

CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY
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OPERATOR: I would like to pass the floor over to Jodie Levin-Epstein of the Center for Law and Social Policy, CLASP. The floor is yours.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY: Thank you so much and welcome to Job Schedules, Child Care and Subsidies. CLASP, together with the Center for Popular Democracy and the National Women's Law Center, has sponsored three audio conferences this year on different aspects of job scheduling.

Congressman George Miller and Senator Elizabeth Warren spoke on the first two about what drove them to introduce a Federal bill to introduce and address job scheduling issues. (Missed post), no worries. Just to go the CLASP website.

My guests today are Helen Blank of the National Women's Law Center. Hi, Helen.

HELEN BLANK; DIRECTOR OF CHILD CARE AND EARLY LEARNING; NATIONAL WOMEN'S LAW CENTER: Hi, Jodie.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And Julia Henly of the University of Chicago. Hey there, Julia.

JULIA HENLY, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO: Hi, Jodie.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And CLASP's very own, Hannah Matthews. Hi, Hannah.

HANNAH MATTHEWS, DIRECTOR OF CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION, CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY: Hi, Jodie.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: These guests will provide both information and insights to help tackle this issue in your communities and states. We hope you will join in as well by asking your questions and I would like to say early and often, just email your questions to audioconference@clasp.org. and I already have a few so keep them coming. Pile it on.

Inside the homes of low wage working parents, there often is an ongoing tension between job schedules and the child care that enables parents to go to work. In the policy world, these two topics are often housed separately.

Some of you work on child care, some of you on job schedules. We are going to straddle them both and look at how they intersect. We're delighted you've joined. Registrants come from far and wide, 48 states, the District of Columbia and Virgin Islands. A special shout out to colleagues from Canada.

All different levels of government including a variety of Federal agencies and the congressional offices are participating and you include not only every aspect of a child care community but also work focus groups like NeighborWorks in Oregon, Link Works in Missouri, Career Transitions in Montana, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services and the Reentry Coalition in Georgia.

I could go on but instead let me just say, let the issue straddling begin. At least if I don't trip upon those words.

I'm going to recap quickly what we heard in our earlier calls about the schedules that work act and just highlight some provisions that could mitigate the tension between job schedules and child care, then we will turn to today's experts.

The schedules that work act will be reintroduced in Congress in 2015. It would give working parents the right to request and receive schedule changes. All workers in firms with 15 or more employees could ask for a schedule change such as more stable hours.

The point here is such an ask should be able to be made without fear of retaliation like getting fewer hours. Four categories of workers are supposed to have those requests actually accommodated. One of those four are workers with caregiving responsibilities.

The others are those with serious illnesses, those enrolled in school or job training, those with a second part-time job. Employers need to do this unless there is a bona fide business reason not to.

In addition, workers in three industries - retail, restaurant and janitorial - have additional scheduling protection. This also could help mitigate tensions with child care arrangements. One, it's just the basic premise of transparent positions.

In other words, on or before their first day of work, employers must in writing identify workers' expected schedule and hours. In addition, there's a provision related to predictable schedules which provide for at least two weeks' notice of schedules.

Now I'm going to turn to my guests after we've heard just this little bit of Federal law that if ever passed this bill, if enacted, would try and improve the job side of the equation. It is now time for us to dig into the child care side of the equation with our experts including first up, Helen Blank, who is going to take us through some of the big picture issues.

We're then going to move on to the scope of the problems at the nexus of job schedules and child care with Julia. And then with Hannah, we're going to flag how the brand new - brand new - child care development, Block Grant law which is just three hours old could grease the way for smoother subsidies, it's safe and advocates act.

So Helen, help us here with an important primer for the folks tuned in who come from the workforce side of this equation and are not familiar with child care assistance otherwise known as the subsidy system.

Can you give us just a topline picture about the incomes of families who might be eligible for assistance? Just something to hold onto by way of an image.

BLANK: Yes. A state can help families up to 85 percent of the state median income but in 15 states, a family who earns above 150 percent of poverty or a little above \$29,000 a year for a family of three cannot qualify for assistance.

And families with incomes above 200 percent of poverty, about \$39,580 a year for a family of three could not qualify for assistance in a total of 38 states. So eligibility is tight and we only help one in six children who are eligible for Federal child care assistance. Jodie?

OPERATOR: Everyone, just hold on. We just lost two of our presenters. I'm going to get them reconnected. Just give me one moment. One more moment.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Hello? Hello? Jason, are we ready to start?

OPERATOR: And you are live once again, yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: OK. Well, our apologies for this technical glitch. Helen, I was asking you about whether or not there is a big picture way of letting us know how many families actually face this challenge and tension between needing child care and having a volatile schedule.

BLANK: According to findings on job schedules from Julia Henly who is with us on the call today and Susan Lambert, working mothers and fathers are at high risk of precarious work schedules. Among their respondents with a child 12 or younger, 69 percent of mothers and 80 percent of fathers report that their hours fluctuated in the prior month by an average of approximately 40 percent when compared to their usual hours.

For many fluctuations in work hours are driven by their employer. Forty-six percent of fathers and 32 percent of mothers say they know their work schedules at most one week in advance. An analysis of the American Time Use survey 2010 to 2011 found that 28 percent of low wage workers work nonstandard hours.

About 50 percent of hourly workers report having limited control over their work hours. Based on projection from the Bureau of Labor Statistics over the next decade the economy will continue to add jobs that has historically been low wage and female-dominated.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So lots of households. This is not just something that's on the side - this is something that's very prevalent and appears like it's going to grow. So now that we have an extent of the issue picture, Helen, what do we know about the child care arrangements of parents with volatile job schedules?

What's the picture inside of those child care arrangements?

BLANK: We've been conducting listening sessions with these moms and they have been very informative and concerning about their child care arrangements and challenges. We know that jobs with erratic schedules and also during nontraditional hours, make it most challenging to find regulated child care, much less any child care.

Parents often have no choice but to rely on relatives and neighbors who can provide more flexible care. They often feel more comfortable with providers that they know and trust as well. Well, Federally-funded child care systems as I mentioned is quite limited.

Between 2006 and 2013, over 300,000 lost child care assistance. Many of the parents that we interviewed did not receive child care help or even know about the possibility of getting help with their child care cost.

Ironically, states are also increasingly reluctant to offer subsidies or assistance to parents using family, friend and neighbor care especially with new requirements for inspections included in the recently-enacted child care reauthorization that have significant cost implications.

It's clear that many parents face the high cost of child care without any financial help as well as challenges finding providers that can meet their schedules, limited transportation and a little time to travel long distances to child care.

Some workers reported using multiple providers throughout the week, some without a day. Some would be doing this because they have more than one jobs, others just because their schedules were so volatile.

Particular challenges were faced by moms needing child care during night and weekend hours. More formal providers are generally not open during these hours and sometimes providers charge more for these times.

Parents are also less likely to want to use more formal care during the evenings. However, there was quite an interesting article that recently appeared about child care centers stretching limited resources to serve these moms.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: We actually have a registrant -- someone listening to the call right now who is writing to us right now as you speak about that extreme daycare or the rise of 24/7 daycare centers or child care centers she says, so thank you for mentioning that as well.

So Helen, let me jump to a different question. A parent's job schedule influences child care providers in a host of ways - everything from like sudden and disruptive drop off and pickup times that are changing, so these can stress out parents and their children.

As the audience works on different aspects of policy in this arena, what is important to keep top of mind about the implications of job schedules for child care providers?

BLANK: That's a good question, Jodie. Let me just mention one more things. There are parents who want a more educational experience for their children but they could find no preschool program in their neighborhood and they couldn't afford or they weren't able to travel to alternate locations.

Many child care centers couldn't serve these children. Parents do want their children to be ready for school. On the side of what to keep top in mind about schedules is that child care providers often bear the brunt of these schedules.

They can offer a window into the lives of stressed moms. They too are often underpaid and overstressed. They face parents having no choice but to drop their children off very, very early in the morning and pick them up late at night.

This cuts into the time they have with their own families and their own lives. They also may find themselves not feeling they are able to refuse to serve parents with these schedules or to charge desperate parents who may be their friends, relatives and neighbors more for extra or erratic hours.

This affects their bottom line as well. Given the child care provider salaries are already at the bottom of the pay scale, this is even more of a worry. Even when a provider is part of the child care assistance system, they are paid poorly.

Only one state in 2014 paid rates to providers serving children receiving child care assistance a minimally reasonable rate. Family, friend and neighbor providers receiving public funds are also often at the bottom of the charts regarding rates.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So Helen, I want to drill a little bit more into this provider side. You make a compelling statement when you described how all of this chaos affects their bottom line. There is lack of supply, everybody knows about that, for nontraditional hours in getting formal care for weekends and nights and part of the explanation is that to meet this demand, someone who runs a formal child care facility would need to be amenable to nontraditional hour businesses.

So Julia's study underscores that there are a lot of parents in need of child care that accommodates volatility as well. There is demand but not supply here as well. What are the basic disincentives in accommodating all those parents? There's a market out there. What's the problem?

BLANK: There's a big problem. Volatile parental schedules translate into volatile child care attendants. The subsidy is tied to attendants. That means, income of the center is volatile even without a subsidy, just whether a child can't come on a regular basis.

The center or a family child care home that's regulated has fixed cost whether or not the child is attending - rent, teachers, utilities - so the center is dependent on stable income. It's a circle. Family income fluctuations that translate into center income fluctuation is not workable.

A solution, and we're not there yet, is a subsidy system untied from attendants, more like how we approach per pupil payments in public schools which get an allocation based on enrolment at the beginning of the year.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Helen, we've got some questions coming in here right now and I want to give the audience a chance to get in some although I could keep going. What's really interesting is we have a question here from (Juanita Reed) who is with the Great Start Collaborative and I don't know what state

that is. in any event she asked the question which, as I'm looking at the screen which is throwing lots and lots of questions at me and thank you so much to the audience for taking up this chance to ask Helen some questions, a number of people are actually asking the same thing and I wouldn't have predicted this.

So (Juanita), I'm going to read hers on behalf of these several people, I work with parents that use public transportation to get to work. I would like to know if legislators can implement a policy that will consider traveling time for parents who receive subsidy.

BLANK: Good question (Juanita) and Great Start I believe must be from my home state of Michigan. Yes, legislators can consider travel time in paying for child care assistance. A) you have to be able to get assistance and b) this policy will compete against whether they pay for days when children are absent or who is eligible for child care or rate.

They can lots of things as Hannah will talk about, to make things easier for providers and parents. It's a lot of choices in a system that is unfortunately constructed on scarcity. But you should ask.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: OK. And we have a question here from Amanda Manning in Alaska. Wow, what time are you? Anyway, hi, Amanda. She asks, what is the state reference as paying an appropriate child care subsidy? She believes you -- go ahead.

BLANK: Sure. I was trying to do this in non-wonky language. So Federally recommended --

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And you got into trouble for it.

BLANK: Right, I got caught. The Federally recommended level isn't even enough. It's the 75th percentile of a market rate which technically would allow a parent to choose 75 percent of care in their community and there's only state that bases their rates on the current market rate survey.

But we know that child care that is high quality costs even more than that because the market really can't bear what child care should cost because it's based on what parents can pay. So it's the 75 percentile reference.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Helen, we have time for one more question. This one comes from Margarita McKissick who is in Pennsylvania. She gives an acronym which I thought was only a problem for those of us living in DC so I can't translate it but maybe you can.

CCIS only allows a 10-hour window for travel I guess. Some parents work an hour away from the site yet if they are just a few minutes over that 10-hour window they are reported to CCIS. What can be done?

BLANK: CCIS I'm assuming it is the Pennsylvania child care systems. They use different acronyms. What can be done is to ask your state for more flexibility, expand the window. I mean, this is a problem when parents get to the child care center five minutes late and are penalized. We just have to make things more flexible and make sure we're supporting the parents and the providers in the process.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Thank you very much. We're going to now turn to Julia Henly. Julia, my question for you, you are going to zero in on the learnings from your recent study, Determinants of Subsidy Stability and Child Care Continuity.

But let me interject another shout out for the research you conducted with Susan Lambert that Helen mentioned at the outset on precarious work schedules and to also note that you're really the poster child for what we're trying to accomplish here - bridging job schedules and child care issues because your research actually straddles both.

You are involved in both. So you're the poster child. Welcome.

HENLEY: Thank you.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So just to sort of step back, the big picture of your study was to get a handle on child care and subsidy stability. Why did you want to investigate that issue?

HENLEY: Sure. Well, first of all, thanks for the shout out about the work scheduling study. Susan Lambert, who you mentioned, is really the dry run network and I've been really lucky to be part of that.

To answer your question about why we focused in, zeroed in on child care and subsidy stability, the stability of child cares are really important components of successful employment and of quality child care yet we know that child care is often unstable.

Low income children in particular move in and out of care arrangements and recent studies suggest that child care subsidy use is also very unstable. Families experience relatively brief periods on the program or they cycle off and then back on again. Often they return to the program with a new provider.

So we really wanted to understand that in our section between parent's child care arrangements and their use of the subsidy program.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So who partnered in the study and can you just give us a teeny weeny hint of the methodology just really who is interviewed, how many?

HENLEY: Sure, yeah. So together with my colleagues, Amy Claessens at the University of Chicago and Heather Sandstrom at Urban Institute in DC, we partnered with Child Care Subsidy Program administrators in both New York and Illinois and we focused on two suburban counties in New York and a very large urban county in Illinois as well as an area in southwestern Illinois that has both rural and urban communities.

So we really have a hodgepodge of different kinds of settings that we studied. And in terms of methodology, we did sort of three separate projects. We examined participation in the subsidy program for over 7000 participants by following administrative program records over time.

And then we also conducted a telephone survey with about 600 recipients of the -- users of the subsidy program. And then finally, we conducted in-depth interviews, qualitative interviews with the subsample of our survey respondents and they are all low income families with young children, all kids six or under.

All of them participated in the subsidy program but in very different ways. So some continuously for many months, some very short term and some who cycled both on and off.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So you underscored earlier how a stable child care is an ingredient of stable employment. That's kind of a chicken or egg ingredient question if you will. So employment, and particularly whether schedules are unpredictable or erratic and earnings seesaw can influence the ability to hang on to that child care, can you highlight some of your interview findings about how employment factors influence to maintaining program eligibility or even meeting program eligibility rules?

HENLEY: Yeah, sure. So we find that employment reasons are the most important reason, the most important factor that explains family leaving the subsidy program in our study and there seem to be three kind of different sorts of employment challenges.

The first might be the most obvious and that's unemployment, so when you lose your job you are no longer eligible for the subsidy in many states. There are some states that allow time for job search before losing the subsidy but unfortunately our study suggested that most parents don't know about that job search option when it is available and so didn't take advantage of it in our study at least.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Wow. So it was there but they just didn't know.

HENLEY: In some communities. And in some communities that we studied, there wasn't a job search option, so it varies by state and in some cases by county. And then a second kind of employment reason has to do with earning too much money to remain eligible for the program.

This might sound kind of like a good thing, you know, if you earn your way off maybe you don't need the program, but we found that some families, they are past the income threshold and lose the subsidy even when they can and often when they can't maintain their child care without it.

So for example, we have examples of families that got a \$1 or \$2 raise and that puts them above the income threshold but they couldn't keep their child care without the subsidy. And then the other kind of hidden issue here is that sometimes families will get a bonus or the work extra hours for a period of time and so have a temporary increase in their earnings and so that disqualifies them or can disqualify them from the subsidy program even though it's just a short term temporary bleep in their earnings increase.

So that's another kind of employment problem that our families came across. And then the third thing which is really consistent with something you had been talking about in your last two audio conferences and that is precarious work schedules.

So we find that many of these work schedules that touch waiting hours, et cetera, make it very hard to stay on the child care subsidy program. The more your job veers from a regular standard hour job, the harder it is and the more complicated the process is to complete the necessary paper works for subsidy application and recertification of eligibility.

Delayed processing of application forms, confusion over paper work, needing to get verification from an employer, these are all very, very common inconveniences really for all program participants but the problems multiply when schedules are unpredictable, when hours vary or when the jobs are seasonal jobs.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: I want to remind the audience to send in questions as they occur to you. All you do is send your question to audioconference@clasp.org. Julia, an exit or loss of a subsidy could happen because of employment conditions that you were describing but it also apparently happens because of agency administration issues and sometimes these are intertwined. Can you fill us in on that?

HENLEY: I mean, all the job-related reasons that I just talked about are intertwined with administrative challenges. So basically anytime your job deviates, as I mentioned, from something that is standard and jobs are increasingly not standard as Helen talks about, there is room for confusion about what form to fill out or what paper work is needed and so on.

So there is a lot of ambiguity actually about whether someone with a precarious job situation is even eligible for the subsidy program. There's a lot of discretion at the local level in determining eligibility in some cases, not in all cases, and that ambiguity is really both on the side of the case workers I've suggested but also on the side of the participant and so some participants don't know whether they are still eligible even when they are and sometimes don't even try to recertify their eligibility because they are not aware of the possibility of maintaining the program.

And it's just there are a lot of administrative challenges too and paper work and hoops to jump through to stay on the program in many of the communities that we studied.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So Julia, one of your findings is that participants with these challenging work schedules often had multiple arrangements. Now some folks have multiple arrangements without challenging work schedules and sometimes for good reasons too. You know, you got wraparound services so you go from one program to a fuller day, but can you fill us in on some highlights of what you learned particularly vis-à-vis these challenging work schedules and multiple arrangements?

HENLEY: Sure. Some families use multiple arrangements out of choice. I think that's really important to underscore. So for example you might want to have your child in a part-time preschool environment and

then have your neighbor or your mom pick up your child or your dad pick up your child and spend the rest of the day with him or her.

And I think, especially middle class families often use multiple arrangements in that way, but for the families that we studied especially those with precarious work schedules, multiple arrangements are more often thought of as kind of complicated patchworks of care - that's a phrase that I actually borrow from my colleague Ellen Scott who has done this work on multiple arrangements in Oregon as well - families package together last minute arrangements to meet the demands of their last minute variable and fluctuating work schedules and the arrangements are really complicated to maintain and hang on to and they are really only as strong as their weakest link.

So if one arrangement falls through it can really create havoc for the parent and also for all the other providers who've been assembled often at the last minute to care for that child, so sort of everyone - parents and providers - kind of absorb the instability, as Helen mentioned earlier, of the crazy work schedules and multiple arrangements are the way that kind of shows itself.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: One of the beauties of getting to be the interviewer is I get a chance to read the studies that everyone has done and the reports and so forth and Julia, it was really interesting to dig into yours and I know how much we haven't been able to capture here.

So I'm going to do something that's tough, since you work on both child care and on job schedules and have done research in both, I don't want to let you go without asking you to pick a policy. What strikes you - as someone who has straddled both, as a top policy on either child care subsidy side or the on the job schedule side, to get at stability?

HENLEY: Well, there is a reason I'm not a policymaker so this is not going to be a very satisfactory answer I think, but I'm just not good at picking one policy. I really do believe that with major investments in the subsidy program and with the decoupling of program eligibility from employment, as Helen also suggested earlier, and by simplifying program rules regarding the subsidy program, children would experience much more stability and actually much higher quality care environment while their parents work.

So I think that's one, but I also believe that no amount of investment in child care would solve the problems below each labor market and I think that's really important to think about. It just isn't fair, I don't think to providers or families, to expect them to simply absorb the instability that's found in our low wage labor market.

So I do also think we need to start seriously considering laws to give greater worker protections and that reign in the great deal of precariousness in workers' hours and schedules. I the schedules that work act is one important for a step as are a lot of the laws that are recently being debated at the city level, at the local level and in fact passed recently in San Francisco that try to really reign in the unpredictability of worker schedules.

So I think we really need laws on both sides. We need employment law and we need child care law that's more flexible and more kind of better represents the realities of families' lives.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Well, appropriate push back. Thank you so much, Julia. Let me give you a question from the audience. This is from (Lavern Parker) who is with the Division of Early Care and Education in New York, New York.

And (Lavern) asks or says, we seek to collect data to document increasing nontraditional job schedules in New York City. Please advise of the best resources to employ to collect the job schedule data. This is with your job scheduling ask. Julia?

HENLEY: The child care subsidy program may actually collect that data but not have it in a form that is easily usable. So often I don't -- I'm not sure about in New York City. New York City was not one of our

sites, I should say, but often when you apply for a subsidy program as a parent you are asked to give information about your work schedule, you almost always are and so some of that information on work schedules may be available.

It might be on paper instead of electronically but that's one place to get it. Unemployment insurance data has information on hours but not on schedules and the hours are quarterly so you know how many hours parents work and have worked in the last quarter for anyone who is working a job that has taxes paid out of it, taken out of it.

So those are two ideas. I mean, I'm also happy -- you should have (Lavern) follow up with me as well. I have some other ideas specifically about New York where you might look.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: OK. We'll do that. (Lavern) we will put you together with Julia. Julia, I have another question here for you and it comes from (Arielle Jacobson) with Restaurant Opportunities Center United.

Do you have any thoughts about the "shared services" model on the provider side for providers to pull resources for processing subsidies to make it more effective cost which can make it more affordable for parents? I realized that was not the focus of your research, Julia, but I'm wondering if you've come across that model and whether or not it came up maybe in your conversation with your colleagues as you were noodling through the implications of what you were saying.

HENLEY: I'm actually not familiar with the shared services model. It sounds interesting. Hannah and Helen may know more about this.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Helen, do you know anything on the shared services model idea?

BLANK: Shared services is a great idea. It could involve a large child care center or resourcing referral program, helping out with the shared cost of accounting, of food, of human resources so that smaller programs don't have to take this on.

It won't solve any of the issues that Julia raised in terms of the real significant lack of investment in child care or the scheduling challenges - it's a way to help child care programs make some modest but important savings.

It's not a financing approach but it's a good strategy if you have a program in the community who can take on this responsibility for other programs.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Well, Helen, while you are on, let me ask you the second part of (Arielle's) question which is sort of related about whether or not there are illustrations of child care cooperatives for low income -- schedules where they address this precariousness together.

BLANK: This is a really interesting issue as to how you would run something like this because if you're talking about parents - and I know (Rock) is very interested in this and we've been trying to think through it, if you have parents with very different schedules, how can they figure out who is where.

I suppose it's worth thinking about. Because of all the schedule challenging -- with the challenges that the parents face, you have to sort of factor all of that in as you design your coop and be able to switch your coop participants within minutes' notice from what parents told us because we know they often get it -- they can get a notice of having to go to work within two hours.

So it's worth exploring. We found a program years ago in San Francisco - it didn't stay around long - that put together a network of family child care providers that could be open within a 24-hour range and the children knew all the providers within the group. So if they had a switch from one to the other, they were not uncomfortable.

Now unfortunately that network didn't last very long. By the time we published the book, the network was gone but that's sort of another concept of creating a -- it's not a coop but a neighborhood strategy.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: -- we're running on time for Hannah's conversation about what just happened and it's the new CCDBG law so we've got to jump there. And Hannah, we've been talking about these challenges job schedules create for a child care stability but the new child care and development Block Grant act of 2014 which is an effort to improve the health, safety and quality of child care and support working families access the child care subsidies has some provisions that you are going to tell us about that relate to the subject at hand.

Also I should let everybody know that class dispose is a fact sheet that pulls together the provisions not only of the newly passed child care development Block Grant act but also of the pending schedules that work act, the issues that we've been discussing today.

But Hannah, tell us, just hours ago the president signed this new law and it makes big changes for child care assistance. Can you dig into the provisions of the child care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014 that could help tackle, for lack of a better word, the bumps of volatile schedules?

MATTHEWS: Yes, absolutely. So it is very exciting that this updated CCDBG law includes provisions that will make it easier for low income parents to get and to keep child care assistance and it will give children access to more stable child care.

In making the subsidy a more continuous benefit, the intent here is to make the subsidy less reactive to every change in a parent's employment, so along the lines of those hoops and burdens that Julia was describing.

So a key example of this that I want to highlight is that CCDBG will now require that states give children a full year of continuous child care assistance. That means once they have been determined eligible, children are to be considered eligible in the program for a minimum of a year regardless of changes in the status of a parent's employment or income.

This is very different from how states currently authorize care. Even in states that have 12-month eligible period now, any change that happens, the loss of a job or small increase in earning, any of those changes could jeopardize the parent's subsidy and as a result we have all of this churning coming in and out of the subsidy system that Julia talked about.

So if a parent's job schedules change frequently and for many low wage workers, this continuous eligibility will significantly reduce the burden of keeping child care subsidies. Another key provision that I would flag is that states will also now have to take into account irregular fluctuations in earnings when they determine eligibility. So this is another example of trying to kind of smooth out that receipt of child care assistance.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: What do you mean take into account?

MATTHEWS: When they determine whether a child meets the income eligibility they will have to account for irregular earnings, so rather than working some extra hours and all of a sudden being over the income limit, states will have to figure out a way of making in their calculations, taking into account the fluctuation for families.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: All right. Well, these are definitely important changes in this challenging area. So are there other provisions that will encourage state subsidy programs to be more responsive to parents with job schedule challenges, other things the child goes to?

MATTHEWS: So there are several more, there are some that are directly related and some less directly but there will be important changes. You can of course, as you mentioned, we have the statute, you can read more in that and we will be writing more about the new law.

But another example of a provision that's really relevant here for those with job schedule challenges is that states will need to develop strategies to increase the supply and improve the quality of different types of child care and one category that is specifically called out in the law is children who need care during nontraditional hours.

Now what those strategies will be can be determined by states. So it could be paying higher payment rates for providers during those hours, it could be direct contract where you pay a child care provider to be able to provide nontraditional care.

States could also think about supporting families by the neighbor caregivers, so caregivers who we know are often the providers of nonstandard hour care and particularly for those who need care at different times, they can think about strategies to support those providers as well.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So in addition to these new policies and the strategies you are mentioning, how else can states go about thinking through how to improve their subsidy systems for workers with volatile schedules?

MATTHEWS: The provisions that I highlighted are ones that are included explicitly in the legislation but I think it's important to realize that there are still a number of changes that states could choose to make that would make subsidy receipts smoother for workers that we're talking about here and they aren't necessarily called out in the new legislation but states have a lot of flexibility to design their own policies and they still will have a lot of flexibility.

We've been working here at CLASP with some partner organizations at the Urban Institute and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities on the work support strategies initiative. In this large project we've been working with states on simplifying their child care subsidy program to make them easier for families to navigate and reduce the burden both on families and on administering agencies so this kind of gets at all of those hoops that Julia mentioned that families have to jump through.

We've been trying to really eliminate them for families. And so to give a very specific example, one requirement that often is very difficult for these workers in particular is state requirements to verify an exact work schedule, not just the employment but the actual hours that a parent is working in order to tie that the child care subsidy.

This is a state choice. It doesn't have -- this program does not have to operate that way and really it makes it virtually impossible for workers with constantly changing schedules to be able to participate in subsidies. In fact, one state we work with found that taking away just a single verification requirement, this documentation of work schedules, it had such administrative burden that it was slowing down their entire system in terms of being able to approve subsidies for families.

When they got rid of the requirement, the state was really able to kind of address that bottleneck of applications that they had. So I would say that states can take a look both at the big picture policies as well as those very specific administrative details and requirements that can make the program work much better.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: You know, you recently issued a report, Hannah, that the number of children receiving child care subsidies funded by the child care Block Grant fell to a 15-year low in 2013 largely due to insufficient funding and Helen was saying between 2006 and 2013, over 300,000 children lost child care assistance.

I mean it takes my breath away. I mean, I just don't get it, but in any event, so we're all keeping our fingers crossed to hear your answer to the following question. The question is, does this new bill include new resources for child care?

MATTHEWS: Well, that is the very big question. So the answer is that the bill authorizes funding increases for the program, but they are frankly minimal compared to what we know will be the cost that states will be incurring to meet the changes that are required in the bill.

And as you mentioned, even before the new law we were facing a situation in which each year fewer children are receiving assistance. You can see, again, we have another fact sheet on our website that shows the 15-year decline. It includes state by state numbers but we essentially are serving the lowest number of children since 1997.

So while we celebrate the important improvements in this bill that could really make the subsidy system work better for all low wage workers, it's really important to recognize that it will take resources at all levels - Federal, state, local and CLASP, we'll of course be working to make these new investments a top priority because we've really got to have the resources to make all of this happen.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Hannah, we're going to turn to some audience questions for you. And this one comes from (Jennifer Ralston) who is with the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities here in DC.

And she asks, does the new CCDBG law lessen the tie between funding and student attendance?

MATTHEWS: As I said, there are a number of provisions that we didn't have time to get into the details of - that is one of them. This is an area where states are highly encouraged to make this connection between payment and attendance less. So states are encouraged to use the practices that private paid parents use.

So you pay for child care in advance, you pay for an entire month regardless of whether your child happens to be sick and out of the classroom for a couple of days, so states will be encouraged to look at those kinds of attendance and enrollment policies and certainly that will be an area that will be really working with states and highly encouraging that they give serious consideration to.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Really interesting. All right. So (Leone Giles) who is with the Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services in North Carolina asks, under the new law, if a client loses their job, will the client still have to pay the parent's fee?

MATTHEWS: That's an excellent question. It is certainly not something that is specified in the new statute. The eligibility language does talk about letting children continue in the program during gaps in employment. States have their own policies around the portion of the child care fees that is paid by parents, so states will be looking at those policies as they reconsider the larger set of policies and that potentially could be an area that the Federal office of child care would put out some guidance around as well.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Helen, that's an important question. Well, thank you, for you and audience, for raising it. Awesome. And so here is a question from (Jane Merrell) who is with the Michigan League for Public Policy. And Hannah, this is kind of illustrative of why it's great we work together because I don't even know what this question actually means but I'm quite confident that you do and it probably is a question on a lot of people's minds.

Jane asks, what about states that pay by the hour?

MATTHEWS: There are states that pay by the hour or small increments of time. So the opposite of what I described, so I have child in child care in. I owe his tuition one month in advance and I pay a set amount every month.

In the child care subsidy system payments are typically reimbursed to providers based on the child's attendance. In some states, that is defined specifically as a number of hours. So if a child is in care for four hours one day or six hours in another day, that's the amount of time that the provider receives payment.

This part of why this subsidy system is so unstable and so difficult for providers to participate in because they have to pay a teacher in a classroom all day, regardless of whether a child gets picked up early because mom has to get to a second job.

So there is -- similar to the answer that I gave previously about delinking attendance and the hours of authorization there is encouragement in the bill for states to make the program more stable for parents and for children by moving more towards this kind of enrollment policies versus strict attendance policies.

But how states ultimately authorize care, how they pay for care, how many hours they authorize - all of those are state decisions. So my answer on this would be, well, there is nothing specific in the legislation. States are going to be making big, big changes in our subsidy program and this is the time to be advocating for even bigger change and to be thinking really broadly about what those key policies are that really impact low income parents and make this subsidy system just really unworkable at times and those are the policies that we should all be identifying and really working together to hopefully make better for families.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: This is a question that may well have existed before the new law but maybe the new law has implications for. This comes from Pennsylvania. I work for nonprofit helping many get back to work. However, I am finding it challenging to have my clients wait on a waiting list before they can place their children in subsidy child care.

Many of my clients have had to give up job offers as a result. Is there anything in the bill that might facilitate or ease this problem rather?

MATTHEWS: Well, there are a number of states that have very lengthy waiting list and that's something that Helen documents, the number of families that are waiting for child care. This is again why we need tremendous amount of new resources because if we are making the subsidy program more continuous for families which I believe is critically important, it does not help parents working and it does not help children for them to receive a subsidy for two months to lose it, to come back into the system three months later and to move back and forth.

But keeping families on longer will have implications for families that are waiting on waiting list if we are dealing with the current amount of resources that we have. So again, I would just say that I hope that this is an area that we will all be working together to really think about how to increase investment significantly so that more families are getting help because we're just not serving our families as it is.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: We have a question here from a child care provider who describes themselves as not a center but a star provider and this person writes, the volatile schedules are a burden on resources and manpower. I agree with all stated but historically nontraditional hours have been with home-based providers. Could you address this tension or issue or development around home-based providers and volatile schedules versus center care and volatile schedules?

MATTHEWS: Well, we ought to make -- why don't you go ahead, Helen?

BLANK: I mean, volatile schedules don't work for anybody and with Julia said is so right. The employer policy is at the heart of this issues because children are being raised in families with enormous instability and it's very bad for kids.

When you have a volatile schedule, parents may choose informal child care because that more easily fit a volatile schedule. You could work at night, you could work in the morning, you could work at four o'clock, you could work at two o'clock.

That's very hard for a regulated provider who clearly has to balance their budget. It's hard for an informal provider too but you are more likely to find a neighbor or a relative who is willing to go all out for you, but it's very hard to do this no matter how you fix the rules in a child care center.

This is all compounded by the things like Michigan's hours policy, but that's the challenge. You may be able to find a parent if they are lucky enough to have a full school day of pre-K, may be able to figure out a way how to get their children to pre-K as a 4-year-old for part of the daycare because that's not related to their work -- to work and to what anyone will pay for, but basically it's really hard to use more formal child care arrangements.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Julia, is that you?

HENLEY: This is Julia. I also think that regulated family child care providers are really -- they often really get squeezed on this issue because I think there is sometimes a little bit more familiar relationship between parents and their family child care provider and yet family child care providers are small business owners and they really need consistent income and earnings and yet I think it's easier for parents to sometimes expect flexibility from family child care providers around their variable work schedule.

So I think, I don't know if this was what was behind the question, but I think family child care providers are in a particularly challenging position because they are expected sometimes to be more flexible and yet they really need to keep the lights on and that's a tricky place to be.

BLANK: You are right, Julia. We often find, like regulated providers can't do this either and you are using an informal provider who does need to keep the lights on too but they are doing it less as a business but they need an income, so it doesn't work for anybody.

HENLEY: No.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: All right. So, Helen, Julia, Hannah - a closing question - the same one for each of you. This call is just the beginning. We brought together two communities - those who work on job schedules and those who were on child care and we need to continue to do this and we will, but could you each identify some action steps that administrators, advocates, researchers and others could take to foster cross-collaboration, mutually supportive actions that sort of further promotes stability in child care and in jobs? Julia, take it away.

HENLEY: Boy, I think that we should have calls like this and networks in our local communities that get people at the table who are concerned both with early care and education and also with work. I think we need to be talking to each other, so creating opportunities to do that any way we can.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Just that space to deliberate.

HENLEY: I think so, yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Yes, yes, yes. Helen?

BLANK: I think I agree with Julia. I think it's very important to put all of us together. We're doing more of that at the center. I think we're lucky that we have Liz Watson down the hall from us but I think we're trying to work with our vast child care and early learning networks to share information about scheduling and we hope to do vice versa and get everybody working together on both issues and to continue to fight for money for child care is really critical in the next two years from what everything Hannah said about the bill and to do that together.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And Hannah.

MATTHEWS: Well, unfortunately going through both sounds like a hybrid of the two, but absolutely I think it's so important for folks to really understand how the child care subsidy is working currently or I should say how it's not working in many cases and where there's just such huge potential here to make improvement.

And that stability issue is important for employers, it's important for parents, it's important for children and so to the extent that we can all come together to understand that better and really see where there are the big opportunities to seize and to really try to get the resources to make them possible and live up to the vision of the bill is going to be an incredibly large task ahead but I think it will be exciting to all work on it together.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Exactly. I completely agree. I just want to let the audience know that lots of resources from lots of organizations working on the intersection of jobs and their schedules with child care and with other issues are available on the CLASP website on the national repository on scheduling.

There is a separate section on child care. Our colleagues who cosponsored this audio conference series and other organizations have their materials posted there so we encourage you to go there to find the kinds of resources that you need.

And if you generated any, send them to me and we will get them posted as well. I want to thank Helen Blank from the National Women's Law Center, Julia Henly from the University of Chicago and of course Hannah Matthews here at CLASP for joining today's call.

And I want to also thank the cosponsors, the Center for Popular Democracy and the National Women's Law Center for doing this 2014 series. You should all and this audience look for a couple of things in your inbox.

You are going to get a link to this audio call and its transcript as well as the prior audio calls on scheduling issues. We're also going to soon send you an invite to join next year's series on job schedules and a variety of issues. No doubt we will be taking up child care in this context as well, hopefully with some developments and reports of innovations in your states and in your communities about how you've been tackling the opportunities presented by the bills that have been discussed and the new law as well.

So I just want to thank everybody for interest in this issue, commitment to this issue and the work ahead. And again, goodbye to Helen, Julia and Hannah. Thank you so very much everybody. Have a great rest of your day.

BLANK: Thank you.

MATTHEWS: Thank you, Jodie.

HENLY: Thank you.

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