



Measuring the impact of a fee subsidy and access to child care on children and families

The Impact of Affordable Child Care Study examines the effects of getting a child care fee subsidy and space for eligible parents and their children. The study will also provide key information about how children who receive subsidized child care are impacted by it, and how similar families who do not receive a subsidy manage child care, work and other needs.

The study, which is a partnership between the City of Toronto and OISE/UT, is a random control trial. This methodology is very strong and will allow us to study the impact of child care subsidies in a unique way.

The Context

In Toronto, child care subsidies are provided through Municipal government. Having access to affordable child care allows parents to work or continue with their education. Access to good quality child care can have a positive impact on children and their families. We will use the City's measure of child care quality to study the impact of program quality, not just whether or not a child attends a child care program.

Study Design

600 parents will be recruited from the waitlist to participate in this study over a one-year period. Two hundred of these parents will be randomly assigned to a condition where they immediately receive a child care subsidy and support in finding a child care space. The other 400 parents will make their way through the waitlist as part of our "business-as-usual" group. Because of insufficient availability of subsidies and child care spaces, some of these eligible families will likely get child care later than they need it. Some families will not receive a subsidy and space at all.

All families will be surveyed when their children are 12-months old. Direct assessments of children will be conducted when children are 24-months and 36-months old. During these sessions children's cognitive abilities and social/emotional development will be assessed. We will also assess how the families are doing in terms of parent stress, ability to work, etc. All assessments will be carried out by members of the OISE/UT research team.

Importance of the Study

Because of its methodological rigor this study will be a huge step forward in our understanding of the impact that child care has on parents and children. It is a unique and very important study that we hope will be a key tool to advocate for more investment in early childhood.

For more information about this study please contact:

Nadina Mahadeo, Research Project Manager

University of Toronto

Email: nadina.mahadeo@mail.utoronto.ca, Phone: 416-978-0957