

I. INTRODUCTION

There has been growing recognition of the fact that child care has become an expensive necessity for many families. The Child Day Care Affordability Study was commissioned by the Massachusetts Office for Children in partnership with the United Way of Massachusetts Bay to collect and analyze information about the extent of the child care affordability problem in Massachusetts and to review options for addressing the problem. A report of the findings of this study is available from the Office for Children. This technical report describes the research methods used.

A team of researchers at the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, working with the Center for Survey Research at the University of Massachusetts, was commissioned to conduct the Affordability Study.

The Affordability Study Team conducted three surveys:

1. Parents Survey: a telephone survey of a random sample of 750 Massachusetts families with one or more children under the age of 13.
2. Survey of Center-based Care Providers: a telephone survey of a random sample of licensed centers.
3. Survey of Licensed Family Day Care Providers: a telephone survey of a random sample of licensed family day care providers.

II. THE PARENT SURVEY

From June 4 to July 2, 1987, the Center for Survey Research conducted a random digit dial, probability sample survey of households in Massachusetts with telephone service that had at least one child age 12 or younger. The 750 telephone interviews were designed to obtain information about the child care arrangements, costs of child care, demand for child care, and affordability of child care in Massachusetts.

Sample

The sample was drawn in a two-stage process developed by Waksberg (1978) that increases the efficiency of the random digit dial survey. In the first stage, a sample of random digits is added to a sample of exchanges. These numbers are called, and interviewers ascertain whether or not the selected number serves a residential household. If so, the cluster defined by the exchange and the first two digits of the telephone number (542-12--) are retained as a cluster. A fixed number of occupied residential housing units is then identified within the hundred possible numbers defined by that cluster (542-1200 to 542-1299). Specifically, a fixed series of random two digit pairs are added to the root so defined. Interviewers call such numbers. If the number so created is found not to serve a residential number, it is dropped and another two digit ending is added and tried until a residential number is found.

Even though the number of working residential numbers in any particular exchange is not known in advance, the basic principle of equal probability or known probability throughout the State is maintained. The only basis on which a number is dropped and substituted is if it is specifically ascertained that a selected number does not lead to a residential unit. If a selected number produces a ring and no answer after repeated calls, the phone company is contacted to find out whether or not the phone is residential. If a number is not definitely determined to be nonresidential or not a working number, it is maintained in the sample and every effort is made to complete the interview with a designated person in the household linked to that number.

At the first stage of selection, all of the exchanges in Massachusetts were included. To each exchange, one 4-digit number was added to create a complete telephone number. These numbers were screened to ascertain whether or not they were residential. The residential numbers were retained. This process produced 449 primary clusters consisting of an exchange plus two digits. Then eight occupied housing units were randomly selected in each cluster, so the sample consisted of 3592 housing units.

Response Rate

The response rate calculations are shown in Table 1 and 2. There are several ways of calculating response rate for this study. First, we can ask in how many of the eligible households were interviews obtained. Of the 809 households that were screened and determined to be eligible, interviews were completed in 737 or 91 percent of them. However, we were unable to complete the screening process to determine eligibility for 172 of the numbers in our