



Child Care Access in Alabama: Recent Research and Future Directions

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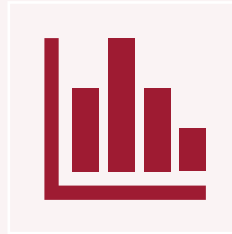
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Overview



Framing



Research Findings



**Implications and
Future Directions**



Child Care

Supports **children's** learning and development

Helps **families** participate in the workforce

Furtheres our **state's** economic growth

All programs
for young
children
provide both
care and
education.



There is a gap
between what it
costs to provide
high-quality child
care and what
families can **pay**.

How do we fill that gap?



Top Priorities Related to Child Care

- Build supply and increase access to high-quality care
- Decrease cost to families
- Grow a stable and qualified early education workforce through increased compensation

Multi-Dimensional Framework of Access to Child Care and Early Education

Reasonable
Effort

Affordability

Supports
child's
development

Meets
parents' needs



Exploring Child Care Access in Alabama: Three Studies

1. Measuring and Mapping Child Care Access in Alabama
2. Identifying and Addressing Barriers to Early Care and Education Access in Rural Alabama Using Rapid-Cycle Evaluation
3. Alabama Family Child Care Providers' Decision-Making Related to Serving Children During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

**MEASURING AND MAPPING
CHILD CARE ACCESS IN ALABAMA**



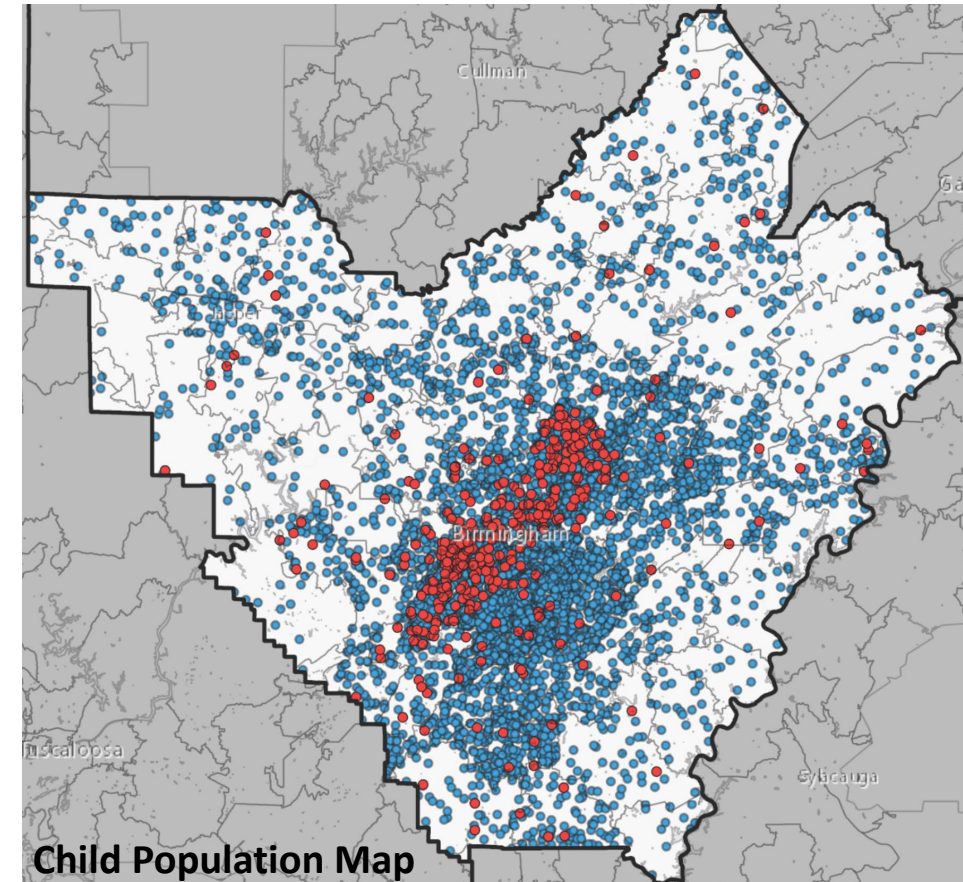
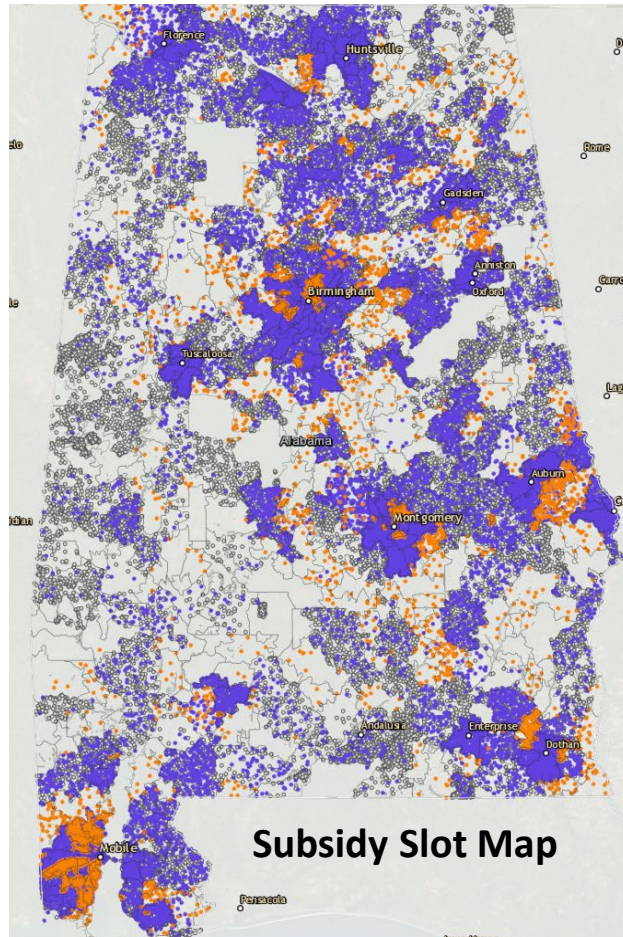
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Study 1: Measuring and Mapping Child Care Access in Alabama

- Create maps to visualize child care licensing and subsidy data
- Understand current subsidized child care access in Alabama
- Inform data-informed decisions to increase supply of affordable ECE options

Study 1: Measuring and Mapping Child Care Access in Alabama

- Developed five sets of maps, each measuring subsidized access differently
- Data stories provide example of how to combine maps to inform geographically-targeted solutions

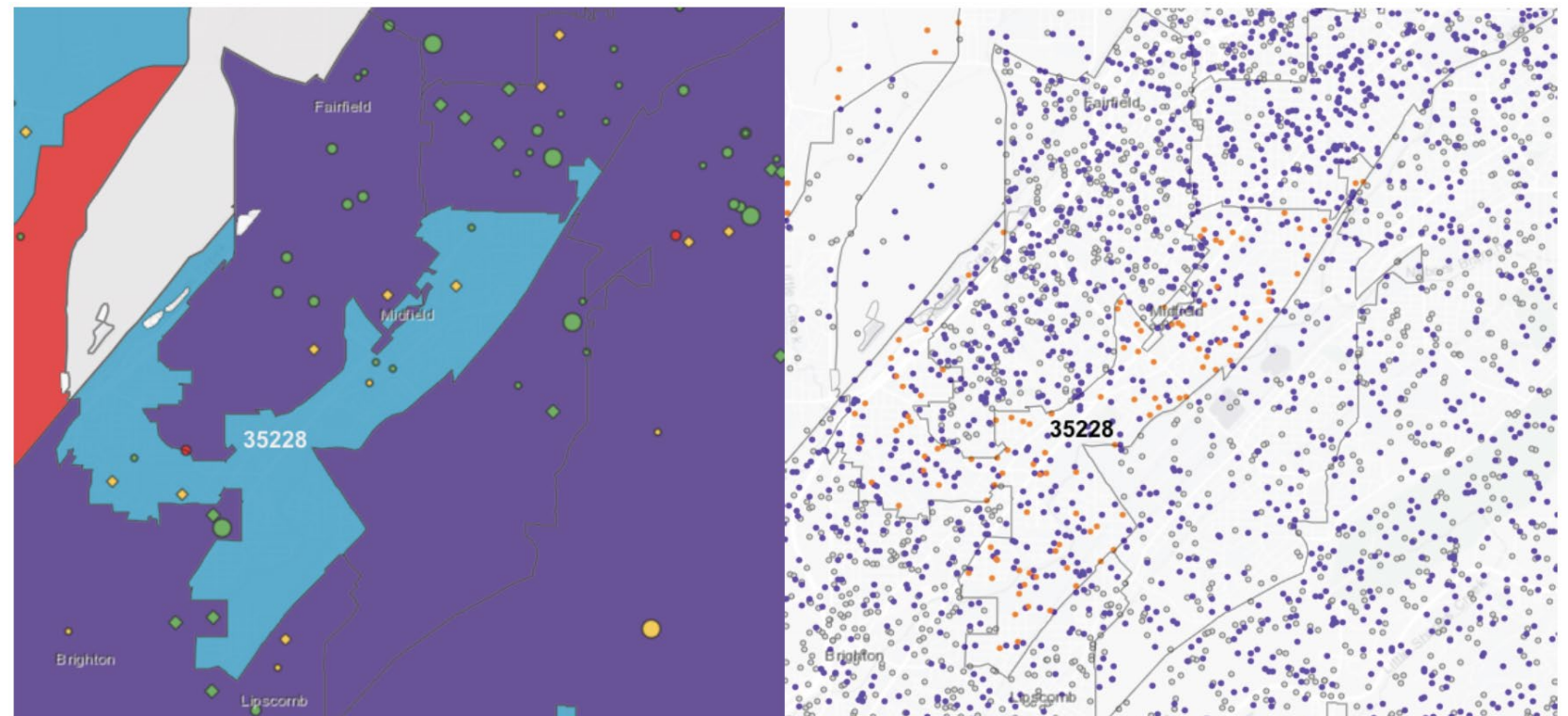


Study 1: Measuring and Mapping Child Care Access in Alabama

Data story example: a zip code where there doesn't seem to be enough subsidized care, and programs participate in subsidy at a low rate

- **Blue quadrant:** low program participation, high utilization of slots by subsidized children
- **Orange dots:** not enough subsidized slots in zip code

Subsidy Quadrant



Study 1 Highlights

- Significant **local variation** in access
- Zip codes around the state with **no regulated capacity**
- Many children receiving subsidies attend care **outside their zip code**
- **Clusters of zip codes** with high enrollment ratios and large differences between the subsidy rate and eligibility rate, indicating potentially insufficient subsidized child care supply

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

- Explore **targeted intervention** where maps suggest there is inadequate subsidized care
- Implement strategies for **recruiting and supporting home-based child care** providers
- Help child care programs **begin participating in the subsidy system**, and identify and address barriers they may face
- Support and encourage **faith-based license-exempt programs** to become licensed

Limitations of Mapping Access

- Often rely on census estimates
- Don't capture variation in access based on children's ages
- Families don't always want child care where they live
- May over-estimate demand

Recommendations for Research and Data

- Supplement findings with **direct data collection** from families and educators
- Examine access specifically for **infants and toddlers** and **non-standard hours care**
- Use **waiting list data** as another method to measure demand
- Because data are from prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, consider **recreating** these maps

Study 2: ECE Access in Rural Communities

- Case studies of two rural communities
 - Phase 1:
 - Interviews with 31 stakeholders about ECE access and quality
 - Identify a need
 - Phase 2:
 - Develop an intervention plan to meet that need
 - Pilot the intervention and measure its effectiveness
- Case studies of promising practices to address access and quality

Study 2: Phase 1 Results

- **Barriers**
 - Insufficient capacity
 - Hours of operation
 - Cost
 - Transportation
- **Differences by role**
 - Community leaders: insufficient infant/toddler care
 - Parents: satisfied with infant and toddler care options
- **Access dimensions**
 - Reasonable effort discussed most often
 - Access dimensions sometimes conflict (e.g., improving teacher-child ratio)

Study 2: Phase 2

- Community A:
 - LENA Start groups with Alabama Talks and United Way of West Alabama
 - Goal: engage parents and relative caregivers in parent education about the importance of talking with children
- Community B:
 - Business practices learning community for current and aspiring center-based child care administrators
 - Goal: build administrative capacity and provide social support

Study 2: Implications

- Understanding and addressing ECE access needs in rural communities is complex
- Include multiple stakeholder perspectives when possible
- Consider access dimensions in combination with each other

Study 3: Alabama Family Child Care Providers' Decision-Making Related to Serving Children During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Study of FCC educators during COVID-19
 - Administrative data
 - Educator interviews
- Lower closure risk for FCC educators who
 - Participate in **subsidy**, especially in lower-opportunity communities
 - Are **nationally accredited**
- FCC educators **prioritized families' needs** when making operating decisions
- **System flexibility** and **financial incentives** helped them stay open

Overall Implications

- Need for **statewide and local solutions**
- Importance of **collaboration**
 - Across agencies that support young children and families
 - Research-practice partnerships
 - Employer, philanthropic, government, advocacy, non-profit collaborations
- Integrating **multiple data sources**
- Including early childhood educator and family **voice**
- Attending to **implementation**

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Thank you!