

Addressing child care deserts in Oregon: Eliminating upstream barriers to promoting maternal and child well-being

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TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: The impact child care deserts have on the health of rural mothers and children in Oregon; Policy makers, parents with young children, educators, advocates and public health professionals

ABSTRACT: Limited child care access in rural areas may impact the health of mothers and children negatively. A review of current literature on child care deserts and results from the multi-state Rural Family Speak Health Project will be discussed. Preliminary qualitative analyses suggest that mothers with limited and/or costly child care options increases may experience stress, rely on unregulated care, and derail entering the job market.

To address the impact of child care deserts in rural child and maternal well-being, the following approaches will be discussed: 1) Raising awareness of the cost of child care and its limited availability in rural Oregon, 2) Increasing parent's knowledge of Oregon's 211 child care referral services and the Employment Related Daycare (ERDC) assistance program, 3) Generating more funding for ERDC and developing new opportunities for rural children to attend high quality child care facilities, and 4) Connecting rural childcare providers with resources around statewide incentives and supports (e.g. Quality Rating and Improvement Systems).

Increased research-based knowledge of the effects of child care deserts in rural communities and its impact on child and maternal well-being will assist policy makers in creating rural child care opportunities which can improve the health of rural mothers.

OBJECTIVE(S):

1. Identify three consequences lack of child care has on the health low-income rural mothers
2. List at least two Childcare resources available to Oregonians
3. Analyze the impact of child care deserts in rural communities

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