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| Group F |
| Child Care Assistance- Changing lives of children and families |
| November 2010 |

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**Introduction**

In the 19th century Day Nurseries first emerged in Boston. The nuclear family was dominant, and children were cared for by their mothers. Husbands were expected to work to provide for the family. This was not the case for all children. Some parents were immigrant workers, impoverished mothers, widows, or were married to sea husbands. These children were left with no parental supervision as their parents went to work. Relatives were unable to look after these children because often times they worked alongside the parents or were elderly and physically not accessible. Day nurseries were founded to help care for children whose parents were economically deprived and disadvantaged in society. As the parents worked low paying jobs and long hours to support their family. Day nurseries allowed parents to work without the fear that their children would be roaming the streets, which could be a contributing factor in them being physically and morally abused (Boschee & Jacobs, 1998). Day nurseries would lead the way to what we now know as day care for working parents.

The societal burden and negative view on the welfare system led to the 1996 Welfare Reform Act. The main component of the Welfare Reform Act was the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). PROWRA’s goal was for welfare recipients to get off of welfare and into a job. Since low income families work jobs for lower wages it kept many of them in poverty. Many of these families were unable to pay for the daycare costs as it took up to one third of their income. This caused many of them to quit their job to care for their children, and return to welfare assistance (http://www.iwpr.org/About/About\_IWPR.htm).

The federal government enacted subsidies to help low income families with the cost of daycare. Child Care and Development fund is a mix of federal block grants and state funds. Each state receives block grant funds to disperse throughout their welfare programs. The states are allowed to transfer 30% of their Temporary Assistance for Needy families (TANF) to be used for helping to pay for day care (Greenberg, 2007). Subsidies for childcare freed up income dollars for low income families to help with other expenses. The only problem is that over half of welfare leavers and low income families are not receiving subsidies. Out of 10 million children that qualify for childcare assistance only 1.24 million of those children will receive some kind of assistance (Connelly & Kimmel, 2000).

The subsidy program for those who qualified for childcare was a reimbursement scheme that ran under AFDC. This program was where mothers would pay for daycare cost out of pocket upfront. They would later be reimbursed for the cost. This caused a problem for working mothers as some daycares were reluctant to accept children under a reimbursement plan. Also it created a hardship for many mothers as they were had to pay for daycare cost out of pocket each week. While waiting for a check for the daycare cost to help with other needs the family had (Connelly & Kimmel, 2000). According to Anderson and Levine’s review (1998) the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) a program enacted by employers to encourage its employees to work. The MFIP program paid employees cost of day care as long as they participated in an employment related activity.

Other subsidies were created to help with the cost of childcare assistance. Many welfare recipients or welfare leavers still qualify for other welfare programs. Some of the programs are food stamps, housing vouchers, and Work Incentive Programs. These programs allow low income families to receive a benefit amount to help pay for these expenses. Low income families that qualify for these programs are able to help pay for the expense of daycare costs (Besharov & Tramontozzi, 1989).

Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) was enacted in 1954. It was created for families who received no childcare assistance, and meet income guidelines. The idea behind the credit was to help working families with the burden that daycare expenses create. Families were allowed to be refunded up to 80% of the first childcare expenses that qualified about 580 a week. Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit began as a deduction. In 1976 it was passed as a credit as those who were eligible utilized its return. Those who benefitted from the passing of a childcare credit were middle and higher income families. As these families incomes allow for affordability of childcare, higher quality of daycare, and access to daycare. This credit did not help lower income families as their income is below guide lines to qualify for the credit. Families who earned $10,000 a year accounted for 1% of families who received the tax credit. While families who earned $15,000 a year accounted for 13% of families who received the tax credit. Another reason low income families do not receive Child Dependent Care Tax Credit is that many lack an income or pay taxes. Lower income families are also exempt from the credit as they are unable to afford daycare, and many rely on relatives to care for their children. (Besharov & Tramontozzi, 1989). Childcare assistance differs greatly for welfare recipients and those who are non welfare recipients. The allotted benefits to those who receive welfare are a lower written off amount as opposed to the non welfare childcare costs. The non welfare amounts are generally higher yet yield a bigger benefit in quality and availability of the care given.

The objectives of our group will be to examine the effects of issues the system faces daily due to the lack of availability of quality care giving, the rising costs of care on single parents and low income families, and the impact these issues have on the qualifying factors in the distribution of subsidies. The study will serve to assist in identifying key factors involving the gaps within the system and help us to understand the policy making process itself, the implementation procedures, and evaluate the policies of the childcare assistance program for each of these issues.

**Definition of the Policy**

Many parents whether they are single or married struggle with paying for quality and affordable daycare. States now carry the responsibility of providing funds for daycare to families that meet income guidelines. In Kansas it is known as the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). The program was designed to help with paying for childcare to eligible children under the age of 13. This program has an income guideline at 185% the poverty level. This means that parents who qualify are able to get a portion on their childcare expenses paid. It also allows a family to keep 41% of their income. The program benefits not only parent and employers, but also society. It allows parents to stay in the workforce. As they no longer have to spend the bulk of their income on childcare. Instead they are able to put that money on other necessities the family needs. It strengths employers as they have employees who are more focused on doing their job. Absences are reduced, and work performance is increased. For society it helps by not paying out in other costly social services to these families who would need it without their job (www.kac.org).

**Objectives of the Policy**

The Child Care Assistance policy and the many organizations within it have many specific objectives. Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is a federal fund that provides child care grants to individual states based on qualifying factors. Vouchers provided by the state are given monthly to participating families as an incentive to remain self-sufficient or to work towards economic self-sufficiency. Social and Rehabilitative Services (SRS) allows parental figures to choose from a variety of child care services. These options include child care centers, family members, neighbors, home-based day cares, afterschool programs, and faith-based programs. Child care centers and home-based daycares must be approved by the state. Child care providers are required to abide by a variety of safety and health standards. These requirements seek to provide even the poorest of citizens the right to quality and affordable child care and the recourses to attain theses services. The types of child care assistance programs and the diversity of recipients of the CCAP benefits have changed as our society changes.

The Child Care Assistance Program helps single parents and families with low income. The objectives of the program are to assist parents in locating care, making provider payments and promoting quality activities that encourage the recipient children to succeed in life through affordable, high quality early care and education and after school programs thus helping the parents lead a productive and self sufficient life (Boschee & Jacobs, 1998).

**Factors influencing Policy**

As the policy of childcare was being shaped and created, other outside factors influenced the process. In the mid 1800’s our nation was swept with a the Women’s Suffrage Movement involving women’s rights which increased our awareness and needs for child care as so many women came into their own and entered the workforce (htto://www.ibiblio.org/prism/mar98/path.html).

During this movement, the women wanted all of the same rights that men had, including the ability to own property, right to vote, and to be considered equal in the workforce and at home instead of another piece of property their husbands own. In the 19th century, it began to be more acceptable for women to enter the workforce Over the years more and more mothers are working, in 1998, 65% of women were working. Due to the increase number of women working there was a growing need for quality and affordable child care (http://www.wic.org/misc/history.htm).

Today there are various campaigns still advocating for better and more affordable child care. The Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) works with the “economic and social issues affecting women.” (http://www.iwpr.org/About/About\_IWPR.htm). They are striving to help women and families in poverty make their lives better. Another is the Center for Child Care Workforce (CCW) who makes it their goal to provide valued care and the education children need to better succeed in this world. They are providing the training, research, and opportunities to better their education to ensure they have more enjoyable and rewarding jobs in their future (http://www.ccw.org/index.php?option=com\_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=43). The National Network for Child Care provides information they have found and receive from universities with those who are interested in child care. They want to help people find what they need about child care in their area. (Boschee & Jacobs, 1998) This just lists a few of the various organizations and campaigns advocating for quality and more affordable child care.

**History of the Policy**

Prior to the Second World War the need for child care assistance was primarily limited to widowed mothers and their children. Divorced and unwed mothers were nearly unheard of, and in the instances when the situations arose, the women were deemed “unworthy”. Services to the poor were provided by the community and not looked upon as the responsibility of the federal government. The welfare theory that our country operated on was based on the Elizabethan Poor laws (Zastrow, 2010).

The 1930’s and 1940’s was the beginning of a new era. The Great Depression set the stage for the first government ran welfare program. With the fall of the economic system president Roosevelt acknowledged the governments’ responsibility to its citizens. The Social Security Act of 1935 was implemented. Once again the dynamics of our country changed just a few years later with the start of the Second World War. As men were sent off to fight in the war their wives were assuming the roles that they left behind. The need for child care was growing as women began venturing out into the workforce. The Federal Government sponsored day care during the Great Depression. Also during World War II, the government sponsored daycare to over 400,000 preschool aged children. They sponsored this daycare because mothers need to work to produce war materials. After the war women were told not to work anymore and go home to care for their children but many did not return home to take care of their children, and instead remained going to work every day. Since the World War II there has been an increase in the number of women who do work outside the home (Boschee & Jacobs, 1998).

Originally the Social Security Act of 1935 focused on the needs of children rather than the needs of the family as a whole, but as society progressed new provisions to the laws were implemented. Other programs started in 1943, in Oregon. The Kaiser shipyard opened a child care center at their shipyards. The goal of this was so that the rate of absents of the working mothers would reduce. Henry Kaiser built the child care centers, they were opened 24 hours a day and provide the children with a nurse on site and meals. The cost to run this was shared by the company and the parents. The child care centers closed after the war but today there are many business like Kaiser that provide daycare (Boschee, 1998). The 1960’s introduced an era where little to no form of social injustice was tolerated. In 1962 the name of welfare changed from the Social Security Act of 1935 to Aid to Families of Dependent Children (AFDC). For the next few years requirements for welfare recipients were lenient.

With the Family Support Act of 1988 came the Job opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program (JOBS). The act required mothers with children above the age of three to seek employment, work, or training under JOBS. The era where women were encouraged to stay at home with their children was coming to an end. The 1950’s family value system had changed drastically. As more and more mothers had children out of wedlock and divorce rates increased society and the governments focus turned more towards financial responsibility rather than the moral responsibility of taking care of your own child.

In 1996 president Clinton vowed to “end welfare as we know it”. The 60 year old welfare act was replaced by Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). The new act does not allow mothers the opportunity to receive assistance while staying home with their children. All recipients are required to seek employment and are limited to a “5 year lifetime cap” (debate 14). Under TANF states are required to provide financial assistance for childcare.

**Conductor of Policy**

One of the core providers for child care policy and funding is a social service known as Social and Rehabilitative Services (SRS). Within SRS there are a number of programs that conduct the childcare policy. Subsidy programs that aid families in need of childcare are Temporary Assistance Needy Families, job training, and continuing education for young teen mothers. Families applying for childcare assistance must meet state income guidelines and regulations. Once recipients qualify they are given options for providing childcare. Their choices range from a licensed child care center, a licensed family child care home, registered child care home, a provider who comes into the home, or a relative (Kansas Social and Rehabilitation Services, 2010).

**Beneficiary of Child Care Assistance Welfare**

Approximately 15 million U.S. single parent and families are eligible for services offered by the State funded programs and of those 15 million only a 14-20% receives assistance (http://www.kaccrra.org/FAMfinancial.shtml). Children in our society whose families qualify for child care assistance benefit from the standards set by each state. Providers are required to attend a variety of classes in the areas of infant/child development, early education, nutrition, safety, and accountability. Upon completion of these classes childcare providers are able to attain a license, or become registered to care for children. To ensure that policies are being meeting standards, visits are done routinely. Each state inspects for the safety and quality of childcare being provided within that facility. Inspections, done by the state, benefit the overall physical and intellectual growth of its recipients. It also allows each state to interfere when a provider is giving low quality care. This often times leads to children being neglected.

Policies set forth for childcare allow parents a peace of mind about leaving the care of their children in the hands of stranger. One of the programs goals was to provide families with a variety of licensed or registered childcare providers. This allowed parents the ability to have affordable childcare within close proximity of work or home. In return parents were able to stay employed while cutting the cost of childcare.

On a larger scale society benefits from funding child care assistance. Parents who are able to utilize this social service become more self-sufficient. They are less likely to depend on welfare programs. Instead they are able to care for themselves and their families. This gives hope for future generations who desperately need to break the culture of poverty (Kansas SRS, 2010).

**Eligibility Criteria of the Policy of the Program**

The criterion for qualification of childcare assistance varies from state to state. The first step is that a recipient must apply for assistance. For Kansas applicants they must along with their children reside within the state. A child must be under the age of 13. If older than 13 they must be unable to care for themselves. Families are responsible for providing all sources of income. Other requirements may include working, pursuing a GED or high school diploma, parents in crisis, foster parents, and for training (Keys, 2010).

Income is one of the main factors that determine eligibility. In 2009, a family of four could qualify for childcare assistance with an income of up to $40,793 (Child Care in Kansas: A short-Term Opportunity to Achieve Long-Term Improvement, 2009). In Kansas monthly income guidelines have been set for different family structures. A family of two- $2,246, three-$2,823, four-$3,400, five-$3,976, six-4, 553, seven-$5,130, eight-$5,705, nine-$6,283, ten-$6,860 Income guidelines are set to determine those who may qualify. Income amounts set by the state are only seen as guidelines, and not a guarantee (Keys, 2010).

The Kansas Head Start is a program in the childcare assistance program. It provides care for pregnant women, infants, and toddlers. In order to qualify for the Head Start Program one needs to be a Kansas resident, and a parent or caregiver to the child. Another requirement is a family’s income cannot exceed a set amount. The annual household income cannot exceed these amounts. The amounts are as follows: for a family of one $10,830, two-$14,570, three-$22,050,

four-$25,790, five-$29,350, six-$33,720, seven-$37,010, and a family of eight-$20,750 (http://www.ksheadstart.org). Head Start gives low-income families an option of placing their children in an environment that prepares them for school.

**Conducting in Kansas**

The childcare assistance subsidy program in Kansas is in place to help families pay for services. The Child Care and Developmental Fund (CCDF) Child Care Subsidy Program helps pay for child care costs. The funding for this program is a result of a federal block grant awarded to the state of Kansas. Social Rehabilitative Services (SRS) distributes this money to the many subsidiary divisions of the Office of Child care. Four percent of these funds are allocated to improving services. These services are offered to parents such as resources and counseling, availability, and safety measures within the homes and centers that provide care. There is a matching fund clause within the policy that allows private funds that the state matches (CCDF from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/ccdf/index.htm>, 2009).

The funds that are distributed as mandatory funds, matching funds, discretionary-including, school age care, quality care, infant and toddler care, and discretionary- excluding to the amount of $45,546,388 a year. The state then lists in policy the implementation criteria for the moneys given. These include, provider payment rates, eligibility requirements for participants, co-payments. The money will be distributed to the participants (i.e. direct pay to care provider, or electronic benefits card). Listing the safety standards that pertain to health and quality in the centers or home is required. The rates to providers are determined based on a rate ceiling as the reimbursement is based on the price of childcare, and not the cost itself of the care given. This policy is to be non-discriminative. Therefore it is not based on the family’s income status, but on the price itself. This helps to stabilize the equal access to program benefits to those who meet eligibility requirements (CCDF, 2009).

**Positive Impact of Policy**

During the movement of social change in the 60’s and 70’s family structure was perhaps the largest change to happen. As more women moved towards equal rights as men. They were stepping out of the homemaker role, and into the working woman role. This brought about the need for child care assistance. Since its implementation, this social service need to working families, childcare assistance has had both positive and negative impacts on recipients.

Positive impact of the current child care assistance policy is directly related to small business owners, low income families, and children. The U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services reported that an average of 1,600,300 children (21,500 in the state of Kansas) nationwide receive benefits and 2008. This indicates that a significant number of children in our society qualified and had access to quality child care. In fact 76% (84% in the state of Kansas) of those recipients receive child care from a licensed or registered childcare provider. By ensuring that there are licensed in registered childcare facilities available children in childcare are receiving the highest quality of care available (<http://www.hhs.gov/grants>, 2008).

**Policy Increases Well-Being of Recipients**

The childcare assistance policy has had a positive impact on the recipient’s (families) who receive it. Out of 932,000 recipients (11,400 in the state of Kansas) 77% are employed or are seeking employment. While another 9% are obtaining job training or seeking education. For welfare recipients childcare assistance allows them to seek and secure a job. It has been shown that 59% of welfare leavers who have access to quality child care systems are employed and they are less likely to return to welfare. While 83% of childcare recipients are not applying for or receiving any other welfare benefits. This indicates that a high percentage of individuals who qualified and receive childcare systems become self sufficient. This allows them to stay employed which decreases the likelihood of becoming dependent of the welfare system. It has also had a positive impact on the children as they receive not only quality care, but many also receive education that prepares them for school (Jindani & Murdock, 2009).

**Negative Impact of Policy**

There’s also been a negative impact of childcare assistance for those who want to qualify, and its recipients. Childcare assistance is a social service provided to the public, which only a few will actually qualify for benefits.

Even though parents and families can qualify for childcare assistance the process can hinder those trying to utilize this resource. Some deterrents of the process is the lengthy time and documentation of income, frustration with a case worker, and the like a guidance filling out an application. For these reasons many individuals withdraw from the process. When an individual withdraws an application it is never submitted to see if they qualify for childcare benefits.

Another negative impact of the policy is in order to keep getting childcare benefits, individuals and families must report every single change, and keep in contact with the state. This is very time consuming and it can be difficult for some families. After taking the time and following all of the steps to keep yourself qualified, you have to make sure you are following the policy and practice requirements. Sometimes requirements of the policy and the practices of a local office make parents and families have a more difficult time than it does to help them.

Those who receive child care benefits and have a change in their employment status due to job hours, loss of job or change in schedule must notify the agency of the change. Sometimes parents do not notify the agency. One reason parents fail to notify the agencies is the confusion about the criteria of the policy. While many are unaware or are not told at the time they receive childcare benefits of what they have to report, the results of not telling the agency of changes could lead to the family not getting benefits from the program anymore. After getting off of childcare assistance many families worry about finding another child care provider that will work the same quality of care that the current provider did (Adams, Gina, Snyder & Sanfort, 2002).

A child’s eligibility to receive benefits is based on the parent’s eligibility status. If a parent gets a raise, and becomes ineligible to receive benefits, the child is affected. A key aspect of the child’s development is making sure they have stability in their relationships. If the child is removed from a program when they are succeeding, because a parent is ineligible, then their stability is being affected. In programs like Head Start, where developmental program is in place for the child, it is usually because there they are not always getting the one on one attention at home that they need. The children may also be put in a daycare that doesn’t focus on development and the well being of the child. The longer a child is in a certain place the more meaningful relationships and development progress they are making. If services are stopped there is a possibility that they would be returning to a situation and environment that no longer fosters the same development and relationship bonds (Adams, Gina, Snyder &Sanfort, 2002).

**Unexpected Side Effects**

Families who receive childcare assistance face the problem of being terminated from the program for main reasons. Some of the reasons the family might lose childcare benefits is their income is higher than maximum amount allowed, the child becomes too old, and the parents do not need other criteria, such as working a certain number of hours a week to meet eligibility guidelines (Adams, Gina, Snyder & Sanfort, 2002).

Another reason parents could be terminated is because they do not re-apply for assistance. One of the many reasons is that some parents are unable to take time off work. Their inability to leave work stems from many situations some of which are, employer and not allowing time off, not enough accumulated paid time off, or simply are unable to afford missing work. How often the person must re- applies for assistance varies state by state.

**Summary of the Policy**

The childcare assistance policy provides aid to children and low-income families who struggle to maintain financial stability. The program seeks to provide services that assure quality and affordable child care with the long-term goal of enabling financial independence of its recipients. Social and Rehabilitative Services (SRS) administers and disperses the funds for the program. Eligibility is based on specific state criteria related to the applicant’s income as well as their employment and education status. By implementing and maintaining a child care assistance policy children benefit from quality child care and families are able to seek and maintain employment. Because participants are able to work, society pays less for other more costly welfare benefits and parents are able to contribute to society by providing services and by paying taxes. The base for an affective program is there, however, there are flaws that must be addressed in order for the policy to adequately serve those in need.

**Recommendations**

There are flaws specifically related to the safety guidelines of the program. The child care assistance program would benefit from all around better decision-making from those who implement the policies. Stricter training requirements and changes to the licensing procedures for care-givers would raise the standards and assure better quality care. A lower child-teacher ratio and the implementation of curriculum requirements are two ways to improve the quality of care.

Policy-makers should reconsider the guidelines for who benefits from the policy. It has been shown that the median income families struggle more to find child care than those below it. To implement changes in the policy raising the income levels would significantly raise the number of families that could receive benefits under this program and ensure the safety and well being of more children. If the childcare policy would allow parents to make more money and continue to qualify for childcare assistance they would not have to be on other government assistance programs. Policy-makers should also make the program more accessible to the public in general. Many families are unaware of the resources available to them and when families do apply the process is often lengthy.

             An increase in the amount of tax credits should be available to anyone who pays out of pocket for day care. The current tax credit only benefits 1% of families who earned $10,000 a year and 13% of families who earned $15,000 a year. (Besharov & Tramontozzi, 1989). It is the middle class families who are left with the burden of paying for child care. The new tax credit would allow any family to receive up to an 80% refund for their child care expenses. By removing income guidelines it would remove the burden of affording child care. It would also decrease the amount of money that is spent on welfare each year; as many of those who seek welfare are unable to work due to small children in the home.

Prior to the 1996 welfare reform low-income mothers/parents were able to stay at home with their children until they reached the age of 3. Currently, if parents do not find and maintain employment their benefits become inactive. The goals set by the current welfare policy are based primarily around short-term economic gain. Although low-income families are obtaining employment it is often unstable and with little benefit to the long-term enhancement of the family unit. Requiring parents, who receive child care assistance, to attend parenting classes, career counseling, etc. would help to build skills that would enable parents to become more self-sufficient. Also providing childcare assistance to students while they attend college courses or training would contribute to the long-term welfare of recipients.

**Should the Program continue to be conducted?**

The program contributes greatly to the welfare of our society. It plays an important role in the lives of many families who struggle to find quality and affordable childcare; therefore it would be detrimental to the economy and families if the benefit was not available. This policy needs some improvement but should continue to be conducted.

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