

Foster children and placement stability: The role of child care assistance

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Abstract

Children who enter the child welfare system at a young age are at risk for a myriad of developmental, physical, and mental health problems. The risks faced by these vulnerable young children may be exacerbated by placement disruptions during foster care. This study utilizes administrative data from Illinois to explore the potential of child care assistance programs to reduce placement disruptions among foster children under the age of five. Survival analysis results suggest that receipt of child care assistance is associated with a reduced risk of placement disruption over time, especially for children who enter foster care as preschoolers. These findings are discussed in the context of the literature on the compensatory role that early care and education can play in short circuiting the detrimental impacts of toxic stress. With regard to public policy, they suggest an important, largely unexamined, role for child care support within the child welfare system.

Highlights

- ▶ Only 11% of eligible Illinois foster children received child care assistance.
- ▶ Foster placement type and child demographics predicted childcare assistance use.
- ▶ Placement stability in Illinois was relatively high.
- ▶ Childcare assistance was associated with reduced risk of placement disruption.

Keywords

Foster care

Child care

Stability