



NATIONAL CENTER *for* CHILDREN & FAMILIES  
ADVANCING POLICY, EDUCATION, & DEVELOPMENT

TEACHERS COLLEGE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

*Experiences with Child Care Subsidy Application and  
Recertification in New York City*

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## Introduction

Nationally, many families with young children who are eligible for child care subsidies do not receive them. Among the families who do receive child care subsidies, many experience interruptions in coverage. In New York City, subsidy interruptions are less frequent than in other states that have been the subject of subsidy studies (e.g. Illinois, Maryland). Nevertheless, parents may still encounter problems when applying or getting recertified for subsidies that may contribute to unstable care arrangements. This brief examines parents' experiences with the subsidy application and recertification process in New York City, the characteristics of parents who report problems, and the potential effect of these problems on the stability of subsidy receipt.

## Data and Methods

These analyses combine survey data with administrative data from New York City's Administration for Children's Services. A stratified random sample of approximately 2,000 families was drawn from all families who received a child care subsidy in New York City in February 2008. A telephone survey was conducted by the National Center for Children and Families, Teachers College, from mid-2008 to mid-2009. Parents were asked about their experiences with the subsidy application and recertification process. In this brief, information on child care arrangement (child care center, family child care home, & informal care), subsidy type (contract, voucher), and duration of subsidy receipt are drawn from administrative data; all other information comes from the survey. Sample weights were applied to enable generalizations to all families with a child aged 6 or under who received a subsidy in New York City and could be reached by telephone ( $N = 47,312$ ).

Study Population (weighted  $N = 47,312$ ):

- The mean child age was 3 years, 8 months (range: 13 months to 6 years)
- 47% of children were girls; 53% were boys
- 49% of parents used vouchers; 51% used contracts
- 49% of children were in a child care center; 31% were in a family child care home; and 20% were in an informal care arrangement
- 55% of parents were US-born; 45% were foreign-born

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## Findings: Experiences of subsidy recipients

The majority of child care subsidy recipients reported having a positive experience with application and recertification:

- 73% reported having no problems during the subsidy application process  
27% reported having a problem during the subsidy application process
  - 83% did not have a problem with the application paperwork  
17% reported a problem with the application paperwork
  - 93% did not have a problem with the application staff person  
7% reported a problem with the application staff person
- 79% reported that the notification to recertify was very clear  
21% reported that the notification to recertify was not clear
- 73% did not have a problem with the recertification process  
27% reported a problem with the recertification process
  - 91% said the recertification notice was clear  
9% said the recertification notice was unclear
  - 99% said the recertification notice was in their language  
< 1% said the recertification notice was not in their language
  - 97% said they received correct information  
3% said they received incorrect information

## Findings: Characteristics of subsidy recipients who reported problems

### Problems with the application process were reported by...

- More non-immigrants than immigrants (29% vs. 23%)
- More parents who speak English at home than parents who speak another language at home (30% vs. 19%)
- More parents who use a voucher than those who use contracted care (29% vs. 24%; *see figure 1*)
- More parents with at least some college education than parents with less than some college education (31% vs. 23%)

### Problems with the recertification process were reported by...

- More parents who speak English at home than parents who speak another language at home (29% vs. 21%)
- More parents with at least some college education than parents with less than some college education (30% vs. 24%)
- More parents who use a voucher than parents who use contracted care (33% vs. 22%; *see figure 1*)

There were no differences in problems reported with the application or recertification process according to parental race/ethnicity, number of children age 13 or under in the household, and standard versus non-standard work schedule.

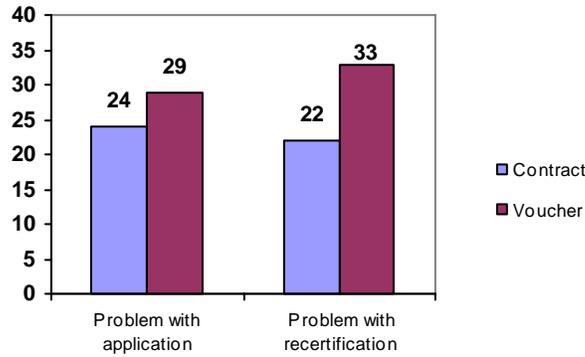


Figure 1. Percent of subsidy recipients reporting problem with application/recertification.

Parents who reported problems with recertification did not experience shorter periods of subsidy receipt than other parents.

**Findings: Associations between recertification problems and stability of subsidies**

- Parents who reported problems with recertification did not experience shorter periods of subsidy receipt, or more interruptions in subsidy receipt, than other parents between January 2006 and December 2008

**Findings: Affordability of parent child care fee**

Parent fees are required by the federal funding stream for subsidies. Compared to other counties in New York State, New York City's parent fee requirement is one of the lowest.

- 80% of child care subsidy recipients reported that the fee was affordable while 20% reported that the fee was not affordable
- Problems with the parent fee were more likely to be reported by immigrants than non-immigrants (22% v. 17%; see figure 2)

There were no differences in problems reported with the parent fee according to parental race/ethnicity, number of children age 13 or under in the household, and standard versus non-standard work schedule.

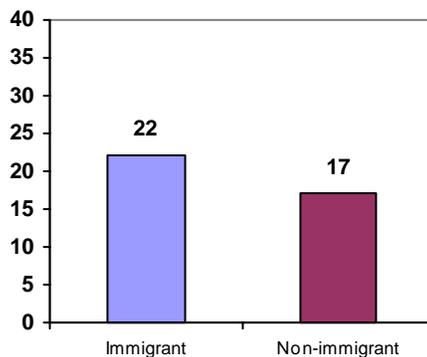


Figure 2. Percent of subsidy recipients reporting problem with parent fee.

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