summary, only families on TANF are relatively assured of getting child care assistance to support employment and training in these sites. In Larimer County, **only** TANF families can get child care subsidies for education and training, while Broward County and Central Texas place non-TANF families

on waiting lists. Finally, Northern Indiana and North Central Washington can typically meet the child care needs of their families but must sometimes put families on waiting lists depending upon the funds available. As noted above, Central Texas's waiting list was attributed to new CCDBG requirements. Given that the CCDBG did not get additional funding to meet these requirements, the local board had to implement a waiting list. New funding provided by Congress in 2018 may help address this challenge (Matthews and Walker 2016).

Families who cannot get public CCDBG child care assistance in these sites are referred to partners for assistance. In two sites, if the parent cannot get assistance from CCDBG/TANF subsidies or from partners, the LWDB cannot help them with their child care needs. In the other three sites, the LWDB may provide at least some resources through WIOA, though there are restrictions on the amount families can access in two of these sites.

BOX 6

Site Profile: How Northern Indiana Families Get Child Care Support

The Northern Indiana site handles WIOA-funded programs, and while it is not colocated with TANF and SNAP E&T programs, the programs are highly coordinated. The site also has a large group of other partners who help meet the child care needs of its clients. Partners include the local child care and resource and referral agency, Head Start, United Way, YWCA, and some individual child care providers and employers. Child care subsidies are administered by the child care resource and referral agency, which is under contract with the state.

When customers come into the workforce center, they are assessed to determine whether they need child care assistance. If so, the center has multiple ways to address their needs, including voucher funding, allotted WIOA supportive services funds, employer child care services, and training providers that provide on-site child care.

The two major ways the Northern Indiana site provides child care assistance are by helping parents get voucher funding from the CCDBG and by using WIOA supportive services dollars. Generally, the site looks to voucher funding first, but that is based on need, accessibility of funding, and ability to meet the child care needs of the family. Recently, some training providers and employers have started offering on-site child care. Some partners, like the YWCA, are able to provide quality child care through federal or state grants. Other partners find other resources to support child care.

Key Partners and What They Do

The workforce system overall relies heavily on a diverse array of partners to meet families' child care needs. Some partnerships, such as those with TANF and state employment service agencies, are mandated by WIOA, while others are voluntary (Spaulding 2018). Our focal sites described various partnerships that help them meet the needs of their clients.

WHO WERE THE PARTNERS?

All sites reported working with the CCDF and TANF agencies, although in Texas, both services were already under the management of the workforce board. Many respondents talked about partnering with the local child care resource and referral agency to help parents find care in their community. Head Start was a common partner as well. These findings correspond with those of our workforce board survey, which found that 84 percent of the 124 responding LWDBs reported partnering with at least one child care organization; the most common partners were child care resource and referral agencies (68 percent), Head Start (40 percent), and child care providers (36 percent; see Spaulding 2018).

HOW DID THE PARTNERS WORK TOGETHER, AND WHAT BROUGHT THEM TOGETHER?

Respondents described how partnerships work in their communities and the different ways those partnerships came into being. As discussed earlier, Broward County has formal collaborative structures in place with its Early Learning Council and works closely with the Coordinating Council of Broward, which brings together public and private community partners dealing with other issues such as health, housing, and other social services. As our respondent noted when describing the Coordinating Council,

The Early Learning Coalition is there. County Human Services is there. Family Success Centers under [the] Community Services Block Grants is there. Mental health people there, the Community Foundation of Broward is there, United Way, the Urban League, and so on. And the purpose of that group is to look at what is happening in the community—look at what problems are there, and if it takes a coordinated approach, like Hurricane Irma, then we get together and decide who takes what piece and how we are going to coordinate it. And that meets monthly.

Respondents also described activities that support these partnerships, such as meeting regularly, serving on boards, and participating in joint committees. These close relationships help them solve problems together quickly and easily.

BOX 7

Site Profile: How Central Texas Families Get Child Care Support

All publicly funded employment programs are consolidated under the Texas Workforce Commission, including the Child Care and Development Fund, SNAP E&T, TANF, and WIOA. This means that most publicly funded child care money is funneled to LWDBs, except child care related to protective and foster care-related cases, which goes to the Department of Family and Protective Services.

When customers enter the workforce center, staff assess their child care needs. Parents requiring child care assistance have two avenues for receiving it: they need to meet the eligibility qualifications for either a working parent or someone enrolled in education or training. To meet these qualifications, a single parent must be working or participating in an education or training program at least 25 hours a week; for a two-parent family, the threshold is a combined 50 hours a week. Additionally, parents must meet the income eligibility requirements set by the federal poverty guidelines. For education and training, Central Texas offers child care services for a maximum of four years or until a parent completes a bachelor's degree, whichever comes first. A parent in a technical program rather than a degree program is offered two years of child care services. Families deemed eligible register at the workforce center and are offered a range of provider options, including licensed care, registered family homes, and licensed child care homes.

Families deemed not eligible are given contact information for other services, like Head Start, military child care subsidies, or public school pre-K programs.

Other sites, however, had strong partnership networks even without such requirements. For example, Northern Indiana respondents described the critical importance of the “massive group of partners” they work closely with. This group includes the United Way, community foundations, food service organizations, health and mental health partners, the YWCA and Goodwill Industries, and employers and training providers offering on-site care. The YWCA, for example, has a specific grant to provide on-site child care but also funds other providers to cover child care costs at the beginning of a work placement. The United Way and religious organizations help provide the means to pay for child care (religious organizations also provide child care services directly), and Goodwill opened a center to help student parents get their high school equivalency diploma.

Northern Indiana respondents said their partners had been working together in their community for a long time but credited the WIOA legislation and its focus on partnerships and reducing barriers for bringing them together. As our respondents noted, “When we first got WIOA, as soon as we saw it, the partners got together and we decided we all had to do it together. ...[They] really jumped in and thought about what we can do and what we need from one another. ...It made them rally around and put funding

on the table...to serve this community.” The respondents also said, “Many of our training providers are increasing the number of child care classes so that agencies and individuals can open more and more daycare centers. All of our communities now have child care task forces comprised of the local leaders, universities, employers, parents, and other concerned individuals because the need is so great.”

The Central Texas site also reported partnering with early care and education programs, Head Start, the military, and other service providers, among others. While the Texas Workforce Commission requires all LWDBs to have these partnerships, our respondents said these partnerships were also catalyzed by the state’s policy of passing the federal requirement for matching funds to the local workforce boards:

So, in order for us to get a match, we have to go to the school districts and colleges...and get matching contracts in place with Head Start programs and things like that. Just the fact that we have to get matching requirements from local partners, requires us...to work together so that it’s mutually beneficial for all players. So, that sets the stage for how a system can be driven to make different providers all work together or different people who are supporting child care—we all have to work together to get the money to the local system.

Respondents from Larimer County and North Central Washington also discussed the importance of working with partners in the early childhood area, including the subsidy and welfare agencies, child care resource and referral agencies, and Head Start. The North Central Washington site has a particularly strong partnership with the local community college, which had obtained funding through a state worker retraining and opportunity grant to provide some supportive services funding for child care. The workforce board worked closely with them, and the college was an entry point for parents seeking education and training. Our respondents noted that a child care support plan “could originate at three locations: the one-stop center, the welfare office, or at the community college. Wherever it originates, they...need to reach out to other partners to build on that plan.”

Some respondents discussed the importance of paying attention to formal partnerships as well as the smaller informal connections with local services that can support client families. For example, a North Central Washington respondent told us, “We have a women’s shelter three blocks away. We are well-known at that location—and we want to be well-known at that location. We want our services to be very accessible to those people. They have an on-site child care for children who live there. ...[These kinds of providers] don’t necessarily make it into some kind of a formal network because it’s unique to that location...and those are the resources that are going to be disclosed when we discuss with customers, ‘How are the kids going to be taken care of while you are at school/work?’”

BOX 8

Site Profile: How North Central Washington Families Get Child Care Support

The North Central Washington site partners closely with the Department of Social and Health Services and local community colleges. In Washington, the Department of Social and Health Services administers the state's CCDF, TANF, and SNAP E&T funds.

When people enter the workforce center, staff help them develop individual employment plans and determine their barriers. If child care is a barrier for someone enrolled in the Title I adult, dislocated worker, and youth program, the first step is to determine whether they can be referred to partners in social services or the local community college. Through the community college, families can receive limited funding for child care through a state-funded worker retraining and opportunity grant.

If a referral to partners cannot be made, parents must show financial need (i.e., expenses are more than income) and be participating in a career or training activity. If those requirements are met, up to \$1,000 of WIOA funds (lifetime limit per individual) may be used to pay the child care provider directly. The provider can be anyone who is registered in the Washington State licensing system. Depending on budget and with the approval of the managing director, financial support beyond the \$1,000 can be provided for people with exceptional circumstances, though this happens very rarely.

The site also partners with Head Start for child care and early childhood services and funding. In prior years, the site had partnered with a nonprofit child care facility that has since shut down because its expenses exceeded its income.

What Data Do LWDBs Collect about Parents and Child Care?

Sites varied significantly in the data they could provide about the child care needs of their parent clients. This was usually because child care was provided by other non-WIOA entities, such as the CCDBG or other partners, and therefore was not collected by WIOA data systems. For example, a Central Texas respondent noted, "WIOA-eligible customers who need child care assistance are referred to our child care services. The service is not provided as a supportive service under WIOA and, therefore, it is not a number that we track or have available." Similarly, a Northern Indiana respondent noted that they have data on who comes to them and where they refer them to, but it can be difficult to track information on child care services if the partners providing services are not part of a shared case management system. While it is not surprising that sites may find it challenging to keep track of whether their clients' child care needs are being met by partner agencies and outside referrals, it does seem as though sites would be able to track how they use WIOA funds for this purpose. North Central Washington reported that it has had three parent clients use supportive services funds for child care.

Conclusion

Our interviews provide a number of insights into the role local workforce development boards play in meeting the child care needs of their parent clients and some of the challenges they face in their efforts. LWDBs can clearly play an important role in meeting the child care needs of their parent clients and supporting child care in their communities, but they are constrained by funding limitations and an inadequate child care market. Nonetheless, the commitment these five sites demonstrate to supporting their parents and partnering with the child care and early education community shows the potential impact that LWDBs can have if they make meeting the child care needs of their clients a higher priority.

Appendix. Interviewees

CareerSource Broward

Mason Jackson
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Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development

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North Central SkillSource

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Workforce Solutions of Central Texas

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Northern Indiana Workforce Board

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Tom Primrose
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Notes

- ¹ We focused mostly on adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs, which fall under Title I. But some respondents also discussed Wagner-Peyser Employment Service programs, which fall under Title III.
- ² For more information on strategies to help meet the nontraditional-hour child care needs of parents in education and training, see Adams, Derrick-Mills, and Heller (2016) and Henly and Adams (2018).

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