

What Should We Do About Family, Friend, & Neighbor Care?

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Acknowledgments

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- Presentation is based on the following book by Douglas Powell published by ZERO TO THREE Press (2008): *Who's Watching the Babies? Improving the Quality of Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care* (www.zerotothree.org)

Overview

- Characteristics and prevalence of FFN care
- Quality of FFN care and consequences of developmental risk factors
- Options for improving quality

Informal arrangements for infants and toddlers

- Nonparental relatives and nonrelatives who are not licensed or regulated for the provision of child care
- Largely invisible
- Poorly understood
- Disconnected from traditional sources of training and support for caregivers

Most common source of infant and toddler care (nonparental)

- Grandparents: 34% / 30%
- Other nonparental relatives: 10% / 11%
- Nonrelatives in child's home: 3% / 6%
- Other nonrelatives in provider's home: 6%
- Family child care homes: 11%
- Center-based programs: 16% / 25%

Considerable “dose” of care for many infants and toddlers

- 37% of children under 3 years of age whose parents are employed spend 35 + hours a week in care of a relative
- About 7% in combination with other nonparental care
- Fluid arrangements: less than 20% who receive nonmaternal care stay in same type of care from 6 to 54 months of age



Who uses FFN care for infants and toddlers

- All types of families
- Slightly higher use among lower-income families
- More common among African American families than other populations

Parents use FFN care for many reasons

- Knowing and trusting the caregiver
- Flexible hours
- Instill cultural values, family traditions
- Concerns about possible negative effects of maternal employment
- Reluctant necessity, not preference

What's different about FFN care

- Embedded in extended family and friendship network
- FFN settings often entail exceptionally close interpersonal relationships
- Questions about appropriateness of some licensing standards for FFN care

Considerable variability in quality of FFN care

- Some studies indicate FFN care is of lower quality than other types of care
- Other studies suggest FFN quality is no more variable than in other types of care
- Difficult to identify and engage FFN caregivers in research
- FFN defined differently across studies
- Major issue is measurement of quality

Consequences of at-risk circumstances

- Recent research on family income disparities in early learning and development
 - Evident at 9 months and grow larger by 24 months
 - Significant differences in cognitive, social, behavioral, and health outcomes
- Most prevalent risk factors are family income and low maternal education
- More risk factors = greater disparities across outcomes



Emerging policy options

- Incentives for parents to use high quality arrangements
- Training and technical assistance for FFN caregivers
 - Emphasis on movement toward licensure
 - No expectation of movement toward licensure
- Require training as part of subsidy to FFN caregivers

Starting points for supporting FFN caregivers

- Begin where FFN caregivers are
- Tailor to subgroups of FFN caregivers
- Use diverse forms of outreach to engage caregivers
- Base support on established models in child care training and/or parenting education
- Address strengths and challenges of agency platform

Assistance caregivers may welcome

- Maintaining positive parent-caregiver relationships
- Fostering warm, responsive relationships with children
- Maintaining good health and safety provisions
- Equipment and materials
- Recognition of caregiver role

Matching support to subgroups of FFN caregivers

- Relative caregivers: Helping out a family member (do not view themselves as child care providers)
- A typical child care training program may appeal to:
 - Friend and neighbor caregivers
 - Caregivers who receive a subsidy

Diverse forms of outreach

- Direct contact with caregivers
- Indirect contact through families
- Personal vs. impersonal approach
- Learn first hand the needs and interests of target population
 - Telephone
 - Focus group

Some curriculum resources

- Promoting First Relationships (www.son.washington.edu)
- Parents as Teachers: Supporting Care Providers (www.patnc.org)
- Working With Home-Based Caregivers (www.bankstreet.edu/ICCC/)
- Program for Infant/Toddler Care (www.pitc.org)

How support is offered

- One-to-one formats
- Group formats
- Newsletters, booklets, videos
- Mobile vans
- Combining approaches

Who provides support

- Agency resources and readiness for supporting FFN providers
 - Child care training approaches
 - Family and parenting education approaches
 - Agency accommodations and collaborations
 - Staff preparation

Our challenge



FFN is “the most underexplored issue in the provision of child care to America’s children”

— Edward Zigler

Contact information

- www.zerotothree.org/bookstore

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