

# A Research Partnership to Advance Equitable Access to Early Care and Education in Minnesota

## Purpose

The purpose of the Minnesota Research Partnership is to address the challenges of access to early care and education (ECE) in Minnesota through an established research partnership with the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), Child Trends, and the University of Minnesota (UMN). This project aims to support children and families in Minnesota by addressing pressing questions related to equitable access to ECE and understanding the effectiveness of policies and practices to support access.

## Research Questions

The Partnership will undertake three sub-studies to examine how policies and practices support ECE access in Minnesota:

- Study 1: What are the changes in the supply of ECE including the decline in licensed family child care? How is the supply of ECE influenced by policies, regulation, and funding?
- Study 2: What is the effectiveness of activities designed to engage and support professional development among family child care providers and center-based providers from different geographical areas and different cultural communities?
- Study 3: What is the effectiveness of policies and practices in positively shaping the way families of different backgrounds navigate and use available information about quality? How do families use subsidies, manage their ECE costs, and perceive their experiences using ECE?

## Definition of Access

The conceptual framework for the project is based on a family-centered definition of access: Equitable access to early care and education (ECE) in Minnesota means that with reasonable effort and affordability, all families in Minnesota can use early care and education that supports their child's development and meets their family's needs.

## Data

Multiple sources of data (administrative, web analytics, surveys), innovative participatory data collection strategies and rigorous analysis techniques will produce findings that are actionable, relevant, and timely.

## Process and Results

Co-design and joint decision-making about partnership projects are core values of the partnership. For all products, the Research Team will seek input from and build in time and processes for partners, key stakeholders, and an Advisory Group to inform the research design and to reflect on preliminary findings and implications for policy and practice. Partners will engage in dialogue and action planning about strategies to promote equitable access to ECE.

## Project Team Members

Co-Principal Investigators: Kathryn Tout, Child Trends and Elizabeth Davis, University of Minnesota

Sub-Study Co-Leads: (1) Elizabeth Davis and Aaron Sojourner, UMN; (2) Amy Susman-Stillman, UMN and Mallory Warner-Richter, Child Trends; and (3) Jennifer Cleveland and Weilin Li, Child Trends

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