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## **Oklahoma Study Offers Insight Into Child Care Breaking Point During COVID-19**

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK (October, 6 2020) — The Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness (OPSR) is pleased to share “Estimating the Cost of Quality Early Childhood Care & Education in Oklahoma” by Lynn A. Karoly and Stephanie J. Walsh with the RAND Corporation. During the pandemic, providers have been forced to operate at a reduced capacity and families have struggled to find affordable care, pushing our early childhood system to the breaking point. This study’s data on the financial impact of low enrollment sheds light on why it has been difficult for providers to stay in business during the pandemic and offers possible solutions for the future.

In addition, as part of the federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five, also known as [OKFutures](#), which was awarded to OPSR in 2019, this study helps depict the “true” cost of early childhood care and education in the state of Oklahoma and estimates how costs can vary with quality while aiming to inform Child Care Subsidy program reimbursement rates.

“The Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness commissioned this study to inform families, providers and state leaders on investments needed to support quality early care and learning programs, who each have a meaningful role in addressing disparities and difficulties brought on by COVID-19,” said Debra Andersen, executive director, OPSR. “By listening to providers and leveraging this study’s data, we hope collaborations will form solutions to improve investments in quality child care.”

Using its findings to move in a direction that ensures quality and supports providers, this study includes several recommendations for Oklahoma:

- Use cost information collected directly from providers and/or through cost modeling to reconsider the current Child Care Subsidy program reimbursement schedule.
- Consider options for tying higher subsidy reimbursement when higher quality rating tiers are achieved to increased spending on resources that matter for quality.
- Review participation in Child and Adult Care Food Program subsidies on the part of early childhood care and education providers in the state.
- Ensure that home-based providers have access to supports to improve their financial literacy and business practices.

“Although data from providers was collected for this study before the pandemic, the findings shed light on how provider costs are expected to change as a result of the current situation and how stakeholders can ensure a robust high-quality early childhood care and education system in the future,” said Karoly, senior economist, the RAND Corporation.

To read the final report, [click here](#). To learn more about OKFutures or this project, [click here](#).

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### **About Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness (OPSR)**

In 2003, House Bill 1094 created the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness and added Oklahoma to a growing list of states that recognized more action is required to successfully support families and children from birth to preschool — thus improving school readiness. Together, through both public and private partnerships, this group works to help children arrive at school with the knowledge, skills and physical and emotional health to achieve their dreams. Today, their mission is to lead Oklahoma in coordinating an early childhood system that strengthens families and ensures all children are ready for school. For more information, visit <https://www.okschoolreadiness.org>.

### **About RAND Corporation**

The [RAND Corporation](#) is a nonprofit research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND's research and analysis address issues that impact people around the world, including security, health, education, sustainability, growth, and development. As a nonpartisan organization, RAND is widely respected for operating independent of political and commercial pressures.

### **About OKFutures**

The Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDG B-5), titled Oklahoma's Future Begins with Children (OKFutures), was a one-year grant focused on improving the coordination and quality of early childhood services. Over \$3 million, Grant No. 90TP0037, was awarded to OPSR by the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education and is administered by the Office of Child Care, [Administration for Children and Families](#). During the course of this grant, OPSR will have completed five activities, including: conducting a needs assessment, crafting a strategic plan, maximizing parent choice, sharing best practices and improving overall quality. For more information, [click here](#) or [here](#).

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this press release are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Child Care, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.