

Expanding Early Learning Opportunities for Infants and Toddlers: An Evaluation of the Chicago Department of Family & Support Services Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership



The United States Department of Human Services funded the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (Chicago DFSS) Early Head Start Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP). Chicago DFSS contracted with the Center for Literacy at the University of Illinois at Chicago to evaluate their EHS-CCP program.

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Introduction

Recent federal policy initiatives have brought early childhood education center stage in the national conversation on how to eliminate chronic gaps in achievement and opportunity in the U.S. educational system. Indeed, evidence suggests that high quality early childhood programs not only improve young children's lives, but also make good on the promise of social and economic returns later in life (Yoshikawa et. al, 2013). Consider that investments in early learning initiatives are estimated to benefit society by "roughly \$8.60 for every \$1 spent" (President's Council of Economic Advisors, 2015). Admittedly, access to high quality early learning programs must be in order to realize such returns.

In an effort to expand early learning opportunities for infants and toddlers specifically, the Obama Administration created the Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships program in 2014. \$500 million was invested to support the expansion of early care and education through these partnerships (President's Council of Economic Advisors, 2015). The United States Department of Human Services awarded the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (Chicago DFSS) with \$14,900,000 to support the administration of an Early Head Start Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) grant from June 2015 through June 2019.

Approximately 26,000 children under age three are eligible for both EHS and Child Care subsidies in Chicago, but just under 6,000 infants and toddlers receive high quality services through federal, state, and local funding (Chapin Hall, 2019). Due to the limited access to services, 75 percent of Chicago eligible infants and toddlers do not have the opportunity to receive high quality services. Funding through the EHS-CCP grant program is intended to accelerate the City's efforts to expand access to high quality early learning programs in the neediest communities in Chicago.

Chicago DFSS Goals

Chicago DFSS aims to provide high quality child development and early learning opportunities to 1,100 more infants and toddlers at DFSS delegate and childcare partner agencies. A critical component of the grant is to raise quality across all partners in order to meet EHS Standards such as low teacher child ratios (2:8); credentialed teaching staff (IT CDA); comprehensive support services for families; and ongoing supports for staff professional development.

As the lead grantee, Chicago DFSS developed a comprehensive scope of work that they determined was needed to successfully support the Partner Sites' transition from compliance with child care licensing standards to Head Start Performance Standards, which includes the following: service planning related to eligibility and enrollment; fiscal supports and facilities management supports; guidance on grantee expectations of policies and procedures; guidance on the EHS monitoring system; assistance meeting and exceeding teacher quality requirements (i.e., teaching credentials and ongoing professional development for staff); assistance with parent engagement planning; and assistance with writing community partnership agreements.

EHS-CCP Background

Successful partnerships bring together the strengths of both programs out of the Office of Head Start and Office of Child Care to best meet child and family needs (Del Grosso, et al., 2019). The partnerships support working families by providing a full-day, full-year program so that more vulnerable children have the healthy and enriching early experiences they need to realize their full potential. These partnerships help maximize federal and state funding through more coordinated services. Ultimately, partnerships between EHS and childcare can expand the supply of stable community-based early childhood programs that:

- Are built on identified community needs and strengths;
- Provide high-quality, comprehensive care and services for children and families who are low-income;
- Are child-focused, allowing primary caregiving and continuity of services as much as possible;
- Meet the high-quality childcare needs of parents and the developmental needs of children.

Transitioning from Child Care Licensing Standards to HS Performance Standards

Licensed childcare providers have several considerations to make prior to engaging in a partnership, because it requires their sites' transition to an Early Head Start program model. (Table 1: Licensing Standards Compared to Head Start Performance Standards). The transition from licensed to HS performance standards typically requires changes that have implications for provider budgets and profits.

A prominent example of a required change includes reducing teacher to child ratios for two-year-old children in their programs and group sizes for all ages overall. Such changes are costly, because they require a reduction in the number of children in a classroom as well as hiring additional staff to remain compliant with coverage requirements. In addition, childcare providers must consider how they will support their existing staff in meeting additional teacher quality requirements as well as the hiring of additional staff that also need to meet higher levels of qualifications. Lastly, providers must consider how they will create the organizational conditions to support ongoing professional development opportunities for their staff. When a provider commits to a partnership, development coursework and credentialing must be evaluated and addressed from the beginning. As a result, licensed childcare providers have much to consider before and during their engagement in a partnership.

Licensed child care	Early Head Start
Teacher-Child Ratios <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1:4 Infants ○ 1:5 Toddlers ○ 1:8 Two Year Olds 	Teacher-Child Ratios <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1:4 Infants - 14 months ○ 1:4 Toddlers – 23 months ○ 1:4 Two Year Olds
Group Size <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 12 max for infants ○ 25 max for toddlers ○ 16 max for two year olds 	Group Size <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 8 max for infants ○ 8 max for toddlers; 6 max with one teacher; 12 max with 2 teachers ○ 12 max for two year olds with 2 teachers
Teacher Credentials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 30 semester hours of college ○ 6 hours related to Child Development 	Teacher Credentials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Minimum of an Infant/Toddler Child Development Associate
Teacher Professional Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Not required 	Teacher Professional Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 15 clock hours per program year

Table 1: Licensing Standards Compared to Head Start Performance Standards

Evaluation Overview

Chicago DFSS partnered with the Center for Literacy at the University of Illinois at Chicago to conduct a research study of their EHS-CCP expansion project. The study was designed to focus on the implementation of the grant and the grantee's ongoing work supporting delegates and partners in meeting Head Start Performance Standards. The study was designed to offer Chicago DFSS an evidence-based account of the program implementation and the program's ongoing strengths and challenges. Furthermore, this report is meant to provide insight into practical means of strengthening supports for delegates and partners as well as services for children and families.

The original evaluation scope aimed to document partnership characteristics and the formation process, to identify opportunities to strengthen partnerships, and to understand the experiences of parents and caregivers. Unfortunately, as the project got underway, the evaluation team experienced the unexpected losses of leaders Dr. Bill Teale, Director of the UIC Center for Literacy, and Vanessa Rich, Deputy Commissioner of Chicago DFSS. These losses, coupled with transitions in leadership at both Chicago DFSS and the UIC Center for Literacy, resulted in a significant disruption to the evaluation project. Therefore, this report focuses on the following specific project goals:

- To document the characteristics of the partnerships so that we can better understand how these variables are related to differences in implementation and outcomes.
- To understand how the partnerships are formed and whether certain models produce differences in implementation and outcomes.
- To document the inputs of the grantee that are intended to strengthen the organizational conditions needed to support quality EHS-CCP.

To meet the goals of the evaluation scope, the study was designed to collect the following array of data:

Chicago-DFSS Self-Report Data

- Administratively Collected Records, including attendance to professional development events, staff credential records, EHS-CCP Delegate Agency and Partner Site applications/contracts, and other documentation of participation in the partnership.
- Individual implementation planner interviews at two time points.
- Individual & group interviews with implementation leadership team at two time points.

Participant Self-Report Data

- Individual Partner Site administrator interviews
- Individual Partner Site family support specialist interviews
- Delegate Agency leadership and Partner Site administrator survey of their perceptions of collaboration within the EHS-CCP (Working Together Survey).

Additional Data

- Review of literature related to key constructs of the EHS-CCP.

Findings: Partnership Formation

Chicago DFSS' EHS-CCP consists of multiple layers of partnership engagement (Figure 1: Chicago DFSS Layers of Partnerships). Chicago DFSS, the lead grantee, built upon their preexisting Delegate Agency infrastructure to form the first level of partnership. Chicago DFSS used an application process to select the Delegate Agencies that would then form the second level of partnerships with childcare sites. Contractual agreements between the parties of both the first and second levels of the partnership were established.

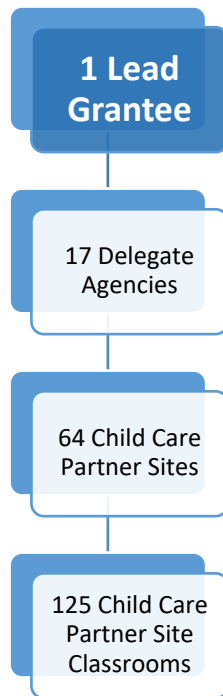


Figure 1: Chicago DFSS Layers of Partnerships

Group interviews with the Delegate Agencies revealed that the formation of the partnerships between Delegate Agencies and Partner Sites consisted of two models: 1) Internal growth and 2) External growth. The internal growth model reflects a process in which the Delegate Agency decided to expand within their preexisting Partner Sites, often opening an additional EHS classroom within those sites. Conversely, the external growth model represented an approach of building a new by forming new Partner Sites, in which the Partner Sites often have not had previous experience with EHS administration. Interviews with Chicago DFSS leadership corroborated this finding, and further added that the Delegate Agencies had complete control over the approach they used to expand within the broader EHS-CCP. Moreover, the implementation planners during their individual interviews explained that the Delegate Agencies that approached their expansion using the external growth model were struggling to provide coherent, comprehensive guidance for their new Partner Sites in comparison to those Partner Sites who are adding EHS to their sites. One implementation planner explained that there was a sense that the Delegate Agencies expanding from within their preexisting Partner Sites have a “leg up,” because they could build upon a preexisting relationship with these sites; referring to them as “part of the family.” Accountability within partnerships appeared particularly significant. Indeed, according to the findings of the national HS-CCP study conducted by Mathematica collaboration increased accountability and outcomes related to performance standards (Del Grosso, et al., 2019).

Findings: Roundtable Discussions

Partner Agency Interviews

Each of 17 individual agencies who were awarded an EHS-CCP expansion contract from Chicago DFSS conducted a roundtable discussion:

- Ada S. McKinley
- Carole Robertson
- Centers for New Horizon
- Chicago Commons
- Chicago Youth Centers
- Christopher House
- Erie House
- Gads Hill
- Henry Booth House
- It Takes a Village
- Korean American Community Services
- Lutheran Social Services
- Salvation Army
- Shining Star
- Trinity United
- YMCA

Each roundtable interview included probing questions related to the areas of the Delegate Agencies “Strengths,” “Challenges,” and “Priorities” in implementing the expansion of EHS through childcare partnerships.

Methods of Interview Analysis

Two researchers from the UIC Center for Literacy split the roundtable interviews in half and separately used a process of open coding for their assigned half of the data. After this, they organized their codes into groups by theme and developed a list of sub-codes to represent with more detail the unique strengths and challenges of each agency. The two raters then split the data set again, this time by “Strengths” and “Challenges.” Each rater took half the data set and used the established codebook to code by larger theme and by sub-code. Finally, one rater used this same process to code the “Priorities” included at the end of each interview. The two raters collaborated on the following narrative summary and created a list of follow-up questions.

Summary of Identified Strengths

Staff. Twelve of 17 agencies interviewed indicated that their staff are a major strength of their programs. However, agencies defined quality in different ways. Seven agencies indicated that they maintained qualified and/or credentialed staffs. Others indicated that they had consistency in their staffs, and/or a low turnover rate. For some agencies, the strength of their staffs included their collective dispositions and morale; three agencies indicated that they had staff that were dedicated, supportive, and/or loyal. Some agencies highlighted their cohort models for staff, describing the benefits of such an approach. Agencies also mentioned their interactions with internal and/or external experts. Four agencies described their strong directors and/or management and two agencies described their small student to teacher ratios.

Parent Engagement. Eight of 17 agencies highlighted parent engagement as a strength of their agencies. Five agencies indicated that they had a parent education curriculum or engagement program. Three agencies described strong parent attendance at center events. Individual agencies also described resources that were particular to their parent populations (e.g., social media as a tool for parent engagement, resources for parents who are students, interpreters for parents who speak languages other than English, and hiring parents as staff members).

Policies and Procedures. Seven of 17 agencies interviewed indicated that their policies and/or procedures were a strength of their programs. Five of these agencies highlighted that they have procedures in place for continuity of care. Specifically, this continuity of care referred to plans for children whose families lose their childcare subsidies. Two agencies indicated that they had well-defined or well-designed policies and procedures.

Enrollment. Six of 17 agencies identified their enrollment as a program strength. Three of these agencies indicated that they are fully enrolled, and two indicated that they have a waitlist. Two agencies highlighted that they had met the required percentage of students with disabilities, and two indicated that they had strong student attendance rates. Finally, one agency indicated that they serve many returning families.

Resources. Six of 17 agencies discussed the physical, curricular, or relational resources of their sites. Three agencies highlighted their curriculum and assessment tools. Three agencies noted that they have mental health resources available for students, families, and/or staff. We also noticed variation in the resources that individual agencies highlighted (e.g., new equipment in classrooms, physical health and advocacy resources, or bilingual education resources).

Training/PD. Five of 17 agencies highlighted their training/professional development programs. However, these trainings varied in their target audiences. For example, two agencies described providing trainings for teachers, and two described providing trainings for managers/directors. Three agencies indicated that they provide trainings for partners.

Summary of Identified Challenges

Staff. Although most agencies highlighted their staff among their strengths, all but two agencies also included their staff and staffing practices among their challenges. Nine of 17 agencies mentioned recruiting as a difficulty, and of these, eight described difficulty with recruiting qualified staff. With respect to recruiting, four sites mentioned that potential candidates are fearful of violence in the community, and so may be reluctant to either come in for an interview or take a position.

Conditions for Staff. Four of 17 agencies explain that their staff feels under-paid. Unionization and awareness of competition for pay are among the concerns. Several agencies mention that they have trouble with staff turnover and that their staff experience burnout. Staff appear to be stretched thin across the board, with office staff and site directors frequently filling in to cover staff breaks and serve as substitute teachers. Multiple sites have unfilled positions or recent vacancies. Another concern is that governance boards do not understand their role and are thus not able to support staff.

Staff Qualifications. Five of 17 agencies said that their current staff is under-qualified. One agency mentioned a need for increasing standards for candidates at the recruiting level. Another agency explained that candidates holding a Bachelor's degree have refused the position after being offered it. One agency expressed a need for a paraprofessional trained to deal specifically with challenging behavior. With respect to training presently under-qualified staff, time and funding are challenges. A concern expressed by three agencies is that they are unable to train their staff without resources including funding and time off.

Enrollment. Eleven of 17 agencies mentioned enrollment as a challenge. Five sites described funding issues, often related to family eligibility for subsidies and Child Care Funding. As one agency put it, when one child in a family becomes ineligible, the family frequently chooses to withdraw all other children in the family as well. Changes in eligibility may contribute to a lack of consistency in enrollment. Other issues related to enrollment include competition with other agencies. Three agencies expressed concern around reaching the required percentage (10%) of disabled children. Two agencies described a need for more space to accommodate their waitlists. One agency mentioned that a violent incident has contributed to low enrollment for students.

Parent Engagement and Education. Five of 17 agencies listed parent engagement and/or parent education among their current challenges. Three agencies expressed that parent follow-through with appointments is a challenge. One agency listed the threat of deportation as a reason why some undocumented parents are reluctant to share information. Efforts to engage parents in activities and educational events are often frustrated by lack of access to transportation and poorly coordinated off-site training.

Summary of Identified Challenges (continued)

Funding. Four agencies listed funding among their concerns. One agency explains that funds were promised for renovations but are now frozen. Another agency also has plans for renovations, including renovations for safety purposes, but needs funding to do so. Another agency describes a need for both PI and state subsidy funding and explains that “vouchers need to be timelier.”

Summary of Identified Priorities

Planning for Parents Who Lose Subsidies. Fourteen of 17 agencies indicated that they needed to develop a plan for parents who lost their childcare subsidies.

Staffing. Nine of 17 agencies listed staffing as a priority. Three agencies indicated that they needed to create a staffing plan that would support a lower student to teacher ratio. Four agencies indicated that they needed to develop strategies for recruitment and/or hiring. Two agencies indicated that they needed to address staff turnover rates. Two agencies indicated that they needed to create a policy that would maintain staffing requirements articulated in their standards/regulations. Finally, there was some significant variation in the priorities established related to staffing (e.g., competitive wages, which staff members are necessary, the need to hire specialists, or the need to increase staff education and/or credentials).

Policies and procedures. Seven of 17 agencies listed priorities related to their policies and procedures. Four of these agencies indicated that they need to update agency records related to staff and student information. Two agencies listed priorities related to their partnerships (e.g., the need to develop strategies and structures for partnership broadly, the need to develop policies and procedures for all of their sites and partners, the need to prioritize the children and families with the most significant need).

Enrollment. Five of 17 agencies listed enrollment as a priority. Two agencies stated that they need to develop a plan to meet their 10% disability requirement. All other references to enrollment priorities showcased variation (e.g., a desire to open enrollment up to their broader community, improving attendance rate, a goal to reach full enrollment capacity, and the need to develop an enrollment plan).

Professional Development. Five of 17 agencies listed professional development as a priority. Three agencies indicated that they need to develop a training/PD plan. Issues related to professional development included the need to include partnership staff in professional development and the need to ensure release time and hire substitutes so that teachers can attend professional development.

Summary of Identified Priorities (continued)

Restructuring/Improving. Five of 17 agencies listed restructuring and improving their sites and programs as priorities. Two agencies said that they aim to improve/strengthen their governance. Two agencies indicated that they need to improve or restructure their monitoring systems. Two agencies indicated that they need to improve safety and security at their sites. Two agencies indicated that they needed to work on licensing or accreditation.

Parent Engagement. Four of 17 agencies listed parent engagement as a priority. All four of these agencies indicated that they needed to find a research-based parent curriculum. One of these sites also indicated that they need to retain exiting parents.

Expansion. Three agencies listed expansion efforts as priorities (e.g., the hope to serve additional children, the desire to apply for additional CCP slots, the desire to explore options of Head Start expansion).

Findings: Administrator and Leader Surveys

Delegate Agency Leader Survey

In 2018, the Center for Literacy research team distributed an online survey (“The Working Together Survey”) to 81 Delegate Agency leaders and 66 Partner Site administrators. The goal of the survey was to learn more about the perspective of Delegate Agency leaders and Partner Site administrators regarding collaboration with Chicago DFSS and the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP).

For Delegate Agency leaders, a “partnership” is defined as the association between Chicago DFSS and their agency. For Partner Site administrators, “partnership” is defined as the association between their Delegate Agency and early childhood education center. The shared aims of each partnership included working together to expand services to infants and toddlers through the EHS-CCP funding line.

The responses which meet the criteria of this survey (n = 44) were analyzed to learn about the experiences of Delegate Agency leaders and Partner Site administrators (Table 2: Ratios of Survey Responses). In detail, 21 Delegate Agency leaders responded to the survey and 10 responses were excluded because the survey was not completed, and the respondents did not participate in this initiative. Out of 21 respondents, 15 leaders participated in the roundtable meetings held in 2017 to help each agency identify and discuss strengths, challenges, and identified priorities relevant to the EHS-CCP Expansion. Regarding the responses of Partner Site administrators, 23 responses were analyzed, and six incomplete responses were excluded. Out of these 23 responses, one administrator participated in the roundtable meeting in 2017.

	Total	Responses	Analyzed Responses
	N	N	N
Delegate Agency Leaders	81	31	21
Partner Site Administrator	66	29	23

Table 2: Ratios of Survey Responses

The demographic information of Delegate Agency leaders shows that almost 80% of leaders ($n = 17$) held master's degrees, followed by two leaders with bachelor's degrees, and two with associate degrees. Out of 21 leaders, 11 reported their race as Black or African American, five as White, and one as American Indian or Alaskan Native. Three preferred not to answer this question. Regarding their ethnic backgrounds, seven leaders identified themselves as Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin, including six of Mexican/Mexican-American/Chicano heritage and one of Puerto Rican heritage. The average years of working as a leader in agency/school/center settings are 11 years ($SD = 9.32$). Out of 21 responses, eleven leaders reported speaking a language in addition to English.

As mentioned, 15 Delegate Agency leaders out of 21 respondents attended the roundtable meeting in 2017. They reported that the EHS-CCP roundtable meeting helped them to understand their agency's program mission, components, strengths and weaknesses. Throughout the process of completing the application, leaders had an opportunity to plan quality improvement efforts and to discuss ideas and reflections with colleagues. The experience supported leaders to reflect on their practices and to grow as professionals. Sharing information and thoughts may have also helped them to build rapport with colleagues within the agency.

At the same time, some leaders reported feeling unsatisfied with the roundtable meetings. The research team provided additional space for respondents to share their perceived advantages and disadvantages of the budgetary changes resulting from their agency's engagement in the EHS-CC partnership. Five leaders elected to respond, describing positive opportunities for smaller class sizes, more equipment and professional development to raise the quality of teacher-child interaction, setting priority for funding according to the agency's contexts, and program development for parent engagement opportunities. One respondent specified the advantages of the funding. For example, the leader indicated reported challenges in cost matching to their needs and goals.

The survey results suggest that follow-up support to the leaders is needed to better communicate and to share the mission and goals of the partnership. Having time to discuss the agency's goals and mission regularly with colleagues can be a key to sustainably continuing the program and improving the quality of education and services. Regarding the survey question on increasing staff's well-being, half of leaders answered that EHS-CCP funding did *not* impact the increase of wages. Guidance on budget spending therefore needs to be clearer if the budget is to reflect the increase of staff and leaders' wages.

Overall, Delegate Agency leaders (n = 21) positively evaluated their experience of involvement in the EHS-CC partnership. Leaders were mostly satisfied with communication with Chicago DFSS, shared information, flexibility and openness of people in this partnership according to each agency's different ways of working and needs. However, some negative responses (n =8, 38.1%) indicate that enough time to understand and share the major decisions in each agency is needed to implement the major decisions made by the members of the partnership. The questions focusing on benefits and drawbacks from participating in the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership show enhancement of leaders' ability to address an important issue and to meet the needs of their constituency or clients. However, some leaders noted difficulties in heightening public profile, acquiring useful knowledge about services, programs, or people in the community, and developing valuable relationships. To support the leaders, the research team suggests consistent follow-ups are needed. Individual agencies have different conditions and systems, so additional support for sharing information and communicating with colleagues are required to promote their successful engagement. For example, providing further guidance or advice to leaders who have experienced conflict between their job and the partnership's priorities.

In addition to the survey responses, some leaders suggested ideas to improve the effectiveness of the collaborative efforts between Chicago DFSS and their Delegate Agency, including:

- More clear and timely communication in general and on educational requirements
- More lead time given when requesting information.
- Better support for the Family Child Care Home programs as they have different needs and challenges to center based programs
- Update Head Start Performance Standards because the outdated standards are more stringent than the federal government
- With a teacher shortage in Chicago, some type of waiver should be submitted to the feds informing them so that we can cover classrooms with staff who are not qualified according to the performance standards.
- Additional training regarding grant requirements as changes occur
- Additional support in securing qualified staffing/increased funding to attract qualified staff.

Partner Site Administrator Survey

Twenty-three Partner Site administrators responded to the survey. The demographic information of Partner Site administrators shows that 30% of administrators held master's degrees (n=6) and doctoral degrees (n=1). Out of the 23 administrators who responded, 18 identified themselves as Center Director or Owner (78.26%), two as Program Coordinator, and one each as home daycare provider and site director, respectively. One did not answer this survey question. Two administrators identified as female (86.95%). Out of the 23, six reported themselves as being of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino origin, including two of Puerto Rican heritage and Mexican/Mexican-American/Chicano, respectively. Half of the respondents identified themselves as Black or African American (n =11, 47.82%). Regarding diverse language use, nine administrators (39.13%) reported that they speak any language in addition to English.

Overall, Partner Site administrators met the goal of EHS-CCP regarding enrollment and meeting child-teacher ratios, teacher credential requirements, and teacher professional development. However, some administrators reported difficulties in meeting these goals. For example, five administrators (21.73%) reported that they are still trying to meet the goal of infant-toddler enrollment and it is challenging to keep up the enrollment. Some administrators reported that they have difficulties in meeting teacher credential requirements (n=7, 30.43%) and teacher professional development hours (n =5, 21.795).

Regarding the partnership, administrators show satisfaction from being involved in EHS-CCP. But nine administrators' answers (39.13%) indicate that knowing how to effectively organize the process of decision making and implementation in practice is still an issue to be resolved for effective partnership. Other survey results about compromise, flexibility, commitment, capacity, communication, and collaboration about the partnership met the expectations of the participants in EHS-CCP. Some Partner Site administrators reported drawbacks of EHS-CCP involvement, including difficulties in time management, extra workloads, and frustrations. Thus, it is necessary to investigate these groups in detail to provide extra support according to their community, program, and contexts.

Partner Site administrators also suggested several improvements for the EHS-CCP. Administrators appreciate the financial support (n=4) so that they can improve equipment and supplies for the families and class. Better communication and responsiveness (n=2) and professional development (n=2) are suggested to improve the program.

Findings: Enrollment

Enrollment increased from Program Year 1 (2015-2016) to Program Year 2 (2016-2017) as seen in Figure 2. Yet, the Delegate Agencies are still working to achieve target goal of 1100 new enrollments. During interviews with Delegate Agencies, their leadership attributed improvements with enrollment by highlighting several strengths related to parent outreach. For example, one agency highlighted the resources their Partner Sites have for parents who are students and described how social media aided in their facilitation of parent outreach at their site which they believe helped sustain their enrollment. A handful of agencies also described how they provided interpreters for parents who speak languages other than English, and another described hiring parents as staff members pointing to their strong rate of male parent involvement as a result of their practice.

Enrollment increased for Program Year 1 to Year 2

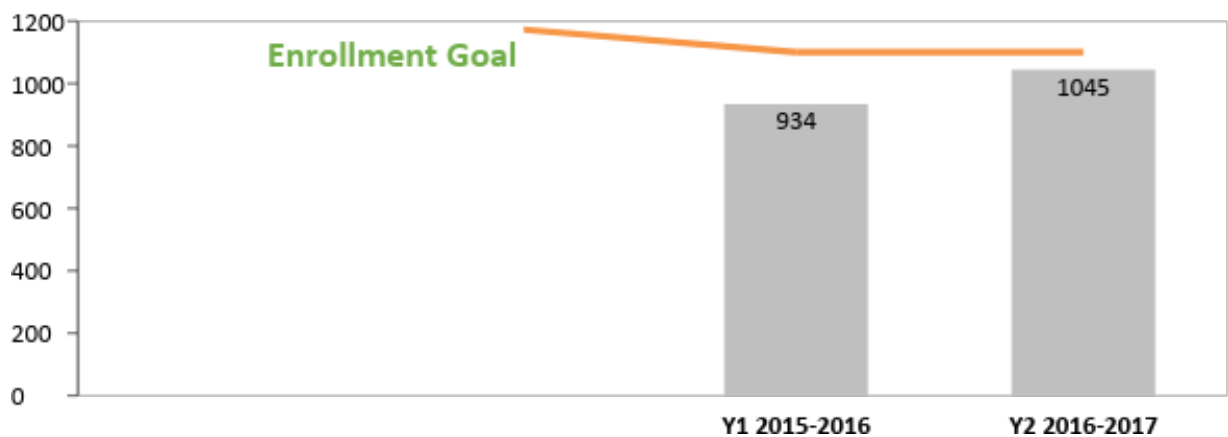


Figure 2: Chicago DFSS EHS-CCP Enrollment by Program Year

Although enrollment increased from Program Year 1 to Program Year 2, just over a third of children were de-enrolled (N 372) from the EHS-CCP program as displayed in Table 3:

Y1 Total N of Child Enrollment	N of Children who aged out and transitioned to HS	N of Children who transitioned to a non-EHS partnership program	N of Children who de-enrolled completely
934	273	16	372

Table 3: Chicago DFSS EHS-CCP De-Enrollment Program Year 1

Identified Challenges with Enrollment

Eleven of 17 agencies mentioned enrollment is an ongoing challenge. Five agencies explained that funding issues, often related to family eligibility for subsidies and Child Care Funding contribute to the persistent problems of enrollment. As one agency put it, when one child in a family becomes ineligible, the family frequently chooses to withdraw all other children in the family as well. Changes in eligibility appears to contribute to a lack of consistency in enrollment.

Other issues related to enrollment include competition with other agencies. And a few mentioned the threat of deportation in that parents have become less engaged, which again they see hurts children attendance and sustained enrollment over time. These agencies shared that they believe that many undocumented parents are reluctant to even leave their homes under the current national political climate coming from DC.

About half of the agencies also mentioned that the locations of the sites themselves may contribute to low enrollment. As one agency put it, "In some agencies, the children are just not there." Efforts to expand enrollment as well as engage parents in activities and educational events are often frustrated by lack of access to transportation to these communities in which the sites are located.

A few agencies mentioned that violence has contributed to low enrollment for students. In one case a random bullet landed in the front brick façade of the Partner Site, fortunately no one was directly hurt but the message spread among parents making them reconsider sending their children to this Partner Site for early learning programming. On a related note, the Delegate Agencies related these neighborhood violence incidences to difficulties in recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff.

Teacher/Child Ratios and Group Size

The notions of ratio and group size are more complicated than they appear. For example, Munton, et al. (2002) found that ratios are defined differently depending on context, educational philosophy, and method of measurement (i.e., total children divided by total staff, or the ratio of children to staff in a given room in the center). Additionally, ratio compliance is more complicated than it appears. Scarr et al. (1994) observed that childcare centers were often out of compliance with state regulations.

Several articles discussed the notion of child care quality. Blau (1999) defines child care quality as “the nature of the interactions between the provider and children, and the nature of the environment, curriculum, and materials to which children are exposed in the child care arrangement” (p. 787). He acknowledges that measuring childcare quality is difficult and costly, and argues that we tend to use childcare inputs (e.g., class size, ratio) as substitutes for quality. Several of the articles certainly seem to use ratio and other measures as a proxy for quality (Vandell and Wolfe, 2000). Blau (1999) makes a strong argument that we should not conflate childcare characteristics (e.g., group size; ratio) with childcare quality and positive developmental outcomes. Importantly, too, Scarr et al. (1994) found that structural measures are not substitutes for process measures. In other words, a measure of ratio is not a proxy for childcare quality.

While ratio and group size are often identified as “structural” or “regulatable” indicators of quality, they may be associated with process indicators of quality. For example, Boller, et al. (2014) state that reducing ratios and group sizes can “increase a teacher’s ability to provide responsive care, facilitate more positive peer interactions, and tailor instruction, which may be constrained by large group sizes and high child-adult ratios” (p. 12). In a 2010 literature review examining dosage, threshold, and outcomes, Zaslow, et al. found that early child care and education were associated with more positive outcomes the longer the children were exposed to the high quality care. The authors found limited evidence for a threshold (whether or not there exists a certain level of quality above which children benefit especially). These authors also found that though some studies were contradictory (i.e., Blau, 1999), ratio and group size were both significant predictors of child outcomes across studies included in the literature review.

Regulations on childcare ratios and group sizes have unintended consequences related to childcare safety and quality (Currie & Hotz, 2002). In their 2002 study of accidents in day care centers, Currie and Hotz write that increasing the education level of child care providers reduces accidental injuries. However, these regulations, along with regulation of adult to child ratio, “crowd some children out of care” (p. 25), creating a system of unintended consequences. As Currie and Hotz write, “Thus, regulation creates winners and losers: Some children benefit from safer environments, while those who are squeezed out of the regulated sector are placed at higher risk of injury” (p. 25). Thus, while ratio is importantly linked to child safety, its regulation may have unintended consequences of funneling other children into less regulated, family care centers. Hotz and Xiao (2011) found that negative impacts from regulating ratio (i.e., having to close a site) are more frequent in low-income areas than in wealthier areas (where more sites open as a result of regulation).

This study complicates our understanding of the increased quality promised by regulating adult to child ratios in child care settings. Regulating ratio does increase quality of services provided, but unfortunately it seems to do so mostly for higher-income areas. Any change to regulation of ratio should be undertaken with an understanding of the consequences for low-income area providers.

There are significant methodological challenges involved in studying ratio and group size. For example, multiple studies called for additional experimental and quasi-experimental work (e.g., Boller et al., 2014). Additionally, multiple studies identify issues related to validity (e.g., Vandell & Wolfe, 2000). Boller, et al. (2014) write, “To date, most evaluation designs have largely been unable to disentangle the effects of particular components of QI [quality improvement] interventions, which makes evidence-based decision-making difficult for policymakers and practitioners alike” (p. 1). These authors also highlight in their policy brief the lack of empirical support for many of these quality improvement interventions. Hotz and Xiao (2011) found that states that impose requirements on ratio also tend to restrict group sizes, making it hard to see the separate effects of individual regulations. While it is costly to measure childcare quality through observational methods, it may provide a more accurate picture of site quality than a simple statistic around group size.

Recommendations for Future Directions

Through the analysis of administratively collected data, surveys of agency leadership, and a review of roundtable discussions, this report provides insight into the EHS-CC partnership formation process as well as the strengths and challenges experienced by agency leaders who participated in this expansion.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the intended scope of this study was amended for feasibility. As a result, the research team was not able to capture the perspective of parents and caregivers of children enrolled in EHS – CC Partnership programs or to compare changes in scores on assessments of classroom interactions.

With more research being published to expand the available literature focused on Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships each year, Chicago DFSS is well positioned to further investigate opportunities to increase the likelihood of successful partnerships in the city. The research team recommends the following potential future directions of study:

- **Professional Development:** Further investigation is needed to fully understand the successes and challenges experienced by early childhood educators in pursuing professional development as a part of the partnership mandate. Further research may explore how funding for professional development was allocated at different sites, and how licensure and continuing education expectations were communicated.
- **Additional Perspectives:** The current literature is limited in its understanding of how EHS – CC Partnership programs are meeting the needs of families and whether they are providing adequate family support. Descriptive research, including case studies of parents and caregivers at Partner Sites, may be helpful to better understand this measure.
- **Comparing “In Groups” and “Out Groups”:** Feedback and insight provided by agency leaders through surveys and roundtable discussions suggest that the way that partnerships are formed may affect their success in meeting the partnership goals. Further research may be able to determine whether “in groups” who built upon existing partnerships, may have more ease in meeting goals than “out groups” who form entirely new partnerships in order to participate in the program.

Appendix A: Working Together Survey

Table 4: Survey Questions for Delegate Agency Leaders about their experience from participating in the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership

This EHS-CCP roundtable helped me reflect on my agency's...
Program mission
Program components
Program strengths
Program challenges
To what degree is the following true about your experience with completing the application
gave our agency an opportunity to plan our quality improvement efforts.
gave me opportunities to discuss my ideas/reflections with colleagues.
encouraged me to stretch and grow as a professional.
encouraged me to reflect on my own thinking.
encouraged me to reflect on my own practices.
When completing the application, to what degree is the following true about your budgetary considerations...
Before attending the roundtable and grant application, my agency had in place a loss of childcare subsidy policy or procedures for its partners
I feel confident in how I budget funds across items and categories.
The EHS-CCP funding allowed us to make investments in our agency that we believe improves the quality of the services we provide to families.
The EHS-CCP funding resulted in increased wages for our staff.
The EHC-CCP reimbursement process that is based on enrollment rather than attendance works well for our agency.
Please mark the degree to which you agree with the following
My organization benefitted from being involved in this partnership.
My ideas about what we want to accomplish with this partnership seemed to be the same as the ideas of others.
What we are trying to accomplish with our EHS expansion would be difficult to accomplish by ourselves.
The people involved in our partnership represented a cross-section of those who have a stake in what we are trying to accomplish.
When the members of the partnership made major decisions, there was always enough time for members to take information back to their agency to confer with colleagues about what the decision should be.
The level of commitment among the partnership members was high.
This partnership was able to adapt to changing conditions, such as fewer funds than expected, changing political climate, or change in leadership.
People involved in this partnership were willing to compromise on important aspects of our project.
People in this partnership were open to different approaches to how we can do our work (e.g., They were willing to consider different ways of working.)

Appendix A: Working Together Survey

Table 4: Survey Questions for Delegate Agency Leaders about their experience from participating in the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership

Please mark the degree to which you agree with the following
People in this partnership had established reasonable goals.
People in this partnership had a clear sense of their roles and responsibilities.
There was a clear process for making decisions among the collaborators in this partnership.
This partnership had tried to take on the right amount of work at the right pace.
The EHS-CCP had adequate funds to do what it wants to accomplish.
We were currently able to keep up with the work necessary to coordinate all the people, organizations, and activities related to this partnership.
People in this partnership communicated openly with one another.
I was informed as often as I should be about what goes on in the partnership.
DFSS communicated well with the Delegate Agency members of this partnership.
Communication among the people in this partnership happened both at formal meetings and in informal ways.
Members of this partnership knew and understood our goals.
We had a method for communicating the activities and decisions of the group to all members.
Members set ground rules and norms about how we will work together.
Members were willing to let go of an idea for one that appears to have more merit.
Members were effective liaisons between DFSS, Delegate Agencies and their corresponding Partner Sites.
Members monitored the effectiveness of the process.
Members trusted each other sufficiently to honestly and accurately share information, perceptions and feedback.
We had an effective decision making process.
I felt comfortable with the way decisions were made in the partnership.
I often supported decisions made by the partnership.
I rarely felt like I had been left out of the decision making process.
There were strong, recognized leaders who supported this collaborative effort.
Our group had access to data and information (e.g., statistical data, information about community perceptions, values, resources, and politics) to be effective
We had concrete, measurable goals to judge the success of our collaboration.
We had identified interim goals to maintain the group's momentum.
There was an established method for monitoring performance and providing feedback on goal attainment.

Appendix A: Working Together Survey

Table 4: Survey Questions for Delegate Agency Leaders about their experience from participating in the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership

Please mark the extent to which you disagree and agree with following
Our group was effective in obtaining the resources it needed to accomplish its objectives.
Our group was willing to confront and resolve performance issues.
Our group was effective in obtaining the resources it needed to accomplish its objectives.
The benefits of participating in this partnership had outweighed the negatives.
I was satisfied with the way that the people and organizations in this partnership had worked together.
I was satisfied with my role in the partnership.
For each of the following benefits, please indicate the degree to which you received the of benefit from participating in the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership
Enhanced ability to address an important issue
Heightened public profile
Acquisition of useful knowledge about services, programs, or people in the community
Development of valuable relationships
Enhanced ability to meet the needs of our constituency or clients
Acquisition of additional financial support
For each of the following drawbacks, please indicate the degree to which you experienced a drawback from participating in the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership.
Diversion of time and resources away from other priorities or obligations
Insufficient influence in partnership activities
Viewed negatively due to association with other partners or the partnership
Frustration or aggravation
Insufficient credit given to me for contributing to the accomplishments of the partnership
Conflict between my job and the partnership's work

Appendix B: PY1 De-enrollment by Agency and Partner Site

Agency	Sites	Number of Children
Ada S. McKinley Community Services		
	Children's Center (Halsted)	9
	Children's Center (Western)	12
	J & L Family Learning Day Care	3
	Precious Little Ones - 47th	5
	Precious Little Ones - 51st	8
	Total	37
Carole Robertson Center for Learning		
	Carole Robertson Center-2929	5
	Carole Robertson Center - 3701(OGDEN)	7
	Rachel's Learning Center North Avenue	9
	Total	21
Centers For New Horizons		
	Altgeld I	7
	Effie Ellis	13
	Total	20
Chicago Commons Association		
	Diversey Day Care	16
	Eyes on the Future	21
	Kimball Day Care	4
	Rainbow Daycare	2
	The Baby Academy	13
	Total	56
Chicago Youth Centers		
	Cuddle Care Academy	6
	Montessori Academy & Association, Inc	10
	Pathways to Learning	4
	Rachel's Learning Center Roosevelt Road	8
	Total	28

Appendix B: PY1 De-enrollment by Agency and Partner Site

Agency	Sites	Number of Children
Easter Seals Society of Metropolitan Chicago		
	Allison's (On 71st)	3
	Busy Bees II	3
	FIFTH CITY	2
	First Start Children's Academy South	6
	Gilchrist Marchman - Fosco	7
	Mother's Touch	6
	Whiz Kids Nursery Center	2
	Total	29
El Valor		
	Centro Infantil (Puerto Rican Comm)	4
	Power Day Care	6
	Young Scholars Dev. Ins.	8
	Total	18
Erie Neighborhood House		
	Erie Community Center	1
Gads Hill Center		
	Albany Child Care Center	4
	Hunt's Early Childhood Educational Academy	1
	Peachtree Educational Daycare Inc.	2
	Smart from the Start	12
	Total	19
Henry Booth House		
	4 Ever Young	2
	Hegewisch	5
	Jelly Bean 61st	2
	Jelly Bean 71st	5
	Jelly Bean 74th St	4
	Lakeview Development Center	5
	Little Angels Family DayCare	2
	Little Folks Day Care	1
	Loop	5
	Young Achievers Academy	2
	Total	33

Appendix B: PY1 De-enrollment by Agency and Partner Site

Agency	Sites	Number of Children
It Takes A Village		
	It Takes a Village	16
Judah International Outreach Ministries		
	Korean American Community Services	2
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois		
	Winthrop Childrens Center	3
Salvation Army		
	Simpson Academy	8
SGA Youth and Family Services		
	FCCH-Diana G. Macias	1
	FCCH-Ileana Gonzalez	3
	FCCH-Juan L. Fuentes	2
	FCCH-Laura Maldonado	2
	FCCH-Maria del Carmen Macias	4
	FCCH-Maria Rosalba Zermeno	3
	FCCH-Martha Cruz-Ornelas	2
	FCCH-Mary Pratts	4
	FCCH-Nancy Aguirre	1
	FCCH-Perla Yasuda	1
	Total	23
Shining Star Youth and Community Services		
	Shining Star #1	8
	Shining Star #2	11
	Shining Star #3	9
	Shining Star #4	9
	Total	37

Appendix B: PY1 De-enrollment by Agency and Partner Site

Agency	Sites	Number of Children
Trinity United Church of Christ		
	Dr. Deton J. Brooks Child Development Center	3
	Rev. Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr. Early Care and Learning Center	5
	Total	8
YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago		
	YMCA - Garfield	1
	YMCA - Jeanne Kenney Day Care Center	6
	YMCA - Marshall	1
	YMCA - McCormick Tribune	1
	YMCA - North Lawndale	3
	YMCA - Orr Family Development Center	1
	Total	13

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