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Nonmaternal care and family factors in early development: An overview of the NICHD Study of Early Child Care

NICHD Early Child Care Research Network

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Abstract

In the most comprehensive US study to date about connections among child care experiences, family factors, and children's early development, 1100 children have been followed from birth through age 7. The study's intent is to describe family and child care/school contexts of children's development and examine associations between contextual variations and children's developmental outcomes in social-emotional, cognitive, and physical health domains. By age 3, over 90% of the children had experienced regular nonmaternal care, and over 50% were regularly spending over 30 hours/week in care. Economic factors, family characteristics, and maternal attitudes all influenced the amount and nature of early nonmaternal care. Observed quality of nonmaternal care consistently predicted social-emotional and cognitive-linguistic outcomes during the first 3 years of life. Amount of time spent in nonmaternal care

predicted some social-emotional outcomes. Type and stability of nonmaternal care had limited predictive value. Family factors, including maternal sensitivity, quality of home environment, and income, were more consistent predictors of children's outcomes than any aspect of early nonmaternal care experiences.



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Keywords

Child care; Longitudinal studies; Childrearing practices; Family-work relations

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