

High-quality child care found good for children -- and their mothers

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High-quality early child care isn't important just for children, but for their mothers, too. That's the conclusion of a new study by researchers at the University of Texas at Austin; the study appears in the journal *Child Development*.

The study analyzed data from more than 1,300 [children](#) in the [longitudinal Study](#) of Early Child Care and Youth Development, which was sponsored by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). As part of the study, children's care settings were evaluated at multiple points when the children were 1 to 54 months old, and moms were interviewed at regular intervals; in this way, researchers created histories of child care location and quality from birth.

The study found that mothers whose children spent their early years in high-quality nonparental care, starting from birth and in either center-based or home-based settings, were more likely than other moms to be involved in their children's schools later, regardless of the moms' [socioeconomic status](#). Other moms were those whose children weren't in child care or were in low-quality child care. [School](#) involvement included being in regular contact with teachers or being involved with the school community after their children entered [kindergarten](#)—for example, attending open house events at school or visiting the homes of the parents of their children's classmates.

Moreover, the effects of this early child care were cumulative. The

quality of the child care the year before children started school didn't matter as much as the history of the quality of care throughout the children's early life. And the quality of children's early care was more important than the type or setting of the care.

"These findings tie into two important components," according to Robert Crosnoe, professor of sociology in the Population Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin, who led the study. "First, high-quality child care promotes school readiness, a phenomenon that motivates programs like Head Start and universal prekindergarten. And second, children make a smoother transition to school when families and schools are strongly connected, as reflected in the goals of No Child Left Behind."

Crosnoe says the study has implications for policy and practice: "Linking multiple settings of early childhood—home, [child care](#), and school—early in children's lives helps support children's school readiness and early academic progress," he notes.

Provided by Society for Research in Child Development

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