

# Do child care subsidies decrease rates of child maltreatment?

YANG, M.-Y., MAGUIRE-JACK, K., SHOWALTER K., KIM, Y.K., & SLACK, K.S. (2019). CHILD CARE SUBSIDY AND CHILD MALTREATMENT. *CHILD & FAMILY SOCIAL WORK*, 24. 547–554. [WWW.DOI.ORG/10.1111/CFS.12635](http://WWW.DOI.ORG/10.1111/CFS.12635)

## What can we learn from this study?

Finding child care can be a source of stress for working parents, particularly families with lower incomes. Yet access to reliable child care for parents of young children is essential to maintaining employment. Studies have demonstrated that child care subsidies are linked to financial well-being and reductions in work disruptions. Given the relationships among parent stress, financial challenges, and child maltreatment, the study authors test the hypotheses that receipt of child care subsidies would be related to a decrease in child maltreatment investigations — specifically, that the receipt of child care subsidies would decrease child abuse because of lower parenting stress and decrease child neglect because of improved financial situations.

### Study details:

- **Population:** 655 mothers in Illinois with children 4 years old or younger
- **Data source:** Illinois Families Study, sampled from families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families in 1998) linked to data from the state's Department of Human Services and the Department of Children and Family Services
- **Methodology:** Longitudinal design (12-month follow-up) using structural equation modeling

## What are the critical findings?

Controlling for previous CPS involvement, number of children, race, education, and marital status, the authors found:

- Subsidy receipt was directly related to a **lower risk of physical abuse and lower risk of neglect** (that is, fewer investigated reports).
- Subsidy receipt was associated with an **increase in working hours** and therefore an **increase in household income**.
- Higher household income was **associated with a decreased risk of physical abuse but was not associated with risk of neglect**.
- Hypotheses regarding the mediating effects of subsidy receipt on maltreatment (that is, decreased risk of maltreatment through the indirect effect of increased income, and decreased risk of maltreatment through the indirect effects of child care concerns and parenting stress) were not supported.

## Why is this important for our work?

This study examined whether child care subsidies reduced maltreatment risk through decreased parenting stress (using stress and coping theory). The authors did not find evidence for the application of stress and coping theory to subsidy receipt, but findings demonstrated a protective effect of child care subsidies in reducing the risk of investigated physical abuse and neglect reports.

This summary synthesizes the findings of a single research study. To learn more, please review additional resources on child care, including: [How does high-quality early care and education improve safety, permanency, and well-being?](#) and [How can child protection agencies partner with early care and education to improve outcomes for children?](#)

For additional information, [see the abstract](#) or email [KMResources@casey.org](mailto:KMResources@casey.org).