

Child Care in the African American Community



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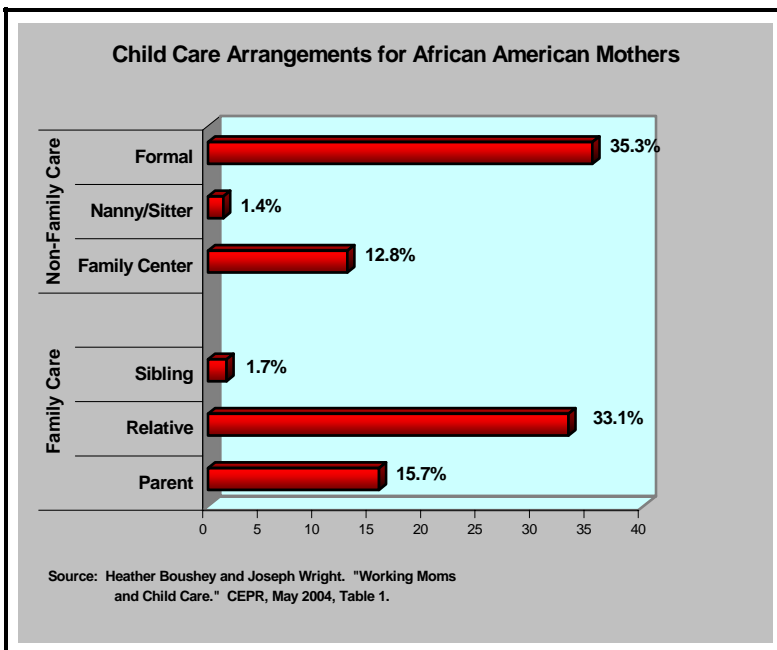
OVERVIEW

For many mothers, work is essential for the economic health of the family. Today, 77.5% of African American mothers work.¹ While parents work, it is critical that young children receive enriching, safe, and affordable child care services.

Child Care Arrangements

The most common child care arrangement is family care. Slightly less than one-third of mothers use formal care but utilization has increased over 4% since 1997.²

- Latinos continue to predominantly use family care.
- Generally, African Americans depend on family care. However, recent utilization of formal child care is nearly equal to that of family care.



Costs

The cost of child care is a problem for most families but without assistance, it presents an insurmountable challenge to low-income families.

- The average annual costs of formal child care is \$4,615.³ Mothers paid approximately 9% of their income on formal daycare.

- Child care places a double burden on households with incomes in the bottom 40%; they pay 18% of their income on formal daycare.⁴
- Latino and African American mothers pay the greatest proportion of household income on child care, 13.3% and 9.5% respectively.
- Of all arrangements, African American mothers pay the most for their formal care arrangements. They pay substantially less for relative care and family daycare.

	Weekly	% of Income
White	\$88.60	9.1
Black	\$70.29	9.5
Latino	\$97.95	13.3

- When compared to Whites and Latinos, African Americans pay \$18 and \$27 less for formal child care weekly.
- Child care assistance is essential for labor force participation; currently, 21% of working African American mothers receive some assistance.⁶

Child Care Assistance

Almost 16 million children in working families at 200% of the poverty rate are eligible for child care assistance.⁷

- Yet, only 2.2 million children⁸ currently receive any help; approximately 15% of all eligible children.⁹
- Currently, child care spending is at an historic high. Despite total spending of \$17.2 billion in 2001,¹⁰ at least 17 states had waiting lists or had to reject eligible applicants.¹¹

of Children Served
1 out of 7 eligible children receives

Child Care as a Community Resource¹³

Access to quality child care is a community asset. Recent labor force expansion among mothers has caused child care demand to outpace growth in the child care market. In most cases, difficulty finding a child care provider renders work or school attendance impossible.

A number of factors influence child care growth within communities:

- The extent of urbanicity, young children, female headed households, and female college graduates, relaxing child to staff ratios, and increasing investments in child care quality, all positively influence community access to child care.
- Community housing characteristics, such as the extent of vacant housing and owner occupied units, negatively influence access.

Urban Communities

Generally child care access is higher in counties that are very urbanized unless the community is also poor.

Policy Implications

- The U.S. is on the verge of a child care crisis. Demand for child care is at an all time high and parents are looking to formal care more than ever.
- Child care costs are equivalent to state college tuitions in some states. For most poor families costs are prohibitive and these families rely heavily on child care assistance.
- The Child Care Development Fund is greatly under funded; more eligible families not receiving assistance for their children need help paying for child care.

- The choice of child care policies must be sensitive to three factors: quality, price, and the growth of the nation's child care supply.

REFERENCES

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- 2 See Heather Boushey and Joseph Wright. Working Moms and Child Care. Center for Economic and Policy Research: Washington, D.C., May 2004, for detailed estimates of child care arrangements by mother demographics.
- 3 Boushey and Wright, 2004, pg8. 2001 child care cost are in 2002 dollars.
- 4 Ibid., Table 2.
- 5 Ibid., Table 2.
- 6 Assistance is from the government, employer, friends, family or an absent parent.
- 7 Children's Defense Fund. Low-Income Families Bear the Burden of State Child Care Cutbacks, Washington, D.C., September 2002, pg2.
- 8 Ibid., pg2.
- 9 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Access to Child Care for Low Income Working Families. <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ccb/research/ccreport/ccreport.htm>, 1999.
- 10 Melinda Gish and Karen Spar, Child Care Issues in the 106th Congress, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 18 February 2000.
- 11 Children's Defense Fund, 2002, pg4.
- 12 Ibid., pg2.
- 13 See Kenya Covington, Variations in Access to Child Care: Understanding County Level Determinants. Unpublished manuscript, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation: Washington, D.C., June 2004 for a detailed description of the relationships referred to in this section.
- 14 Children's Defense Fund, 2002, pg.1.



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