

Background

- The Arkansas Office of Early Childhood (OEC) is partnering with SRI Education¹, the National Center for Children in Poverty², and University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences³ on a Child Care Policy Research Partnership (CCPRP) grant focused on improving access to and delivery of stable, high-quality early care and education (ECE) for young children in foster care (CiFC).
- Young CiFC who participate in ECE programs are more likely to have stable foster care placements and experience positive developmental and later school outcomes compared with CiFC who do not participate in ECE (Meloy & Phillips, 2012).
- Evidence indicates low levels of ECE participation among CiFC (Lee, 2020).

Methods

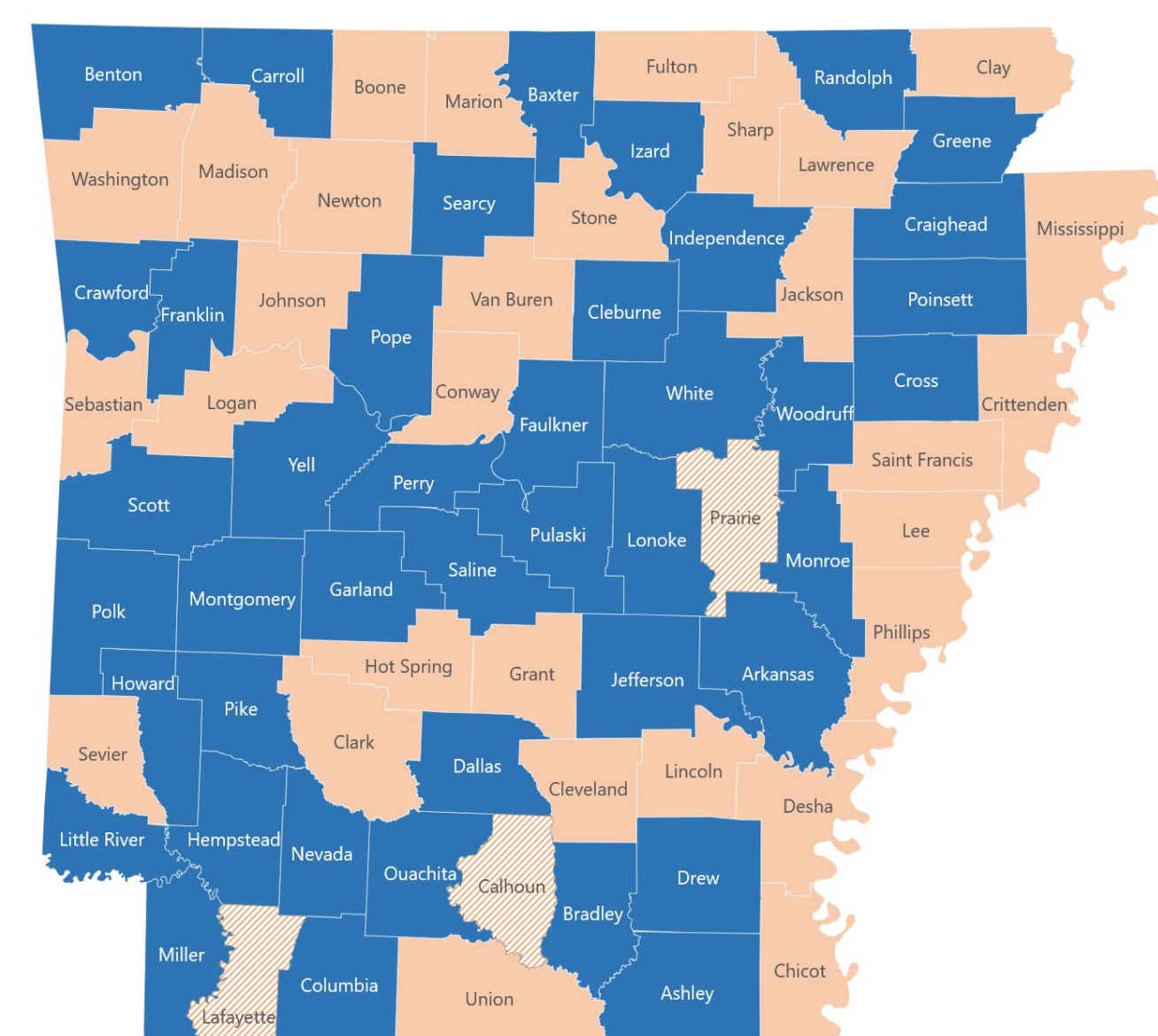
- We examine the quality, stability, and accessibility of subsidized ECE used by young CiFC in comparison with the care used by children who access subsidized care through Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) vouchers.
- Study data include on 3,110 CiFC and 23,276 non-CiFC ages birth to 5 years in Arkansas during the Aug 1, 2021 – July 31, 2022. We supplement these data with information from the following sources:
 - Head Start Program Information Report
 - OEC program licensing (~2K programs) and CCDF voucher authorization records (~100K authorizations)
 - Arkansas Department of Education's Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) program database
 - Department of Human Services (DHS) Subsidy Fiscal Year (SFY) 2022 Annual Report Card

Findings

AR CiFC received child care assistance from a variety of publicly funded ECE programs

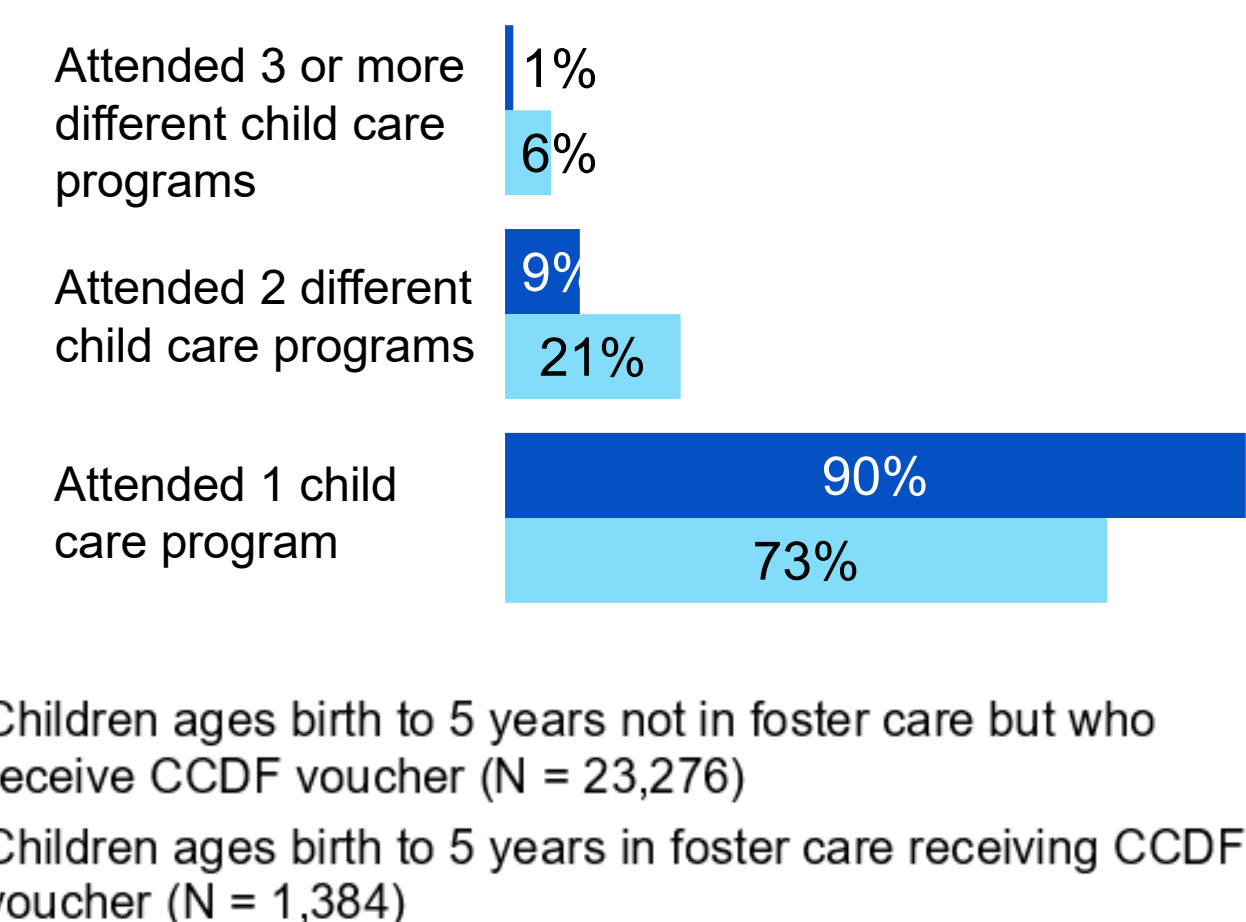
- Nearly half (45%) of CiFC received a CCDF voucher and had ≥ 1 billable day(s)
- More than 1 in 5 (21%) attended an Early Intervention Day Treatment program
- 7% of CiFC were enrolled in ABC programs
- 6% of CiFC were enrolled in Early Head Start/Head Start (HS/EHS)

ECE programs serve CiFC in most AR counties, but there is a significant untapped supply of programs eligible to serve CiFC

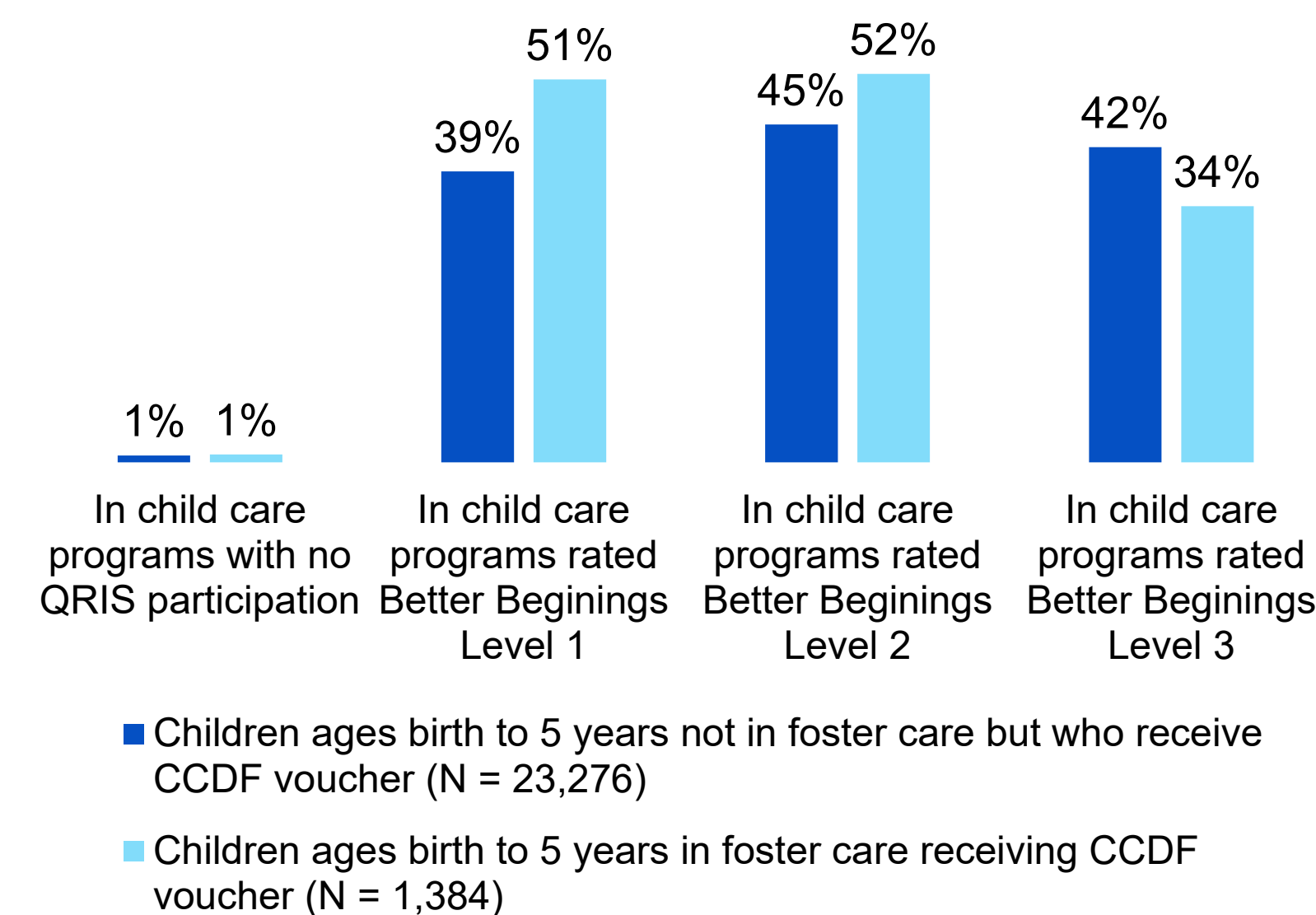


- Counties in which the number of programs that served CiFC is equal to or exceeds the number of programs that are eligible but did not serve CiFC
- Counties in which the number of programs that served CiFC is lower than the number of programs that are eligible but did not serve CiFC
- Counties in which no programs served CiFC and no eligible programs were present

AR CiFC are more likely that their non-CiFC peers to participate in multiple CCDF-subsidized programs



AR non-CiFC are more likely that their CiFC peers to experience the highest quality CCDF-subsidized care



Note: Children may participate in more than one program.

Conclusions

- A majority of CiFC participated in formal child care at some point during the 2021-22 school year, but large numbers of CiFC either did not participate in care or received care in substantially separate settings.
- Among children receiving care through CCDF vouchers, CiFC were less likely than children not in foster care to experience the highest quality of care.
- Once enrolled in CCDF-funded child care, CiFC experienced substantially greater levels of instability in their care arrangements as compared with other children not in foster care.

Future directions

- Integrate administrative data from the Arkansas Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), which will permit us to explore:
 - Variation in child care supply for CiFC across different regions of the state
 - Detailed trajectories of CiFC's involvement in subsidized child care in relation to involvement in foster care
- Insights from planned analyses will help inform potential strategies to test with Arkansas state agency partners in later years of the CCPRP.
- Taken together, these insights will help Arkansas OEC and DCFS improve the supports for CiFC in ECE.

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