**CRIMINAL JUSTICE & VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

- Randomized controlled trial of Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) and Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) for high utilizers of hospitals and jails in Dallas County

**Grant Recipient:** Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

**Term:** February 2017 – April 2022

**Principal Investigators:**
- John Petrila, LL.M., Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute
- Jennifer Skeem, Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley

**Funding:** $1,024,737

**Summary:**
This grant will fund a randomized controlled trial (RCTs) of evidence-based programs – ACT and FACT – for justice-involved individuals with serious mental illness who are high utilizers of hospitals and/or jails in Dallas County.

ACT is an evidence-based program for people with serious mental illnesses and substance use disorders who are high utilizers of hospitals. ACT is delivered by a transdisciplinary team of 10 to 12 practitioners who provide services to about 100 people, and work to engage clients in treatment and directly provide 24/7 services and support in the community. Although prior studies suggest ACT reduces hospitalization and improves other clinical outcomes, it does not necessarily reduce police contacts and arrests. For this reason, offenders with moderate to high risk of recidivism will be assigned to FACT teams, which add a probation officer to ACT’s standard multidisciplinary clinical team.

Dallas County will be delivering ACT and FACT as part of a larger Smart Justice initiative, whose implementation is being funded by a $7 million grant from the W.W. Caruth Jr. Foundation as well as state and local funding. The ACT/FACT model has been previously evaluated in small RCTs and matched quasi-experiments, which have found promising reductions in hospitalizations and/or criminal arrests for high utilizers.

The RCT will evaluate ACT and FACT in a sample of approximately 1,000 justice-involved high healthcare utilizers. Sample members will be randomly assigned to receive either Smart Justice (where those who are determined to be at low risk of recidivism will receive ACT, and those determined to be at high risk of recidivism will receive FACT) or services as usual. The study will measure service utilization and cost – i.e., hospitalizations, emergency department visits, and arrests – over a two-year period as the primary outcomes.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
A large randomized controlled trial of Big Brothers Big Sisters community-based mentoring program for youth at risk of criminal involvement

Grant recipient: The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois

Principal Investigators: David DuBois, Ph. D., University of Illinois at Chicago
Carla Herrera, Ph. D., independent research consultant

Term: August 2016 - October 2023

Funding: $1,760,785

Summary: Over the course of seven years, the grantee will conduct a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America’s (BBBSA) community-based mentoring program for disadvantaged youth. BBBSA is the largest mentoring organization in the United States, with over 300 affiliates serving nearly 160,000 youth annually. Many of the participating youth are at risk of criminal involvement (prior longitudinal evidence suggests approximately 40% of the program’s targeted population will be arrested at least once in adulthood). A sizable RCT of the program in the 1990s found promising effects on both youth violent behavior and substance use, but was limited by only short-term follow-up and exclusive reliance on youth self-reports to measure outcomes.

This RCT will be conducted in 20 BBBSA agencies nationwide, with a sample of approximately 2,500 youth. Crime and delinquency outcomes will be measured with official data over a follow-up period of 4 to 5.5 years (depending on the time of youth enrollment into the study). Crime/delinquency and other outcomes (e.g., school suspensions, truancy, substance use) will also be measured with parent and youth surveys over an 18-month follow-up period.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
• A randomized controlled trial of *Interventions* – a cognitive behavioral treatment program for justice-involved individuals with mental illness

**Grant recipient:** Regents of the University of California

**Principal Investigators:** Jennifer Skeem, Ph. D., School of Social Welfare & Goldman School of Public Policy, University of California Berkeley  
Susan Turner, Ph. D., School of Social Ecology, University of California Irvine

**Term:** August 2016 – November 2021

**Funding:** $1,637,106

**Summary:** This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Interventions, a non-proprietary manualized cognitive-behavioral treatment (CBT) program for justice-involved individuals with mental illness. With U.S. Department of Justice funding, Interventions was recently implemented and refined in four sites (located in California, Ohio, and Texas). In this RCT, researchers will partner with two community-based sites (both in California) to test the impact of the program on recidivism. Prior evidence supporting a CBT approach includes a Campbell Collaboration meta-analytic review of high-quality studies, which found that CBT programs for general offenders (not necessarily offenders with mental illness) reduce recidivism by 25% on average.

In this study, a total of 720 individuals at two sites – a mental health court and an adult probation program – will be randomly assigned to either *Interventions* or to treatment as usual, which typically includes psychiatric treatment. The primary outcome in this RCT is recidivism, as measured with arrest records over a minimum period of 1 year. The study will also assess whether *Interventions* works by reducing criminal thinking and other general risk factors for recidivism.

The study's pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
• Evaluation of Critical Time Intervention case management program for recently released jail detainees in Chicago

Grant Recipient: University of Chicago Urban Labs

Principal Investigators: David Meltzer, Ph.D., University of Chicago
Harold Pollack, Ph.D., University of Chicago

Term: April 2018 – July 2023

Funding: $858,963

Summary: This is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of an adapted version of the Critical Time Intervention (CTI), a case management program designed to connect mentally-ill clients with community services and insure they have an appropriate support system. CTI is typically provided to adults with severe mental illness leaving shelters, hospitals, or other institutions, with the goal of preventing homelessness. In the proposed adaptation, CTI will be offered to ex-detainees who (i) are being discharged from Cook County Jail in Chicago, IL; (ii) have a history of substance abuse, mental illness, and/or chronic health conditions; (iii) and are identified as being at high risk of homelessness. The program’s delivery is being supported by Cook County and philanthropic funders.

CTI is backed by strong, replicated RCT evidence of reductions in homelessness when delivered to the original target population: adults with severe mental illness, based on findings of reductions of more than 60% in the likelihood of experiencing homelessness.

The study will randomly assign approximately 657 ex-detainees over the course of 20 months to receive the intervention described above, or to receive usual services, and will measure re-incarceration rates for a new offense, as well as homelessness, over a three-year follow-up period.

The study’s pre-analysis plan is linked here.
A randomized controlled trial of Motivational Interviewing plus Critical Time Intervention for hospitalized gunshot wound victims, to prevent future risky behavior.

**Grant Recipient:** University of Washington

**Term:** February 2017 – April 2019

**Principal Investigator:** Ali Rowhani-Rahbar, Ph. D., University of Washington

**Funding:** $590,676

**Summary:** This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of an intervention that combines (i) in-hospital Motivational Interviewing designed to prevent hospitalized gunshot wound victims from engaging in risky behaviors upon their release (e.g., crime, retaliation), and (ii) Critical Time Intervention, a case management program provided for several months after hospital discharge that is designed to connect gunshot wound victims with necessary community services, insure they have an appropriate support system, and help them develop a plan for achieving long-term goals (e.g., employment, education). Both components of the intervention are backed by promising evidence of effectiveness from RCTs in other policy contexts.

This study will randomly assign 145 calendar weeks over approximately a three–year period (2016-2018) to treatment versus control conditions. Gunshot wound victims admitted to Seattle’s Harborview Medical Center during “treatment” weeks will be eligible to receive the intervention, and those admitted during “control” weeks will receive usual services. The researchers anticipate enrolling at least 300 gunshot wound victims in the study, with the primary outcome measure being arrest rates.

Funding beyond 2018 for longer-term follow-up will be considered if promising impacts emerge by late 2018.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
RCT of Fostering Healthy Futures for Teens – an intensive mentoring program for youth with histories of maltreatment

Grant Recipient: Colorado Seminary, which owns and operates the University of Denver

Principal Investigators: Heather Taussig, Ph.D., University of Denver
                               Kimberly Bender, Ph.D., University of Denver

Term: May 2017 - May 2021

Funding: $548,455

Summary: This project is an RCT of Fostering Healthy Futures for Teens (FHF-T), a nine-month intensive mentoring program for 8th and 9th graders with open child welfare cases and histories of maltreatment. FHF-T is an adaptation of Fostering Healthy Futures, a program for preadolescent (ages 9-11) maltreated children in foster care that has been found in a small but well-conducted RCT to produce sizable effects on key child outcomes. These effects included, for example, a statistically-significant reduction from 24% (control group) to 8% (treatment group) in the percent of children placed in a secure residential treatment center—an adverse outcome that typically occurs when children’s behavioral, substance use, or psychiatric problems become too severe for them to be in foster care or other non-secure placements.

The new RCT will evaluate FHF-T in a sample of 234 maltreated 8th and 9th grade youth in the Denver metro area with open child welfare cases. Since this target population is at elevated risk of delinquency, the main outcome of interest will be the rate of youth delinquent behavior measured over a 15-month follow-up period. A pilot RCT of FHF-T with 28 8th and 9th graders found that the program was successfully implemented in its target population and achieved preliminary impacts on the targeted short term / process outcomes (e.g., level of caregiver support and connections to school). The Kempe Foundation, Kempe Center, and the University of Denver will ensure that the program’s delivery costs are covered through grants and donations as part of this RCT.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
Randomized controlled trial of providing Pell Grant eligibility to prison inmates to pursue postsecondary education

Grant Recipient: Drexel University

Principal Investigator: Jordan Hyatt, Ph.D., Drexel University
Sarah Tahamont, M.P.P., Ph.D., University of Maryland

Term: June 2018 – August 2023

Funding: $927,774

Summary: This is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to evaluate the impact of offering federal “Pell” grants to incarcerated adults to pursue postsecondary education. The U.S. Department of Education’s Second Chance Pell Pilot Program is approximately a $30 million per year program that provides grant funds to colleges and universities, which the institutions use to cover the cost of delivering college courses to eligible inmates.

This program has not yet been rigorously evaluated but is widely implemented with significant taxpayer investment, underscoring the need for this RCT. The program is backed by evidence that it may reduce recidivism, based on a 2013 RAND Corporation meta-analysis of studies of correctional education for incarcerated adults.

This study will recruit inmates who are interested in pursuing postsecondary education from all 26 state correctional institutions (SCIs) in Pennsylvania, and collect documentation from these inmates and the SCIs to determine the inmates’ program eligibility. The study will randomly assign approximately 350 eligible inmates to receive the offer of a Pell grant and transfer to an SCI that provides access to qualifying educational programming, or to a usual-services control group. Randomization will be conducted on a rolling basis as eligible inmates are identified and other requirements for program participation are fulfilled (e.g., inmates’ completion of the federal FAFSA form for financial aid). The primary outcomes will be recidivism and employment as measured with official arrest and employment records two to six years after random assignment.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
Randomized Controlled Trial to evaluate Rapid Responders for Runaway Youth

Grant Recipient: Colorado Seminary, which owns and operates the University of Denver

Principal Investigators: Elysia Clemens, Ph.D., University of Denver
Kristin Klopfenstein, Ph.D., University of Denver

Term: November 2018 – June 2023

Funding: $387,093

Summary: This is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of an intervention that deploys rapid responders – i.e., case managers with experience navigating multiple public systems – to quickly provide runaway youth and their caregivers with mental health and family preservation services. The goal of the intervention is to stabilize the youth’s family situation and thus prevent him or her from engaging in criminal behavior or experiencing out-of-home placements (e.g., in foster care). Runaway youth are at particularly high risk of such outcomes, with approximately half of Denver runaway youth with no or low system involvement at the time of the run having criminal charges or being placed in out-of-home care within 18 months.

Although rapid responders can refer youth to a range of services, they will prioritize referring eligible youth to evidence-based programs like Multi-systemic Therapy, Functional Family Therapy, and Strengthening Families, which have been found in well-conducted RCTs to produce promising reductions in delinquency and/or out-of-home placements for at-risk youth. An explicit goal of the intervention is to raise the percentage of runaway youth receiving such evidence-based services from approximately 10% (under current practice) to at least 50%.

The sample will consist of approximately 1,800 runaway youth enrolled in the study over a 30-month period. The study will measure impacts on criminal charges and out-of-home placements over at least a one-year follow-up period for the full sample – and a two-year follow-up period for more than half of the sample – using administrative data from the Denver Police Department and the Colorado Department of Human Services. If findings at the end of this grant look promising, the Foundation intends to invite a proposal for a longer-term follow-up.

This evaluation is part of a Pay for Success project facilitated by the Colorado Governor’s office in their effort to provide evidence-based program services to youth involved in – or at high risk of involvement in – the state’s foster care and/or juvenile justice systems.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
**Randomized controlled trial of Therapeutic Communities and Interactive Journaling in Florida state prisons**

**Grant Recipient:** Florida State University Research Foundation

**Principal Investigators:** Stephen Tripodi, Ph.D., Florida State University  
Carrie Pettus-Davis, Ph.D., Washington University in St. Louis

**Term:** April 2018 – July 2026

**Funding:** $480,254

**Summary:** This is a three-arm randomized controlled trial (RCT) evaluating the effectiveness of two different interventions for men and women soon to be released from prison with substance use disorders: Therapeutic Communities and Interactive Journaling. The study will compare both of these programs to a treatment-as-usual control group, which will receive counseling sessions over a 4-month period.

The first program, Therapeutic Communities, consists of specialized units within a prison to house inmates with substance use disorder. Therapeutic Communities encourage substance-free living through a system of established routines, hierarchies of earned privileges, and strict rules and associated sanctions and incentives for behavior. Prisoners are provided with services that include but are not limited to individual and group counseling, and training in pro-social behaviors. Prior RCTs and quasi-experimental studies of TCs have produced positive impacts on incarceration rates, re-arrest, criminal activity, and illegal drug use.

The second program, Interactive Journaling, is a 24-week directed journaling curriculum – comprised of weekly group sessions, regular journal assignments, and drug treatment resources – which aims to reduce substance use and related behavioral problems. An RCT testing Interactive Journaling with a sample from a county jail found that it produced reductions in the likelihood of being re-booked for a new criminal offense during the year after receiving services.

The new study will randomly assign approximately 2,490 prisoners with substance abuse disorders who are within 15-48 months of their scheduled release in three Florida prisons to receive (i) Therapeutic Communities, (ii) Interactive Journaling, or (iii) treatment as usual services. This study will measure the interventions’ respective impacts on 3-year recidivism rates – specifically, the likelihood of a new conviction or technical violation that results in incarceration to a state prison or county jail – using administrative data from the Florida Department of Corrections.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
Randomized controlled trial to evaluate Youth Advocate Programs (YAP): Providing intensive mentoring and “wraparound” supports for disengaged Chicago youth

Grant Recipient: University of Chicago Urban Labs

Term: November 2019 – December 2022

Principal Investigators: Max Kapustin, Ph.D., University of Chicago
Nour Abdul-Razzak, Ph.D., University of Chicago

Funding: $281,776 from LJAF (plus $388,315 in committed funding from other sources)

Summary: This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Youth Advocate Programs’ (YAP) community-based intensive mentorship and “wraparound” support program. YAP’s year-long programming helps at-risk youth in Chicago re-engage in school and avoid contact with the criminal justice system. The program pairs youth with a dedicated mentor (“advocate”) who is on call 24/7 to provide mentoring and “wraparound” support services. These services are aimed at helping youth meet basic needs (transportation, clothes, etc.), helping them reconnect with school and succeed in the classroom, and providing motivation and direction toward completing larger goals such as employment or college. Advocates often come from the same neighborhoods as the youth and have confronted many of the same challenges. Advocates develop strong trusting relationships with youth outside of school, helping them address their diverse needs and supporting youth in achieving their long-term goals.

While the YAP program has not yet been evaluated as part of an RCT, components of the program model are backed by promising evidence from prior RCTs. These include: (i) an RCT of Big Brothers Big Sisters (a community-based mentoring program for disadvantaged youth) which found promising reductions in violent behavior and substance use; (ii) an RCT of Becoming a Man (a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy intervention for high-risk young men) which found promising reductions in arrests and arrests for violent crimes; and (iii) an RCT of the Quantum Opportunities Program (an after-school program that offered mentoring services and educational services to low-income youth) which found promising increases in high school graduation.

Under this project, researchers will recruit a sample of approximately 1,300 youth from two Chicago neighborhoods who are at risk for violence involvement or academic disengagement (e.g., youth who are gang-affiliated, on juvenile probation, chronically truant, and/or a victim of, or witness to, traumatic violence). Half of the students will be randomly assigned to be offered YAP services while the other half will not receive an offer of YAP services. The researchers will use administrative data from the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and the Chicago Police Department (CPD) to measure the effects of YAP on (i) whether youth remain enrolled in, or complete, high school; and (ii) the number of youth arrests for violent offenses. Both outcomes will be assessed over the two years following random assignment.

The study’s pre-specified pre-analysis plan is linked here.
• Expansion and replication of the Enhanced Assess, Acknowledge, Act (EAAA) sexual assault resistance program at five U.S. universities

Grant Recipient: University of Arizona

Principal Investigators: Elise Lopez, DrPH, University of Arizona
Mary Koss, Ph.D., University of Arizona
Mike Baiocchi, Ph.D., Stanford University
Kevin Swartout, Ph.D., Georgia State University

Term: November 2019 – April 2022

Funding: $2,000,000

Summary: The Enhanced Assess, Acknowledge, Act (EAAA) program is a sexual assault resistance program for first-year female university students that has been rigorously evaluated and shown to produce large reductions in sexual assault on college campuses. A well-conducted, multi-site RCT at three Canadian universities, published in the New England Journal of Medicine in 2015, found that EAAA reduced the incidence of completed rape by half: during their first year of college, 10% of women in the control group were raped vs. 5% of women in the EAAA group. The program also reduced the incidence of attempted, but not completed, rape (experienced by 9% of the control group vs. 3% of the treatment group). Both differences were statistically significant.

Under this project, five U.S. universities will expand delivery of EAAA to 1,000 female students over four years – 200 students each at The University of Arizona, Stanford University, Georgia State University, University of Massachusetts-Boston, and Cornell University.

Additionally, all five universities will participate in a multi-site RCT to determine whether the impacts found in the Canadian study can be reproduced in the U.S. context. Researchers will enroll a sample of 2,000 female university students and randomly assign half to receive the EAAA intervention and half to participate in their university's standard sexual assault prevention programming. The study’s primary outcome will be incidence of completed rape in the 12 months after random assignment.

The study’s pre-specified pre-analysis plan is linked here.
EARLY CHILDHOOD

- A randomized controlled trial of Durham Connects, a postnatal nurse home visiting program in Durham County, North Carolina

**Grant recipient:** Duke University

**Principal Investigator:** W. Benjamin Goodman, Ph. D., Duke Center for Child and Family Policy
Kenneth Dodge, Ph. D., Duke Center for Child and Family Policy

**Term:** July 2014 – September 2016

**Funding:** $95,809 from the Annie E. Casey Foundation ($87,000 from other funding sources)

**Summary:** This project was a large RCT of Durham Connects, a postnatal nurse home visiting program designed to improve child and mother health and well-being. This study, which is now completed, sought to replicate the positive findings from a prior RCT of Durham Connects. The study used hospital administrative records to measure program impacts on families’ emergency department use and related healthcare costs through child age 24-months, for a sample of 937 families in Durham County, North Carolina.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
Extending the analysis of the Nurse Family Partnership’s impacts on maternal and child mortality: long-term follow-up of three randomized controlled trials

Grant recipient: The Regents of the University of Colorado

Principal Investigator: David Olds, University of Colorado-Denver

Term: March 2016 – June 2017

Funding: $76,238

Summary: This 12-month project is a study of the long-term impacts of the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) on mortality among the mothers and children served by the program. As background, NFP is an evidence-based nurse home visitation program for first-time (mostly low-income and unmarried) mothers, which has been evaluated in three well-conducted RCTs in the U.S. (in Elmira NY, Memphis TN, and Denver CO). These studies have found a pattern of sizable, sustained effects on important child and maternal outcomes including reductions in child abuse and neglect and mothers’ number of subsequent births in their late teens and early twenties. This new project will expand on Dr. Olds and colleagues’ analysis of NFP’s impacts on mortality for mothers and children in the Memphis sample 21 years after random assignment. That analysis found promising, though not yet statistically significant, reductions in all-cause mortality for mothers (2.2% of NFP group mothers had died vs. 3.7% of control group mothers) and their children (0.9% of NFP group children had died vs. 2.7% of control group children).

Dr. Olds will use National Death Index data (i) to extend the follow-up period of the Memphis mortality impact analysis by an additional four years (i.e., to 25 years post-random assignment), and (ii) to conduct similar mortality impact analyses for the Elmira sample (37 years after random assignment) and the Denver sample (21 years after random assignment).

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
Evaluation of Child First, a home visiting program for low-income families with at-risk young children

Grant Recipient: MDRC

Principal Investigators: Virginia Knox, Ph.D., MDRC
Meghan McCormick, Ph.D., MDRC

Term: July 2018 – June 2025

Funding: $2,499,968

Summary: This is a multi-site randomized controlled trial (RCT) to evaluate the impact of Child First, a home visiting program for low-income families with young children at high risk of emotional, behavioral, or developmental problems and/or child maltreatment.

A prior well-conducted RCT of Child First with a sample of 157 families found a 33% reduction in families’ involvement with child protective services (CPS) for possible child maltreatment at the 3-year follow-up; and 40-70% reductions in mothers’ psychological distress and child conduct and language development problems at the 1-year follow-up (our review and summary of the study is posted on the Social Programs That Work website). The key limitation in this evidence is that the initial RCT, although well-conducted, was carried out in a single site (Bridgeport, Connecticut) with a modest-sized sample. This study seeks to determine whether the sizeable impacts found in the initial RCT can be reproduced with a larger sample across multiple sites in two different states.

MDRC will recruit approximately 12 Child First sites in Connecticut and North Carolina and then randomly assign 600 eligible families to receive the Child First program or be assigned to a usual-care control group. The study’s primary outcomes will be: (i) families’ CPS involvement at the 1- and 3-year follow-ups measured with state administrative records; and (ii) parental psychological functioning measured with a parent survey at the 1-year follow-up.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
• Comparing full-day and half-day preschool: Long-term follow-up of an RCT

Grant Recipient: University of Colorado-Boulder

Principal Investigator: Allison Atteberry, Ph.D., University of Colorado-Boulder

Term: October 2018 – January 2024

Funding: $489,628

Summary: This study extends the follow-up of a randomized controlled trial (RCT), comparing full-day preschool to half-day preschool, and will provide policymakers and parents the most rigorous evidence to-date on the relative effectiveness of full-day versus half-day preschool in preparing children for elementary school.

The study is taking place in Westminster Public Schools (WPS), a school district in suburban Denver. Since full-day preschool slots are limited in WPS, families interested in full-day preschool are randomly assigned through a lottery each fall to either be offered (i) a full-day preschool slot (the treatment group for this study) or (ii) a half-day preschool slot (the control group for this study). Students in full-day preschool spend 30 hours per week in their classrooms, whereas students in half-day preschool receive 12 hours of classroom time per week.

The study’s sample includes families who participated in the lotteries for the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years. Across all three lotteries, the researchers anticipate a total sample of approximately 800 predominantly low-income, minority students.

For the students who participated in the 2016-2017 lottery, the study has already found that full-day preschool produced promising impacts on measures of early literacy in the fall of kindergarten (the average treatment group student scored higher than 64% of control group students, an effect size of 0.34 standard deviations). The study will measure sample students’ reading and math achievement (i) in kindergarten, using the district’s standardized assessment and (ii) in third grade, using Colorado’s state test.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
Large-Scale Replication RCT of Nurse Family Partnership in South Carolina

Grant Recipient: Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

Principal Investigator: Margaret McConnell, Ph.D., Harvard University and J-PAL North America at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Term: February 2020 – May 2023

Funding: $482,749

Summary: This project will fund longer-term follow-up of a large-scale randomized controlled trial evaluating the impact of the Nurse-Family Partnership’s expansion in South Carolina. The scientific trial was made possible by a “Pay for Success” program embedded within a 1915(b) Waiver from Medicaid secured by the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. NFP is an evidence-based nurse home visitation program for first-time mothers. NFP has been evaluated in three well-conducted RCTs in the United States (in Elmira NY, Memphis TN, and Denver CO). These studies have found a pattern of sizable, sustained effects on important child and maternal outcomes, including reductions in child abuse and neglect and in mothers’ number of subsequent births in their late teens and early twenties.

While these RCTs provide credible evidence of important effects, they were all initiated more than two decades ago when NFP was operating on a relatively modest scale. This new trial will evaluate whether NFP is still effective in a modern policy context and when implemented on a large scale with substantial public funding.

South Carolina is partnering with philanthropic organizations to offer NFP to first-time, Medicaid-eligible mothers through a Medicaid waiver, and to incorporate an RCT evaluation into the state’s NFP expansion. The study’s target sample is 6,000 expectant mothers.

This grant will fund follow-up through their children’s second birthday. The study’s primary outcomes at this follow-up will be (i) a composite measure of adverse birth outcomes or perinatal mortality, (ii) rate of repeat births within 21 months, and (iii) a composite measure indicating health care utilization or mortality associated with major injury or concern for abuse or neglect occurring during the child’s first 24 months of life. The study will measure these and several other (secondary) outcomes using administrative records from multiple state databases.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan will be made public shortly.
**EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING**

- **Effects of Federal antidiscrimination and affirmative action enforcement audits on female and minority workforce composition**

  **Grant Recipient:** University of Massachusetts Amherst

  **Principal Investigators:** Fidan Ana Kurtulus, Ph.D., University of Massachusetts Amherst
  Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, Ph.D., University of Massachusetts Amherst

  **Term:** January 2019 – March 2021

  **Funding:** $149,904

  **Summary:** This project will evaluate the effect of antidiscrimination and affirmative action enforcement audits conducted by the Department of Labor’s Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) on federal contractor workplace diversity (i.e., the share of female and minority employees).

  The study will capitalize on OFCCP’s existing random assignment process for selecting eligible firms for audit. Using a sample of approximately 111,000 federal contractor establishments eligible for a randomized audit in 2012, the study will test whether being chosen for audit affects establishments’ subsequent share of female and minority employees at the workplace level and in managerial/executive occupations. These effects will be measured over the four-year period following the audit year using administrative data from OFCCP and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

  The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
A randomized controlled trial of Year Up’s Professional Training Corps – a workforce training program for economically disadvantaged urban young adults

Grant Recipient: Abt Associates

Principal Investigators: David Fein, Ph.D., Abt Associates
              Rebecca Maynard, Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania

Term: October 2019 – November 2022

Funding: $499,162

Summary: This grant will fund the extended follow-up of two randomized controlled trials (RCTs) to evaluate the impact of Year Up’s Professional Training Corps (PTC), as well as alternate strategies for PTC implementation. The grant will also provide modest initial support for a planning phase of an RCT to evaluate the PTC program at a national scale.

The PTC program is a lower-cost version of Year Up’s core program. The core program a national workforce training program for economically disadvantaged urban young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 that focuses on specific economic sectors with jobs in high demand – namely, information technology and financial services. A well-conducted RCT of Year Up’s core program, conducted by Abt Associates at eight urban sites across the United States, found that it produced a 40% ($7,011) increase in participants’ annual earnings in the third year after random assignment, compared to the control group.

However, Year Up’s core program is expensive – approximately $34,500 per participant in 2018 – which motivated the development and testing of PTC as a lower-cost version that, hopefully, can produce comparable, impressive impacts. PTC achieves its lower cost – approximately $20,000 per participant when delivered at scale – by partnering with community colleges, thereby leveraging the colleges’ facilities and resources. For both the core program and PTC, employers bear more than 50% of the program’s cost.

The two RCTs that comprise this project are ongoing, but Arnold Ventures funding will allow longer-term follow-up of both studies. Specifically, the first RCT will measure PTC’s impact on college enrollment, college persistence, employment rates, and average earnings over a three-year follow-up period, with a sample of 552 students. The second RCT, testing alternate strategies for PTC implementation, will measure the impact of the different strategies on college persistence and earnings over a four-year period, with a sample of 319 students. Outcomes will be measured using various administrative databases. The project will also include a streamlined implementation study to gauge the program’s readiness for delivery on a larger scale.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
• RCT of a cognitive behavioral therapy-based curriculum for disadvantaged youth participating in the federal Job Corps program

Grant Recipient: President and Fellows of Harvard College

Principal Investigators: Sara Heller, Ph.D., University of Michigan
David Deming, Ph.D., Harvard University
Will Dobbie, Ph.D., Princeton University

Term: May 2017 – September 2022

Funding: up to $582,956.00

Summary: Under this project, the study team will build on its partnership with the National Job Corps Association (NJCA) to implement and rigorously evaluate a low-cost, replicable cognitive-behavior therapy (CBT) curriculum for youth participating in Job Corps. As background, Job Corps is the nation’s largest “second chance” program for disadvantaged youth who are neither employed nor in school. Program appropriations in 2016 were approximately $1.7 billion for operations at 126 sites, with capacity to serve 60,000 youth annually. Participating youth usually reside full-time in Job Corps centers, where they receive comprehensive services beyond just academic and career instruction, including counseling, health services, and leadership training.

In prior RCTs with youth who, like Job Corps enrollees, are at risk for poor workforce outcomes and criminal justice involvement, CBT-based interventions have been found very promising. For example, a large, well-conducted RCT of Becoming a Man – a cognitive behavioral curriculum for at-risk male high school students in Chicago – found that the program reduced youth arrests by 22% and arrests for violent crimes by 35%, versus the control group, more than a year after random assignment. Other RCTs of CBT-based interventions for unemployed adults have found promising effects on employment outcomes, although these studies are generally small and of short duration.

In the pilot phase of this project, the study team will select 4-6 Job Corps centers for the full RCT, adapt and refine established CBT curricula for use in Job Corps, pilot the random assignment and training of Job Corps staff to deliver the curriculum at 1-2 centers, and obtain access to administrative data needed to measure outcomes in the RCT. In the second phase of the project, to go forward conditioned on success in the first phase (e.g., successful site recruitment, program implementation, and data access), the study team will carry out an RCT of the curriculum at 4-6 Job Corps centers with a sample of approximately 5,100 youth. The study will measure employment, earnings, and crime outcomes over a follow-up period of three to five years, using administrative data.

The study’s pre-specified pre-analysis plan will be posted shortly.
- **RCT of English for Advancement, a workforce advancement intervention for adult English language learners**

**Grant Recipient:** Economic Mobility Corporation

**Term:** June 2017 – November 2022

**Principal Investigators:** Anne Roder, Ph.D., Economic Mobility Corporation  
Mark Elliott, Economic Mobility Corporation

**Funding:** $150,000

**Summary:** This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of English for Advancement (EfA), an employment-focused program for adult English language learners that includes language instruction, career coaching, and job training and placement services. The program is delivered by Jewish Vocational Service (JVS-Boston), an established adult-education and workforce development nonprofit service provider. The training and placement services are provided through a network of partner organizations located throughout the Greater Boston area.

There have not been any prior rigorous studies of workforce interventions serving this population. However, a prior pre-post pilot study of the EfA program found unusually large effects on employment and earnings. These gains weren’t measured with respect to a control or comparison group, and so could at least partly reflect improvements that participants would have experienced in the natural course of events (i.e., without receiving program services). Nonetheless, the magnitude of the pre-post gains is sizable for a workforce development program, suggesting that the intervention may indeed be producing true impacts.

This study is part of a Pay For Success initiative, with Social Finance, Inc., serving as the intermediary. The study will randomly assign approximately 2,200 participants to EfA or usual community services, and will measure impacts on employment and earnings two years after random assignment for all study participants using state-level administrative data. Longer-term follow-up is not possible because participant consent was only obtained for a two-year period, so this RCT’s primary contribution will be to determine whether there are sizable two-year impacts that warrant further study in a replication trial with longer-term follow-up.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
• Randomized controlled trial of Nevada’s Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) Program for new unemployment insurance claimants

Grant Recipient: IMPAQ International

Principal Investigators: Marios Michaelides, Ph. D., IMPAQ
Peter Mueser, Ph. D., IMPAQ

Term: April 2018 – May 2021

Funding: $226,792

Summary: This is a replication randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Nevada’s Reemployment Eligibility Assistance (REA) program, which is a mandatory program for new Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants that provides them with an in-person review of their UI eligibility, and personalized reemployment services (e.g., job search assistance). REA was launched by the U.S. Department of Labor in 2005 and has since expanded to 33 states, with the Trump administration proposing to expand it nationwide. Nevada’s program is uniquely streamlined, in that participants who pass the eligibility review are then offered job-counseling services during the same meeting. This contrasts with the usual practice in other state REA programs of referring claimants to reemployment services at a separate office or organization. Nevada REA is an inexpensive program, costing approximately $230 per participant in 2018 dollars.

The program is backed by highly-promising prior evidence of effects on workforce outcomes. A high-quality RCT of Nevada’s REA program with a sample of 32,751 new UI claimants who filed a UI claim in late 2009 found that the program produced a $2,789 (18%) increase in earnings per claimant, a four percentage point increase in their employment rate, and net savings to the UI system of $715 per claimant, 18-26 months after random assignment.

This new study’s sample will comprise approximately 45,000 new UI recipients who filed a claim in 2015 and 2016. As was the case with the original RCT, the new study will capitalize on the fact that REA-eligible UI claimants were randomly assigned to either a group that received the intervention or a control group that did not. This study will measure the program’s impacts on participants’ earnings, benefits received, and employment rates using administrative UI data from the Nevada Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation. The researchers will report on outcomes in early 2018, early 2019, and early 2020. The final data collection will cover a follow-up period of approximately 3-5 years after random assignment (depending on when individual claimants were randomly assigned).

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
• Expansion and replication of the Per Scholas Workforce Training Program, a workforce training program in information technology for low-income adults

Grant recipient: Per Scholas, Inc.

Term: December 2018 – December 2024

Funding: $4,800,000 from LJAF plus $2,210,013 in committed funding from other sources

Summary: Under this project, Per Scholas — an employment and training program for low-income adults focused on the information technology sector — will expand program delivery by at least 700 new trainees in two U.S. cities selected from among four locations (Atlanta, Columbus, Dallas and Washington, DC). Per Scholas trainees receive 15 weeks of occupational skills training, career readiness services, and post-graduation job placement services. Per Scholas is backed by particularly strong evidence of large earnings impacts relative to program costs. In two prior, well-conducted randomized controlled trials (RCTs) in Per Scholas’ home location in the Bronx, the program was found to produce earnings gains of about 30% ($4,000-$5,000 annually) two to three years after random assignment.

As a condition of grant award, Per Scholas will participate in an RCT at the expansion sites to determine whether the large impacts found in the two prior RCTs can be reproduced under expanded implementation conditions in the new geographic settings.
• Randomized controlled trial evaluation of the Per Scholas workforce training program in two expansion sites

Grant Recipient: Economic Mobility Corporation

Principal Investigators: Anne Roder, Ph.D., Economic Mobility Corporation  
Mark Elliott, Economic Mobility Corporation

Term: October 2019 – April 2027

Funding: $1,427,398

Summary: This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to evaluate the Per Scholas workforce training program in information technology for low-income adults as delivered at scale in two expansion sites in Washington D.C. and Columbus, Ohio (Arnold Ventures is supporting the expansion under a separate project). In two well-conducted, independent RCTs, Per Scholas was previously found to produce earnings gains of $4,000-$5,000 annually (~30%), two to three years after random assignment. This RCT will determine whether the large impacts found in the two prior studies at Per Scholas’ original location in the Bronx can be reproduced under expanded implementation conditions in the new geographic settings.

Under this project, Economic Mobility Corporation, working in partnership with the Per Scholas team, will recruit and enroll 1,400 individuals over a 26-month period at the two expansion sites in D.C. and Columbus. At each site, 700 individuals will be randomly assigned to either a treatment group offered Per Scholas training or a control group. The study’s primary outcome will be participant earnings during the third year after random assignment, measured with state unemployment insurance records collected from Maryland, Virginia, Washington D.C., and Ohio. In addition, the study team will measure secondary outcomes regarding employment, postsecondary education, and other indicators of financial well-being. The study team will also estimate the cost of training and education in the treatment versus control group, and compare it to the earnings impacts as part of a streamlined cost-benefit analysis.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
Randomized controlled trial (planning phase) to evaluate the Per Scholas workforce training program expansion

Grant Recipient: Economic Mobility Corporation

Principal Investigators: Anne Roder, Ph.D., Economic Mobility Corporation
Mark Elliott, Economic Mobility Corporation

Term: November 2018 – December 2019

Funding: $93,637

Summary: This project is the planning phase of a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to evaluate the Per Scholas workforce training program in information technology for low-income adults as delivered at scale in “expansion” sites. In two prior, well-conducted RCTs in Per Scholas’ home location in the Bronx, the program was found to produce earnings gains of about 30% ($4,000-$5,000 annually) two to three years after random assignment. In the planning phase of this new study, Mobility will work with Per Scholas to select two expansion sites (from among four candidate sites) to take part in the RCT and to finalize the evaluation design. Site selection will be determined based on factors such as fidelity of program implementation at the site, the site’s ability to recruit a sufficiently large sample, and site capacity to participate in the RCT. During the planning phase, Mobility will also submit a proposal to LJAF for the full RCT, which will enroll a sample of 1,400 (700 at each site) and measure employment and earnings effects three years after random assignment.
• Long-term follow-up of the randomized trial of Project QUEST's workforce training program for low-income individuals in healthcare-related fields

Grant Recipient: Economic Mobility Corporation

Principal Investigators: Anne Roder, Ph.D., Economic Mobility Corporation
Mark Elliott, Economic Mobility Corporation

Term: December 2017 – March 2020

Funding: $261,848

Summary: This is a long-term follow-up of a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Project QUEST – a workforce development program for low-income individuals – which found large impacts on participant earnings and employment. QUEST supports low-income students’ completion of college credentials in occupational areas that pay good wages and are in high demand in San Antonio, Texas. Major components of the program are: required full-time enrollment in an occupational program that QUEST supports, required weekly group or individual counseling sessions, financial assistance for tuition and other school-related expenses, and a remedial education course for those requiring it. The program costs approximately $10,500 per participant.

Between 2006 and 2008, the RCT randomly assigned 410 individuals who were interested in nursing, medical records coding, or another health-related program that QUEST supports, but who were not currently attending college, to QUEST or to a control group. The study was very well conducted and, in 2017, the Economic Mobility Corporation published six-year follow-up findings based on a survey with high completion rates. The impact in the sixth year after random assignment was $5,080 in annual earnings per person, among the largest ever observed in a workforce-focused RCT.

Under this project, the researchers will partner with the Ray Marshall Center at the University of Texas to extend follow-up to nine years using Texas unemployment insurance earnings data. The researchers will also use other administrative data to estimate long-term effects on educational attainment and public assistance receipt. Finally, they will conduct a simple and straightforward cost-benefit analysis.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
A randomized controlled trial of Transforming Impossible into Possible, a program designed to address cognitive and social barriers to employment for disadvantaged, unemployed adults

Grant recipient: University of Chicago

Principal Investigator: Marianne Bertrand, Ph. D., University of Chicago

Term: September 2016 – November 2023

Funding: $155,071

Summary: The project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Transforming Impossible into Possible (TIP), a job-readiness training program designed to address psycho-emotional and social barriers to employment for low-income, persistently unemployed adults. The 3-week, 15-session TIP program is delivered by job-readiness trained staff in a group setting at local employment agencies through a manualized curriculum designed to empower job-seekers and participants with psychological capital for labor market success, while also providing traditional services such as job-search and resume assistance. Prior evidence for this intervention consists of positive findings from similar interventions tested in other settings. For example, a small but well-conducted RCT of a similar intervention in the UK, found substantially higher rates of full-time employment over a 4-month follow-up period.

The study will take place in three employment agencies in Chicago, each serving economically disadvantaged adults who have been persistently unemployed. The study will randomly assign 930 adults to either receive TIP services, or to a control group that receives usual services (i.e., job-readiness training and job search assistance). The study will use data from the Illinois Department of Economic Security and the Illinois Department of Human Services to measure earnings and employment over a three-year period.
K-12 EDUCATION

- **A randomized controlled trial of Annual Summer Book Fairs for high-poverty elementary schools**

  **Grant recipient:** The University of Tennessee

  **Principal Investigator:** Anne McGill-Franzen, Ph. D., the Reading Center, University of Tennessee-Knoxville

  **Term:** March 2016 – December 2019

  **Funding:** $150,000 from LJAF (the Annie E. Casey Foundation is providing $100,000 in co-funding)

  **Summary:** As background, schools with a high proportion of students from poor families struggle to turn around low academic performance, as evidenced by the mixed success of reform efforts, summer school, and parent programs. The gap is already large upon entry into kindergarten, exacerbated over time by the few resources for academic learning available to poor families over the summer, and ultimately reflected in a much lower high school graduation rate.

  This project develops policy relevant evidence for mitigating the achievement gap by expanding Annual Summer Book Fairs, a well-researched and low-cost summer reading intervention to mitigate summer reading loss that has met the “near top tier” evidence standard according to the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy. A previously conducted randomized controlled trial (Allington, et al., 2010) established that providing 10-12 free, self-selected books to first and second grade cohorts (N=1,713) from 17 high-poverty urban, primarily African-American, elementary schools over three summers not only mitigated summer reading loss but increased students’ annual reading achievement on the Florida statewide test at the 3rd and 4th grade level by 0.14 standard deviations overall and close to 0.21 standard deviations for the poorest students. Annual Book Fairs is an inexpensive intervention – the cost per child over three years is only $225.

  This replication study will expand the intervention to a different high-poverty student population in rural East Tennessee. Approximately 1,640 first graders who are eligible for free/reduced lunch will be randomly assigned to either the treatment (summer books) or the control (no books) conditions. The study will access the state reading assessment data (TNReady) and, if available, partner districts' local assessments to measure student outcomes over a three-year period.

  The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
• A randomized controlled trial of a program, implemented city-wide in Baltimore, that provides eyeglasses to disadvantaged students to improve learning outcomes

Grant recipient: Johns Hopkins University

Principal Investigators: Robert E. Slavin, Ph. D., School of Education, Johns Hopkins University
Megan Collins, MD, Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine

Term: July 2016 - September 2019

Funding: $449,889

Summary: Over the course of three years, the project will evaluate a system-wide approach to ensuring that all disadvantaged children enrolled in Baltimore City Public Schools in grades 3 to 8 are screened for vision problems, and given free eyeglasses if needed. It will provide principals and teachers with professional development and eyeglass management methods to increase the chances that students will use and protect their glasses and that glasses will be replaced if lost or broken. The Baltimore City Health Department will do initial screening, and a Los Angeles-based non-profit called Vision to Learn, which has mobile eye clinics outfitted to provide on-site services, will do full vision assessments and provide free eyeglasses. Staff from the Johns Hopkins School of Education and the Wilmer Eye Institute will work with the schools to train school staff and to maximize use of the glasses.

The initial vision assessments and free eyeglasses will be funded by Vision to Learn, which will ultimately seek reimbursement from the state of Maryland. Professional development for school staff will be provided by Johns Hopkins University and Medical School staff, paid for by a grant through the President of Johns Hopkins University and another from Baltimore’s Abell Foundation.

A total of 127 elementary and middle schools have been randomly assigned to receive the vision screening, evaluation, and intervention in 2016-2017, 2017-2018, or 2018-2019. The primary outcomes will be English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics test scores of students in grades 3-8 identified through screening as having refractive error requiring corrective lenses (approximately 6,500 students). The outcomes will be measured over both a one and two-year follow-up period, using mandated state achievement tests in Maryland. Prior RCT evidence suggests the intervention could produce meaningful effects on student achievement.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
Randomized controlled trial of a vision care intervention in disadvantaged Chicago elementary schools, designed to improve eyeglass usage and learning outcomes

Grant Recipient: Johns Hopkins University

Term: July 2017 – March 2020

Principal Investigators: Robert Slavin, Ph. D., Johns Hopkins University
Megan Collins, M.D., Johns Hopkins University

Funding: $397,721.43

Summary: This project will rigorously evaluate a school wide vision care intervention designed to increase eyeglass receipt, retention, and use among children in grades K-5 in disadvantaged Chicago Public Schools, with the goal of improving their vision and (as a result) their school achievement. Chicago Public Schools has an established system of school-based vision screenings, comprehensive eye assessments, and eyeglass provision to students who need them. However, the school system currently obtains consent from only 17% of parents for the comprehensive eye assessments, which means that many children in need of glasses do not obtain them.

The vision care intervention will provide schools with supports and incentives to ensure that parental consent is obtained and that all children who need glasses receive them, wear them, care for them, and replace them if they are lost or broken. The intervention was designed by researchers at the Johns Hopkins School of Education and the Wilmer Eye Institute, based on their experience in the ongoing LJAF-funded RCT of eyeglass provision to disadvantaged students in Baltimore. Based on this experience, the researchers expect the intervention to increase parental consent from 17% in Chicago to at least 70%, and ensure that about 80% of students who are prescribed eyeglasses actually wear them in class.

The intervention will be funded through a $1.2 million grant from the Robert M. and Diane V.S. Levy Family Foundation. The costs of comprehensive eye assessments and glasses will be covered through Medicaid. LJAF will fund the RCT, in which 80 elementary schools will be randomly assigned to a treatment group that receives the intervention in the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years, or to a control group that receives services-as-usual (without the intervention). The primary outcomes will be math and reading test scores of students in grades K-5 identified through screening as at risk for refractive error (approximately 10,000 students). The outcomes will be measured over both a one and two-year follow-up period, using mandated state achievement tests in Illinois.

Prior RCT and quasi-experimental evidence suggests the intervention could produce meaningful effects on student achievement. This Chicago project is a variation on the intervention being tested in Baltimore, and will provide an important second test, in another major urban public school setting, of whether vision correction can lead to improved educational outcomes.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
A randomized controlled trial of Bernie’s Book Bank, a free book-distribution intervention for high-poverty students, to be conducted in a large sample of Chicago-area elementary schools

Grant Recipient: Measured Decisions, Inc.

Term: June 2017 – February 2021

Principal Investigator: Geoffrey Borman, Ph.D., Measured Decisions, Inc.

Funding: $235,513

Summary: This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Bernie’s Book Bank, which provides free high-quality books to low-income children on a large scale and at low cost throughout the Chicago area (serving approximately 250,000 students annually at approximately 50 cents per book). Its elementary school intervention distributes 12 free books annually to all students in high-poverty schools; students are encouraged to trade books with their classmates to ensure that everyone brings home books they will enjoy.

Prior evidence suggests this intervention could produce sizable impacts on academic achievement. It shares some key features with Annual Summer Book Fairs, an intervention found in a large, well-conducted RCT in Florida to increase elementary school students’ reading achievement on the state test by about 35-40% of a grade level, three years after random assignment.

This RCT will randomly assign approximately 60 elementary schools to treatment or control groups, and track outcomes for approximately 4,700 1st-5th grade students over a period of three years. The study will assess effects on academic achievement as measured by state tests, as well as effects on related outcomes, such as literacy behaviors, to determine whether and how students and their families use the books.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
An RCT to evaluate New Mexico’s oversubscribed “Dual Language Immersion” charter schools, and the state’s elementary and high school charter schools as a whole

**Grant Recipient:** Abt Associates

**Principal Investigators:** Eleanor Harvill, Ph.D., Abt Associates
Rachel McCormick, Abt Associates

**Term:** June 2019 – August 2021

**Funding:** $497,494

**Summary:** This project is an RCT to evaluate (1) New Mexico’s oversubscribed “Dual Language Immersion” (DLI) elementary charter schools; (2) the state’s oversubscribed elementary charter schools as a whole; and (3) the state’s oversubscribed high school charter schools.

All charter schools in New Mexico are freestanding – that is, they are not run by Charter Management Organizations and therefore do not follow a prescribed pedagogical and/or operational model. However, a core group of the charters use a DLI approach, providing students with general academic instruction in both English and Spanish. DLI was previously evaluated in a well-conducted RCT in Portland’s public school system and found to produce promising effects on student reading achievement in elementary and middle school. Additionally, New Mexico has invested heavily in charter schools overall – not just DLI schools. Approximately 10% of public school students in the state attend a charter school.

Under this project, researchers will conduct a retrospective RCT, capitalizing on oversubscribed charter schools’ random admissions lotteries from prior years. The DLI study sample will include approximately 1,550 students who applied to four DLI schools between 2010 and 2014, and will measure DLI schools’ impact on 5th grade reading achievement over a follow-up period of approximately six years. The overall elementary charter school study sample will include approximately 6,250 students who applied to 10 schools between 2010 and 2016, and will measure the charter schools’ impact on 3rd grade reading achievement over a follow-up period of approximately four years. The high school charter school study sample will include approximately 4,000 students who applied to nine schools between 2010 and 2016, and will measure the charter schools’ impact on college enrollment over a follow-up period of approximately four to seven years. Outcomes will be measured using state test scores in reading and National Student Clearinghouse data on college enrollment.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
• A randomized controlled trial of ASSISTments, a web-based homework support tool for 7th grade aimed at increasing student math achievement

Grant Recipient: WestEd, a nonprofit research, development, and service agency

Principal Investigators: Mingyu Feng, Ph.D., WestEd
                            Neil Heffernan, Ph.D., Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Term: October 2019 – July 2024

Funding: $498,997 from LJAF in addition to $3.3 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES)

Summary: This project will expand and extend a large-scale randomized controlled trial (RCT), launched through a $3.3 million grant from IES, to evaluate ASSISTments – an online homework support tool for 7th graders designed to improve math achievement. ASSISTments supports students with math homework through real-time, individualized feedback, and produces real-time reports for teachers on student performance (e.g., concepts/problems that students are struggling with). Teachers then use these reports to tailor their lesson plans.

ASSISTments is backed by highly-promising prior evidence: a well-conducted, state-wide RCT of ASSISTments in Maine found that the program produced a gain of 0.18 standard deviations in math achievement (compared to the control group), which corresponds to what would be expected from roughly a half-year of additional learning in 7th grade. Furthermore, the gains were significantly greater for students with low prior math achievement (an effect size of 0.29).

Under the new RCT, the research team has (through the initial IES grant) successfully recruited a sample of 47 schools in North Carolina and delivered ASSISTments to an initial cohort of Grade 7 students in the treatment schools. The grant from Arnold Ventures supports: (i) recruitment of an additional 30 schools in North Carolina or neighboring states (e.g., Tennessee, Virginia, and South Carolina) and enrollment of a second student cohort, making this a major, multi-state RCT with greater power to detect meaningful impacts on math achievement in 7th grade (i.e., 0.16 standard deviations); and (ii) extend the study’s follow-up for an additional school year – through the end of 8th grade – to determine whether the impacts endure as students proceed through middle school. The study will use the states’ standardized tests to measure math achievement outcomes in 7th and 8th grades.

The study’s pre-specified pre-analysis plan is linked here.
A randomized controlled trial of career and technical education programs in New York City high schools

**Grant Recipient:** New York University

**Term:** July 2017 – September 2019

**Principal Investigator:** James Kemple, Ed.D., Research Alliance for New York City Schools

**Funding:** $299,973

**Summary:** This project is a low-cost randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs in New York City high schools. After considerable growth in its CTE offerings over the past decade, New York City’s Department of Education now oversees the largest and most diverse system of urban CTE programs in the country, with 145 schools offering CTE, 47 of which are dedicated exclusively to CTE. Nationally, CTE programs are widely implemented, serving more than 7.5 million students in the 2013-2014 school year.

This RCT will capitalize on school lotteries that took place between 2008 and 2014, randomly allocating limited 9th grade spots at 70 oversubscribed New York City CTE programs. The study will measure the programs’ impacts on rates of high school graduation as well as postsecondary enrollment and persistence. The total randomized sample includes approximately 52,000 students, whose outcomes will be measured 4 to 10 years after random assignment, depending on what year they participated in a CTE lottery. Outcomes will be measured using administrative data from the New York City Department of Education, the City University of New York, and the National Student Clearinghouse.

This study will provide policy-relevant information regarding the educational impacts of the city’s CTE programs. If feasible, the study will also measure (through an augmentation of the current design) CTE programs’ long-term effects on workforce outcomes such as earnings and employment. This is a particularly important outcome since a prior RCT of career academies (a type of CTE program) found no effects on educational attainment but large, long-term impacts on earnings.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
Expansion of well-implemented Career Academies in California public high Schools

Grant Recipients: Californians Dedicated to Education Foundation & the University of California, Berkeley

Term: January 2017 – November 2020

Funding: $1,500,000 (including $1,165,000 to the Californians Dedicated to Education Foundation and $335,000 to the College & Career Academy Support Network at the University of California, Berkeley)

Summary: As background, Career Academies are small learning communities in low-income high schools, combining academic and technical/career curricula, and offering workplace opportunities through partnership with local employers. When evaluated by MDRC in a large, multi-site randomized controlled trial (RCT) over 1993-2008, Career Academies were found to produce a $2,500 increase in annual earnings sustained over the eight years after high school graduation – making Career Academies the only educational program for disadvantaged youth that has been rigorously shown to produce sizable gains in long-term economic outcomes.

Under this grant, the California Department of Education (CDE), in collaboration with U.C. Berkeley’s College and Career Academy Support Network (CCASN), will significantly enhance the quality of implementation of Career Academies in California by ensuring adherence to the key features of the model that MDRC and others have found effective in improving student outcomes. 406 “California Partnership Academies“(CPAs) are currently in operation in California, but full adherence to the model is uncommon as CDE data show that 80% fail to implement one or more of the model’s core elements.

Grant funds will be used to (i) bring all California Partnership Academies (serving 80,000 students at any given time) into full adherence to the model, through such activities as summer training institutes for Career Academy educators and administrators, and ongoing technical assistance in the form of conference calls, virtual meetings, webinars, and site visits; and (ii) implement a fidelity rating system for the Academies based on objective measures of model adherence that will be used to generate periodic implementation fidelity reports for LJAF and others.

Under a separate grant, LJAF is funding an RCT of the California Partnership Academies participating in this project, to determine whether the sizable effects on workforce earnings found in the earlier RCT can be successfully reproduced.
• **A randomized replication trial of Career Academies in California public high schools**

**Grant Recipient:** MDRC

**Principal Investigators:** Susan Sepanik, MDRC
Rachel Rosen, Ph. D., MDRC

**Term:** March 2017 – October 2030

**Funding:** $2,943,916

**Summary:** This project is a large, multi-site randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Career Academies in California that are receiving technical assistance under a separate grant from our foundation to ensure faithful implementation of the Career Academy model. In winter 2018, MDRC will randomly assign approximately 1,500 ninth graders within 25 high schools across the state, to either a treatment group that is offered a position in the school’s Career Academy, or to a control group that receives the school’s usual services. The study will measure high school graduation rates, college persistence and completion, and employment and earnings outcomes over a 12-year follow-up period, using California state data and the National Student Clearinghouse. The study team will also measure service contrast (i.e., the difference in services received by the treatment and control students) through a survey of sample members at the end of high school.

The ultimate purpose of this RCT is to determine whether the large, sustained impacts on participants’ economic well-being found in the prior RCT of Career Academies can be successfully reproduced in a new sample of schools and time period (i.e., 20 years later). If so, the strength and robustness of the findings will provide policy officials with a potent tool for improving life outcomes of youth from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The study’s pre-specified pre-analysis plan will be posted shortly.
- **Long-term follow-up of an RCT of Core Knowledge Charter Schools**

  **Grant Recipient:** The Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia

  **Term:** May 2017 – August 2020

  **Principal Investigator:** David Grissmer, Ph. D., University of Virginia

  **Funding:** $510,256

  **Summary:** This project is an extension of an existing RCT evaluation of CORE Knowledge Charter Schools in Denver, Colorado. Core Knowledge schools use an integrated curriculum for K-8 students that sets out, in a clear grade-by-grade sequence, the specific knowledge that students should gain in each grade, rather than simply providing teachers with broad goals and objectives about what topics to cover. The Core Knowledge curriculum is implemented in over 1500 schools across 41 states and the District of Columbia.

  The existing RCT, funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, capitalized on kindergarten lotteries, which randomly allocated limited offers for admission in 14 lotteries over two years at nine oversubscribed CORE Knowledge schools. The total randomized sample was 1,796 students. At 3rd grade (i.e., four years after the lottery), lottery winners scored roughly 25-30% of a grade level higher in reading than lottery losers, and also scored higher in English. These effects remained substantial and statistically significant even after the researchers made conservative assumptions to adjust for potential bias due to sample attrition.

  This grant will extend the evaluation by assessing effects on achievement in English, reading, writing, and math through 4th, 5th and 6th grade, and on achievement in the social sciences and science in 4th and 5th grade, using Colorado state test scores.

  The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
Randomized controlled trial of the Educational Liaison dropout prevention program for middle and high school students in foster care

Grant Recipient: The Center for Evaluation and Education Policy (CEEP) at Indiana University

Principal Investigators: John Hitchcock, Ph.D., Indiana University Bloomington
Jeffrey Anderson, Ph.D., Indiana University Bloomington
Patricia Muller, Ph.D., Indiana University Bloomington

Term: May 2018 – March 2024

Funding: $498,908

Summary: This is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of the Child Advocates of Indianapolis’ Educational Liaison (EL) intervention model, a dropout prevention program for middle and secondary school students in the foster care system. The EL intervention incorporates key elements from the Check & Connect model, which has credible evidence of effectiveness (two prior, well-conducted RCTs), and additionally provides wraparound services, consulting on Individualized Education Programs, graduation and post-secondary planning, and other services. Approximately 400 eligible students will be enrolled in the study over two years and randomly assigned to either receive EL services in addition to standard Best Interest Advocate (BIA) services (treatment group) or to receive only the standard BIA services (control group). The primary outcome of interest will be students’ need to participate in an alternate graduation path (AGP) over the four-year follow-up period. AGP serves as a proxy for school dropout rates. The AGP classification is determined by a formula identifying students for whom it will be almost impossible to graduate on time and with a standard diploma based on a student’s credit hours earned relative to other students in their cohort. Secondary outcomes will include credit hours earned, attendance, academic achievement based on state test scores, disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and expulsions.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
Evaluation of Fostering Opportunities Program, which provides youth in foster care with an advocate focused on helping them succeed in school

**Grant Recipient:** Colorado Seminary, which owns and operates the University of Denver

**Principal Investigators:** Elysia Clemens, Ph.D., University of Denver
Kristin Klopfenstein, Ph.D., University of Denver

**Term:** June 2018 – December 2022

**Funding:** $266,033

**Summary:** This is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Fostering Opportunities, a program that provides 7th-10th grade youth in foster care with an advocate who coordinates between teachers, families, social workers and other systems involved in foster youths’ lives to help the youths succeed in school. A major focus of the advocate is to prevent these youth from having to frequently change schools, based on research indicating that such school changes are a potentially important contributor to foster care youths’ very low on-time high school graduation rates (in Colorado, where this study will take place, only 23% of foster care youth graduated on-time in 2017, compared to the statewide on-time graduation rate of 79%).

The program is similar to the Check and Connect model, which has been shown in two well-conducted RCTs to produce sizable increases in school attendance and graduation rates for samples of high school students with learning, emotional, and/or behavioral disabilities. The Fostering Opportunities program has been piloted on a small scale in the school district where this study will take place, and has been implemented effectively.

This study will randomly assign approximately 280 students over the course of two school years to either a group that is offered the program or a control group that is not. The study will measure impacts on attendance and course completion over a two year follow-up period using administrative data from Jefferson County Public Schools and Denver Public Schools. The study team has previously carried out a well-implemented RCT.

This project came about as a result of a Pay for Success initiative launched by the Colorado Governor’s office to fund programs backed by promising prior evidence of effectiveness in serving youth involved in the state’s foster care and/or juvenile justice systems.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
Randomized controlled trial of high-dosage math tutoring for disadvantaged ninth-graders in Chicago and New York City Public Schools

Grant Recipient: The University of Chicago

Principal Investigator: Jonathan Guryan, Ph.D., Northwestern University and University of Chicago Urban Labs

Term: April 2018 – March 2023

Funding: $380,505

Summary: This is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to evaluate a high-dosage math tutoring program for 9th graders in high poverty high schools. The intervention, developed and delivered by SAGA Innovations, consists of intensive individualized math tutoring for 9th graders for one class period per day, every school day. Students receive the tutoring in small groups of up to four students per tutor working either with their in-person tutor or, on alternate days, with an educational technology software program. Tutors are well-educated individuals (often recent college graduates), without formal teacher training, who are willing to work for one year for a modest stipend as a public service. The estimated cost of the intervention is $2,500 per student.

The program is backed by promising prior evidence of positive effects on math achievement. Specifically, a well-conducted RCT of a higher-cost version of SAGA math tutoring, in which students received daily in-person tutoring without the educational technology component, found that the program produced meaningful gains in math achievement after one year, with longer-term follow-up forthcoming. This RCT seeks to determine whether the program can achieve similar gains at lower cost by using educational technology to deliver the tutoring on alternate days.

The study will take place within six public high schools in Chicago and New York City. It will randomize approximately 3,500 students to either the SAGA intervention or to a control group that will receive usual services (i.e., elective coursework). The primary outcome will be math achievement, as measured by state achievement tests, over the two years following random assignment. This project is co-funded with the Overdeck Family Foundation.
Randomized controlled trial of the web-based Healthy Minds intervention to prevent youth depression

**Grant Recipient:** North Carolina State University

**Principal Investigators:** Jeni Burnette, Ph.D., North Carolina State University  
Laura Widman, Ph.D., North Carolina State University  
Mitch Prinstein, Ph.D., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

**Term:** July 2018 – March 2022

**Funding:** $499,314

**Summary:** This study is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Healthy Minds – a growth mindset intervention for high school students designed to reduce rates of clinical depression. Healthy Minds is delivered via a web-based platform making it cost-effective and scalable. The intervention consists of a brief, online, self-administered reading and writing activity that stresses the changeable nature of personality and teaches about the research related to growth mindsets and mental health. Prior evidence suggests this intervention could meaningfully reduce rates of clinical depression in youth. Specifically, Healthy Minds is an enhanced version of a growth mindset intervention which decreased rates of clinical depression in ninth grade students by about 30-40% at 9-month follow-up in a well-conducted RCT. The current work seeks to recruit all ninth grade students from four high schools in a predominately low-income, rural school district in North Carolina and randomly assign those who agree to participate in the study (approximately 650 students) to either a treatment group that will receive Healthy Minds or an attention-matched control group that mimics the time and attention received by the Healthy Minds group but is not aimed at improving mental health. The primary outcome of interest will be rates of clinical depression at 18-month follow-up for students in the intervention, compared to the attention-matched control group.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
Continuation of a promising RCT of high-dosage literacy tutoring for disadvantaged 1st graders in Chicago Public Schools

Grant Recipients: SAGA Innovations, Inc. and the University of Chicago

Term: May 2017 – April 2020

Principal Investigator: Jonathan Guryan, Ph. D., Northwestern University and University of Chicago Urban Labs

Director of SAGA Innovations: Alan Safran, J.D., The George Washington University

Funding: $225,000 ($175,000 to SAGA Innovations, Inc. and $50,000 to University of Chicago Urban Labs)

Summary: This project will extend an LJAF-funded pilot RCT of a high-dosage literacy tutoring program for 1st graders delivered by SAGA Innovations in low-income Chicago schools. As brief background, tutoring programs for at-risk students in early elementary school have been found effective in a number of prior RCTs, with high-dosage tutoring often generating the largest effects. The goal of this ongoing LJAF-funded RCT is to measure the impact on first- and second-grade reading outcomes of a high-dosage tutoring program that is delivered at modest cost by full-time in-school-day tutors who are well-educated community members willing to work for ten school months for a modest stipend as a public service. The program’s cost is approximately $3000 per pupil, but may vary depending on school size and other factors.

Under a prior LJAF grant, SAGA Innovations successfully developed and is now implementing this program within two charter schools in low-income neighborhoods in Chicago.

The new grant provides additional funds to continue the pilot RCT for a second year; this funding will double the study’s sample size to over 300 students and thus increase the study’s power to detect meaningful impacts (e.g., 0.20 standard deviations). The funding also will enable the study to measure impacts at the end of two school years for the two cohorts of students. Should the program be found effective in this study, its expansion in Chicago and elsewhere could largely be funded by federal Title 1 funds.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
Long-term follow-up of a randomized controlled trial of KIPP charter middle schools

Grant Recipient: Mathematica Policy Research

Principal Investigator: Phil Gleason, Ph.D., Mathematica Policy Research

Term: December 2018 – December 2019

Funding: $196,812

Summary: This grant will fund the long-term follow-up of a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of KIPP charter middle schools. KIPP is a national non-profit network of college-preparatory, public charter schools that serve thousands of predominantly low-income and minority students (88% of KIPP students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and 95% are African American or Latino). KIPP’s goal is to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and character strengths they need to succeed throughout their education and in the competitive world beyond.

KIPP elementary and middle schools have been found in large, well-conducted RCTs to significantly improve students’ performance on state reading and math achievement tests two to three years after random assignment, as summarized here.

This grant would extend the follow-up of an RCT of oversubscribed KIPP middle schools in five states and the District of Columbia, with a sample of 1,179 students who applied to the schools in the 2008-2009 or 2009-2010 school years. The study has previously reported positive findings on test score outcomes at two and three years after random assignment. The longer-term analyses will examine KIPP middle schools’ impacts on enrollment and persistence in four-year colleges, using administrative data from the National Student Clearinghouse.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
A randomized controlled trial of the Minnesota Math Corps, a widely implemented one-on-two tutoring program for 4th-8th grade students in Minnesota

Grant Recipient: ServeMinnesota

Term: June 2017 – October 2018

Principal Investigator: David Parker, Ph.D., ServeMinnesota

Funding: $191,051

Summary: This project is a low-cost randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Minnesota Math Corps, a one-on-two tutoring program for 4th-8th graders struggling with math. Minnesota Math Corps was recently evaluated in a short-term RCT, which found it produced a sizable impact on math achievement on a standardized assessment over the course of one semester. More generally, findings from RCTs of a different one-on-one tutoring program for slightly older students struggling with math, suggest that such tutoring can produce meaningful improvements in students’ math achievement (e.g., as much as an extra 2/3 of a grade level of learning over the course of one school year). Minnesota Math Corps already operates on a sizable scale in 150 Minnesota schools and is in the process of expanding to additional states. The program could potentially be implemented on a substantially larger scale given its modest cost – about $800 per student per year – which is made possible by the program’s use of AmeriCorps volunteers as tutors.

This RCT will evaluate Minnesota Math Corps in a sample of approximately 720 4th-8th graders across 15 elementary schools. The primary outcome measure will be math scores at the end of one school year on Minnesota’s state test, the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment. This study will have a substantially larger sample than the previous RCT of the program and will provide longer-term follow-up than the earlier study, which only lasted one semester.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
A randomized controlled trial of Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports, a school-wide reform initiative designed to increase K-12 academic achievement and reduce behavioral problems

Grant recipient: Wake County Public School System

Principal Investigators: Dina Bulgakov-Cooke, Ph. D., Wake County Public School System
Matthew Lenard, Wake County Public School System

Term: October 2015 – November 2018

Funding: $81,512

Summary: This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of a school-wide reform initiative, Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS), designed to increase academic achievement and reduce behavioral problems at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. MTSS is being scaled-up district-wide in Wake County, North Carolina, through a phased-in approach that will embed an RCT. Forty-four schools (the treatment group) began implementing MTSS in the 2015-2016 school year, and 44 schools (the control group) will implement it two years later. The study will measure math and English test scores, behavioral suspensions, and other outcomes over the two-year period using district administrative data.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
A randomized controlled trial of a comprehensive music education program for disadvantaged youth, measuring the impact on academic achievement

**Grant Recipient:** Bard College

**Term:** June 2017 – December 2024

**Principal Investigator:** Steven Holochwost, Ph.D., WolfBrown
  Dennie Wolf, Ph.D., WolfBrown
  Judith Hill Bose, Ph.D., Longy School of Music of Bard College

**Funding:** $224,720

**Summary:** This project is a replication randomized controlled trial (RCT) of a promising music education intervention for economically disadvantaged elementary school students, inspired by the “El Sistema” program in Venezuela. The intervention, which is funded through a combination of public and philanthropic funding sources, is delivered in an after-school setting and provides students with comprehensive music education and orchestral experience.

A prior well-conducted RCT of this intervention – carried out by the current project’s study team – found meaningful impacts on academic achievement: students offered participation in the intervention experienced a sizable, statistically-significant improvement in academic achievement (0.24 effect size) over a 1-3 year period, as measured by standardized academic exams. The theorized mechanisms for this improvement include increased school engagement, academic persistence and motivation, and social-emotional learning (all of which will be measured in this new study).

The study will seek to replicate these impacts in a larger, multi-site RCT in Illinois, Michigan, Nevada, New York, and Pennsylvania. The study will randomly assign approximately 570 students in grades K-2 to the intervention or to a wait-list control group that would have an opportunity to participate in the intervention after a two-year waiting period. The study will measure impacts on academic achievement over the two-year follow-up using administrative data (i.e., district-level standardized test scores).
A randomized controlled trial (RCT) to evaluate OneGoal: a three-year program to help low-income high school students prepare for and succeed in college

Grant Recipient: University of Chicago Urban Labs

Principal Investigators: Kelly Hallberg, Ph.D., University of Chicago
Marianne Bertrand, Ph.D., University of Chicago

Term: March 2019 – November 2029

Funding: $292,718

Summary: This project is an RCT of OneGoal – a program for low-income high school students aimed at preparing students to enroll and succeed in college. The program is offered as an elective course during students’ junior and senior years of high school and works with students to improve their study habits, apply to “best-fit” colleges, and obtain financial aid. During students’ first year in college, OneGoal continues to provide support (regardless of where they matriculate), by connecting students with on-campus support systems, helping them register for courses, and providing emergency financial assistance towards tuition payments or other student-related expenses if needed.

While the OneGoal program has not yet been rigorously evaluated, components of OneGoal’s program model are backed by promising evidence from prior RCTs, including the evaluation of the Bottom Line counseling program for low-income students that spans the end of high school through the college years, and the evaluation of college financial aid application assistance provided by H&R Block.

Under this project, researchers will recruit approximately 2,100 students from public high schools in Chicago. Half of the students will be randomly assigned to enroll in the OneGoal program while the other half will receive the standard college preparatory supports available in their school. The researchers will use National Student Clearinghouse data to measure college enrollment, college persistence (second-year enrollment), and college graduation through eight years after random assignment.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
A randomized controlled trial of the Literacy First Tutoring Program for struggling readers in early elementary school

Grant Recipient: American Institutes for Research

Term: March 2017 – December 2020

Principal Investigators: Sarah Caverly, Ph. D., American Institutes for Research
Ginger Stoker, Ph. D., American Institutes for Research

Funding: $319,476

Summary: This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Literacy First (formerly ACE Tutoring), an intensive one-on-one tutoring program for struggling readers in early elementary school. Literacy First has been evaluated in several quasi-experimental studies over the past three years and been found to produce sizable impacts on reading ability. More generally, findings from multiple RCTs have shown one-on-one tutoring to be a particularly promising approach to addressing early reading failure. However, the most intensive tutoring programs, which tend to produce the largest positive effects, are often expensive, costing as much as $6,000 per student. By contrast, Literacy First offers a potentially more scalable intensive tutoring approach – providing 30 minutes of daily individualized tutoring at a cost of just $600 per student – by making use of AmeriCorps volunteers as tutors, rather than more expensive options employed by other tutoring programs (e.g., certified teachers).

This RCT will evaluate Literacy First in a sample of 624 2nd graders across 26 elementary schools. The primary outcome measures will be reading scores on the well-validated SAT-10 standardized test at the end of 2nd grade and the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) at the end of 3rd grade. The study’s measurement of outcomes over a two-year follow-up period will help address an important gap in the literature regarding the longer-term impact of one-on-one tutoring programs, since most studies of such programs have only followed students for one school year or less.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
Randomized Controlled Trial of Read for Success, a national program that seeks to engage elementary school students in both summer and school-year reading

Grant Recipient: Measured Decisions, Inc.

Principal Investigator: Geoffrey Borman, Ph.D., Measured Decisions, Inc.

Term: April 2018 – February 2022

Funding: $287,550

Summary: This is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Read for Success, a nationally-disseminated program designed to engage elementary school students in both summer and school-year reading. Read for Success will provide books and materials for second and third grade classrooms, students, and their families. Across a two-year period, the program will offer an annual distribution of 35 Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) books and related instructional materials for use during the school year, and for the summer, 8 books per student to take home along with family materials to encourage summer reading. The goal is to improve students’ access to quality literacy materials, increase engagement and enjoyment of reading, and ultimately to boost reading achievement.

Prior evidence suggests this intervention could produce sizable impacts on academic achievement. It shares some key features with Annual Summer Book Fairs, an intervention that provides summer reading materials to students in high-poverty schools over three consecutive summers. Annual Summer Books Fairs was found in a large, well-conducted RCT in Florida to increase elementary school students’ reading achievement on the state test by about 35-40% of a grade level, three years after random assignment.

The RCT of Read for Success will randomly assign 60 elementary schools in Dallas, Texas, to a treatment or control group, and track outcomes for approximately 4,800 students over a period of three years after random assignment (i.e., through 4th and 5th grade) The study will assess effects on reading achievement as measured by state tests, as well as effects on related outcomes, such as literacy behaviors, to determine whether and how students and their families use the books.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
A randomized controlled trial of a Social Belonging mindset intervention for students entering middle school

Grant recipient: Measured Decisions, Inc.

Principal Investigator: Geoffrey D. Borman, Ph. D., Measured Decisions, Inc.

Term: September 2016 – February 2020

Funding: $216,950

Summary: This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of a “social belonging intervention” consisting of two 15-minute in-class writing exercises provided to students entering middle school – i.e., fall of 7th grade – a time of transition to a larger, less personal school environment that many perceive as intimidating. The exercises ask the students to consider a specific school experience in which they might feel social or academic uncertainty (e.g., related to test taking or fitting in with peers), prompts them with stories from other beginning middle-school students about how they struggled initially but eventually got through it, and asks the participating students to write about how they can manage their own difficulties and ultimately overcome them.

A prior well-conducted RCT in Madison, Wisconsin with a sample of 1,500 students found statistically-significant impacts on GPA, failing grades, disciplinary referrals, and absences (effect sizes were modest, between 0.09 to 0.14 standard deviations). This new study is a replication trial, which will be conducted in seven middle schools in Paradise Valley School District in Arizona, with a sample of approximately 2,000 7th grade students. It will measure GPA, behavioral referrals, attendance, and other outcomes using school records. If positive impacts are found after one school year, the study will measure these outcomes over two additional years to determine whether the effects endure.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
• **RCT of Youth Guidance’s Working on Womanhood Program, a cognitive-behavioral therapy program for disadvantaged female high school students at risk of mental illness**

**Grant Recipient:** University of Chicago

**Principal Investigator:** Harold Pollack, Ph.D., Harvard University

**Term:** April 2018 – December 2021

**Funding:** $1,108,149

**Summary:** This is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Working on Womanhood (WOW), a cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) program for disadvantaged female high school students at high risk of mental illness.

The prior evidence for CBT-based programs serving youth at risk of mental illness – including a Cochrane Collaboration review – suggests that WOW has the potential to meaningfully reduce rates of clinical PTSD, depression, and anxiety. Similar programs (e.g., school-based CBT for adolescents in Los Angeles who had been exposed to violence) have been previously shown to produce such improvements in mental health status (though these studies generally had only short-term follow-up).

The City of Chicago has expanded access to WOW as part of its $36 million mentoring initiative. The RCT includes a sample 1,500 youth who have been randomly assigned to receive WOW or usual services, and will measure WOW’s impact on mental health status, academic achievement, and criminal activity.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

- RCT of Accelerate, Complete, and Engage (ACE), a comprehensive program providing academic, personal, and financial supports to predominantly low-income students in a four-year college

**Grant Recipient:** Research Foundation of the City University of New York (CUNY)

**Principal Investigators:** Jing Zhu, Ph.D., Metis Associates
Diana Strumbos, City University of New York (CUNY)

**Term:** March 2018 – July 2024

**Funding:** $265,152

**Summary:** This is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of an adapted version of the City University of New York (CUNY) Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). ASAP is a comprehensive community college program that provides academic, personal, and financial supports to predominantly low-income students, and requires their full-time enrollment. This new study will evaluate the same basic model, renamed Accelerate, Complete, and Engage (ACE), adapted to a four-year college setting – John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

The program is backed by highly-promising prior evidence of effects on college attainment. A high-quality RCT of CUNY ASAP with a sample of 896 students found that the program produced an 18 percentage point increase in degree completion three years after random assignment, and a smaller but still impressive 10 percentage-point increase in degree completion six years after random assignment (i.e., three years after program services ended). At that point, 51% of the treatment group had completed a degree versus 41% of the control group (statistically significant p<0.01). The CUNY Office of Academic Affairs, which created and implemented ASAP, developed the ACE program and piloted it at John Jay College in the fall of 2015. A quasi-experimental study with incoming 2015 students at John Jay College found that at the beginning of their third academic year, ACE participants were nearly twice as likely to be on-track to graduate in four years, compared to the matched comparison group (65% of the ACE group was on-track to graduate versus 37% of the comparison group).

This study will randomly assign 570 students in the fall of 2018 to either a group that is offered the program or a control group that is not. The study will measure impacts on college persistence and degree completion over a 5-year follow-up period using administrative data from the CUNY system and the National Student Clearinghouse.

The study’s pre-analysis plan is linked [here](#).
• A randomized control trial of Capital IDEA’s program to help low-income adults complete postsecondary education and obtain well-paying jobs in the field of nursing

Grant Recipient: Economic Mobility Corporation

Principal Investigator: Mark Elliott, Mobility
Anne Roder, Ph.D., Mobility

Term: July 2019 – December 2028

Funding: $1,028,126

Summary: This project is a randomized control trial (RCT) to evaluate the impact of Capital IDEA – a program in Austin, Texas to help low-income adults complete postsecondary education and obtain well-paying jobs. Key elements of the program include: (i) financial supports for college attendance; (ii) required full-time college enrollment; (iii) individualized counseling to address personal and academic challenges; and (iv) job placement assistance upon degree completion. Program participation typically lasts 4-5 years and costs roughly $24,000 per student.

Capital IDEA is backed by promising prior evidence from its “sister” organizations, which deliver programs with similar features including a sharp focus on training for well-paying jobs in high-growth sectors of the local economy. These other programs include: (i) Project QUEST, which has been shown in a well-conducted RCT to increase annual earnings by $5,490 or 20% at 9-year follow-up (the QUEST group’s earnings were $33,496 compared to $28,006 for the control group); and (ii) VIDA, which has been shown in initial findings from a well-conducted RCT to increase degree completion from 36% in the control group to 46% in the treatment group at 3-year follow-up. This RCT will determine whether the positive impacts found in these prior studies can be reproduced in a different city with students pursuing degrees in registered nursing.

In this study, Mobility will partner with Capital IDEA to recruit a sample of 700 low-income adults interested in enrolling in the Associate Degree Nursing Program at Austin Community College (ACC) and randomly assign half to an offer of participation in Capital IDEA (treatment group) and half to usual community services (control group). The study’s primary outcomes will be: (i) percent of participants completing the prerequisites for the nursing program within two years of random assignment; and (ii) percent who earn an associate degree in nursing within five years of random assignment, measured with administrative data from ACC and the National Student Clearinghouse. The study will also include an implementation analysis and a cost-effectiveness analysis of Capital IDEA.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
A randomized controlled trial of InsideTrack’s coaching and mentoring program for recent college dropouts

**Grant recipient:** The Curators of the University of Missouri

**Principal Investigators:** Oded Gurantz, Ph.D., University of Missouri  
Lesley Turner, Ph.D., Vanderbilt University

**Term:** September 2019 – August 2023

**Funding:** $360,520

**Summary:** This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of the InsideTrack coaching and mentoring program for recent college dropouts from California community colleges or California State University. The program’s goal is to increase college re-enrollment and completion.

InsideTrack seeks to engage students who have recently dropped out of college, and to pair them with a college-educated coach who provides personalized assistance in identifying and addressing perceived barriers to remaining in school (e.g., finances, family or work responsibilities). Coaches maintain average caseloads of 700 students.

InsideTrack delivers a similar college counseling program to currently enrolled students (as opposed to student who have recently left college). This sister program has been found in a well-conducted RCT to increase postsecondary persistence and degree completion for the sub-sample of schools with degree completion data. The new RCT will determine whether the positive effects found in the prior RCT extend to an adapted version of the program delivered to students who have recently left college.

The study team will recruit and randomize approximately 14,000 recent former students who received California financial aid and indicate an interest in returning to college to either (i) a treatment group that receives InsideTrack’s re-entry coaching (approximately 4,000 students) or (ii) a control group of the remaining students that receives information about college re-enrollment (but not personalized coaching). The study will measure the program’s impact on college re-enrollment, persistence, and degree completion over a three-year follow-up period, and earnings and student debt over a four-year follow-up period. The primary outcomes specified in the analysis plan will be measured using administrative data from the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) and National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), with exploratory research questions including outcomes from California’s Employment Development Department (EDD), and Transunion.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
A randomized controlled trial of tnAchieves, an intensive coaching program for low-income community college students

Grant Recipient: Research for Action

Principal Investigators: Dae Y. Kim, Ph.D., Research for Action
Jaime Thomas, Ph.D., Mathematica Policy Research
Kasey Meehan, M.P.A., Research for Action

Term: August 2019 – November 2023

Funding: $499,000

Summary: This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of an intensive coaching program for low income community college students, with the goal of increasing college retention and completion. The tnAchieves program provides low-income students receiving a Tennessee Promise scholarship at Tennessee’s 12 community colleges with one-on-one “completion” coaching sessions with a bachelor’s level coach at least every three weeks over five semesters. This program is backed by promising prior evidence. Similar coaching programs (e.g., InsideTrack and Detroit Promise Path) have been evaluated previously in well-conducted RCTs and have been found to produce promising effects on postsecondary enrollment, credit accumulation, and four-year degree completion.

This RCT will have a sample of approximately 4,000 Tennessee Promise scholarship recipients at the state’s 12 community colleges. Students will be randomly assigned to either (i) a treatment group that receives tnAchieves’ intensive coaching or (ii) a control group that will receive such coaching only upon their request. The study will measure the impact of coaching on college retention and certificate/degree completion over a follow-up period of three years. These outcomes will be measured using data from tnAchieves and the Tennessee public education state longitudinal data system.

In addition, the researchers will conduct a streamlined implementation study, primarily using tnAchieves program data (e.g., to measure the amount of coaching received), and a descriptive cost analysis study.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
- Long-term follow-up of a randomized controlled trial of the Monitoring Advising Analytics to Promote Success (MAAPS) student-advising program at 11 universities

**Grant recipient:** Ithaka Harbors, Inc., a 501(c)(3)

**Principal Investigators:** Rayane Alamuddin, Ph.D.
Martin Kurzweil

**Term:** August 2019 – March 2023

**Funding:** $137,220

**Summary:** This project is a long-term follow-up of an ongoing randomized controlled trial (RCT) of the Monitoring Advising Analytics to Promote Success (MAAPS) program. Implemented across 11 public universities, MAAPS is a three-year student advising intervention that pairs Pell-eligible and first-generation students with dedicated advisors who help students navigate key academic choices and establish plans for course selection to ensure timely graduation. Advisors have smaller-than-average caseloads at their institutions and use early-alert systems to proactively identify and support students deemed at risk of going off-path.

A well-conducted RCT of MAAPS is currently underway across all 11 universities, with a sample of 10,489 students. Preliminary findings at the 2-year follow-up – when continuously-enrolled students completed their sophomore year of college – show no significant effects on students’ credit success rate, cumulative GPA, college persistence, or credit accumulation at their original institution for either the full sample, or for key subgroups of interest (including Pell-eligible, first generation, and minority students). Site-level effects are also generally null with one exception — at Georgia State University, the study found positive, significant impacts on credit success and cumulative GPA. Longer-term follow-up through students’ sixth year of enrollment and across the different institutions they attend will generate more definitive, final results.

The proposed project will measure students’ college persistence and degree completion at the four- and six-year follow-up.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
A randomized controlled trial of providing college students with federal loan eligibility information

Grant Recipient: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Principal Investigators: Benjamin Marx, Ph.D., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Lesley Turner, Ph.D., Vanderbilt University

Term: August 2019 – May 2022

Funding: $245,489

Summary: This project comprises of two randomized controlled trials (RCTs) of providing low- and moderate-income students with information on their federal loan eligibility as part of the students’ financial aid award letters. Providing such information is not the norm at many postsecondary institutions (particularly two-year colleges). The goal of this informational intervention is to increase college enrollment, credit accumulation, academic performance, and student financial health.

This intervention is backed by promising prior evidence. A well-conducted, single-site RCT found that providing federal loan information in award letters to community college students significantly increased their loan uptake, credit accumulation, GPA, and likelihood of transferring to four-year institutions.

This grant will fund two separate replication RCTs within an anonymous college system – one at a community college and one at a bachelor’s degree granting institution, with a total sample of approximately 30,000 students across the two trials. Within each school, students will be randomly assigned to either (i) a treatment group that receives an award letter with information on their federal loan eligibility, including a loan amount that they may qualify for; or (ii) a control group that receives the status quo letter with no such information.

Over a two-year follow-up period, the study will measure the impact of the intervention on college enrollment, credits earned, academic performance, transfer to a four-year institution, and measures of financial health. Outcomes will be measured using administrative data from the college system, the National Student Clearinghouse, and credit bureaus.

The study’s pre-specified pre-analysis plan will be posted shortly.
• A randomized controlled trial evaluation of Federal Work Study for college undergraduates across the City University of New York system

Grant Recipient: Teachers College, Columbia University

Principal Investigator: Judith Scott-Clayton, Ph.D., Teacher’s College, Columbia University
Adela Soliz, Ph.D., Vanderbilt University
Thomas Brock, Ph.D., Teacher’s College, Columbia University

Term: August 2019 – November 2024

Funding: $696,418

Summary: This is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to evaluate the impact of Federal Work Study (FWS) within the City University of New York (CUNY) system. Introduced as part of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, FWS provides financial aid (i.e., funding for tuition and other expenses) to low-income students by subsidizing up to 75% of eligible college students’ part-time, mostly on-campus, educationally relevant jobs. FWS serves over 600,000 students per year at a cost of $1 billion annually.

Researchers at Teachers College will partner with the CUNY system to randomly assign a sample of approximately 7,200 students across up to 18 undergraduate campuses in the greater New York metropolitan area. These students will be randomly assigned to either CUNY’s standard FWS offer or a control group, which would not receive an offer of FWS. The study’s primary outcomes will be college persistence and degree completion, measured with CUNY administrative data. Treatment take-up for students will be measured through CUNY’s payroll system (which contains data on whether offered FWS funds are actually used and in what amount).

The study’s pre-specified pre-analysis plan will be posted shortly.
Randomized controlled trial of a correctional education program for prison inmates, aimed at increasing postsecondary enrollment and decreasing recidivism

Grant Recipient: RAND Corporation, a nonprofit research organization

Principal Investigators: Lois Davis, Ph.D., RAND Corporation
Susan Turner, Ph.D., University of California, Irvine

Term: December 2019 – February 2023

Funding: $343,745

Summary: This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of the Pathways from Prison to Postsecondary Education program, a prison-based correctional education program designed to increase inmates’ likelihood of attaining a postsecondary degree and reduce their likelihood of recidivating after their release. The Pathways program partners with local colleges and universities to provide inmates with (i) in-prison postsecondary education at least two years prior to release, and (ii) two years of post-release support in entering college and completing their postsecondary education.

Pathways has not yet been rigorously evaluated, and though some evaluations of other correctional education programs for incarcerated adults have been conducted and found positive impacts, these studies have tended to have methodological weaknesses. In spite of this limited evidence base, federal policymakers have been increasingly interested in funding correctional education programs as evidenced by recent passage of the First Step Act of 2018 (which increases emphasis on providing education programs in prisons), and the fact that members of Congress are considering legislation to permanently reinstate prisoners’ access to Pell Grants. Since substantial federal funding may soon be dedicated to correctional education programs, rigorous evidence about which programs are effective (and which are not) is critical if this new funding is to be spent wisely.

Under this grant, the researchers will conduct a retrospective RCT, capitalizing on oversubscription to the Pathways program. From 2013 to 2017, the program used a randomized lottery to allocate a limited number of program slots, creating an opportunity to measure outcomes in an RCT evaluation design (i.e., comparing outcomes for lottery winners to those of lottery losers). The randomized sample comprised 426 prisoners in Michigan and North Carolina. Inmates were randomly assigned to either (i) a treatment group that received the Pathways program, or (ii) a control group that did not, but could participate in college correspondence courses and/or prison-based career and technical education programs. The study will measure the impact of the program on enrollment in a postsecondary institution and recidivism four years after random assignment (or approximately two years after prisoners’ scheduled release date). These outcomes will be measured using National Student Clearinghouse data and state arrest records. In addition, the researchers will also collect information to estimate the program cost.

The study’s pre-specified pre-analysis plan is linked here.
Skyline College implementation of the City University of New York's (CUNY) Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) for community college students

**Grant Recipient:** San Mateo County Community College District

**Term:** February 2017 – April 2019

**Funding:** $836,607

**Summary:** Skyline College in San Bruno, California is implementing the Accelerated Study in Associates Programs (ASAP) model for all full-time incoming students, using dedicated local (non-LJAF) funding. ASAP is a comprehensive community college program that provides students with academic, personal, and financial supports. An earlier randomized controlled trial (RCT) of ASAP at CUNY found that the program nearly doubled three-year graduation rates in a population of primarily low-income students with modest basic skills deficits (22 percent of the control group graduated versus 40 percent of the treatment group). These effects on college completion are far larger than identified in any previous well-conducted RCT in postsecondary education.

Skyline anticipates enrolling 500 students per year in ASAP, but the number could rise as the benefits of ASAP incentivize more students to attend full time. The ASAP program at Skyline will become part of a larger Skyline College Promise initiative aimed at increasing overall student success and college completion by removing financial barriers, restructuring the curriculum, and providing intensive academic and personal support services to students.

LJAF’s grant is funding a Skyline-CUNY partnership under which CUNY is providing Skyline College with technical assistance to ensure implementation of ASAP with high fidelity to the program model.
• Longer-term follow-up of an ongoing RCT of the City University of New York’s (CUNY) Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) at three Ohio community colleges

Grant Recipient: MDRC

Principal Investigators: Colleen Sommo, MDRC
Michael Weiss, Ph. D., MDRC

Term: January 2017 – March 2020

Funding: $275,000

Summary: This project will support the continuation of an RCT at three Ohio community colleges that are implementing programs based on the ASAP model. ASAP is a comprehensive community college program that provides academic, personal, and financial supports to low-income students. An earlier RCT of ASAP at the City University of New York (CUNY) found that the program nearly doubled three-year graduation rates in a population of primarily low-income students with modest basic skills deficits (22 percent of the control group graduated versus 40 percent of the treatment group). These effects on college completion are far larger than identified in any previous well-conducted RCT in postsecondary education.

The Ohio ASAP evaluation will provide a second proof point for the ASAP model. The Ohio research sample of 1,505 eligible students was randomly assigned in three cohorts: the spring and fall of 2015 and the spring of 2016. Early findings, which MDRC recently published, show that the short-term estimated impacts for the first two cohorts of the Ohio programs are generally consistent with those found in MDRC’s evaluation of CUNY ASAP.

This LJAF grant will support continued data collection, analysis, and reporting on the impacts and cost-effectiveness of the Ohio programs. Data collection will include detailed school records and program participation data from the participating colleges, enrollment and degree data from the National Student Clearinghouse, and cost data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and the colleges. A brief deliverable in summer 2018 will update the early Ohio impact findings. The final report in fall 2019 will include impact and cost-effectiveness findings on the Ohio programs, with follow-up of three years for all sample members. The ultimate purpose of this RCT is to determine whether the large impacts on college completion found in the prior RCT can be successfully reproduced in the Ohio programs.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
• Westchester Community College implementation of the City University of New York’s (CUNY) Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP)

**Grant Recipient:** Westchester Community College Foundation

**Term:** December 2016 – March 2021

**Funding:** $1,000,000

**Summary:** Under this project, Westchester Community College (WCC) in New York is implementing ASAP – a comprehensive community college program that provides academic, personal, and financial supports to low-income students who need remedial education. An earlier randomized controlled trial (RCT) of ASAP at CUNY found that the program nearly doubled three-year graduation rates in a population of primarily low-income students with modest basic skills deficits (22 percent of the control group graduated versus 40 percent of the treatment group). These effects on college completion are far larger than identified in any previous well-conducted RCT in postsecondary education.

WCC is implementing ASAP with support from other (non-LJAF) funding sources. LJAF’s grant is funding a WCC-CUNY partnership under which CUNY is providing WCC with technical assistance for two years beginning in January 2017, to ensure faithful implementation of the ASAP model. WCC will implement ASAP with a pilot of 100 students in Fall 2018, followed by cohorts of 150 in each of the following two fall semesters. Beyond the period of the grant, WCC plans to scale up the program to serve the 1,200 students it estimates are eligible for ASAP.

Under a separate grant, LJAF is funding a randomized controlled trial of ASAP as implemented at WCC, to determine whether the large effects on college completion found in the earlier ASAP RCT can be reproduced at WCC.
Replication RCT of City University of New York’s (CUNY) Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) at Westchester Community College

Grant Recipient: MDRC

Principal Investigators: Colleen Sommo, MDRC
Michael Weiss, Ph. D., MDRC

Term: January 2017 – December 2024

Funding: $533,688

Summary: This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of the ASAP program as implemented at Westchester Community College in New York (under a separate grant, LJAF is funding technical assistance for this ASAP implementation). ASAP is a comprehensive community college program that provides academic, personal, and financial supports to low-income students who need remedial education. An earlier RCT of ASAP at CUNY found that the program nearly doubled three-year graduation rates in a population of primarily low-income students with modest basic skills deficits (22 percent of the control group graduated versus 40 percent of the treatment group). These effects on college completion are far larger than identified in any previous well-conducted RCT in postsecondary education.

In Fall 2019 and Fall 2020, MDRC will recruit and randomly assign at least 600 eligible Westchester students to either participate in ASAP (the treatment group) or receive regular college programming (the control group). The study’s short-term primary outcomes are credit accumulation and college enrollment. The long-term primary outcome is three-year degree attainment. The ultimate purpose of this RCT is to determine whether the large impacts on college completion found in the prior RCT can be successfully reproduced at Westchester.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
• Expansion and replication of the ASAP model in West Virginia Community Colleges, aimed at increasing occupationally-focused degree completion

**Grant Recipient:** West Virginia Community and Technical College System (WVCTCS)

**Term:** December 2019 – June 2025

**Funding:** $4,175,113

**Summary:** City University of New York’s (CUNY) Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) is a comprehensive community college program that provides academic, personal, and financial supports to low-income students who require remedial education. In a prior well-conducted RCT conducted at CUNY, ASAP was found to increase graduation rates (largely two-year degrees) by 10 percentage points at the 6-year follow-up – 51% graduation rate for the treatment group vs. 41% for the control group. An ongoing Ohio replication RCT, co-funded by Arnold Ventures, shows very encouraging early results – an 11 percentage point increase in graduation rates at the (interim) two-year follow-up. A key outstanding question is whether these sizable effects on two-year degrees will ultimately lead to meaningful gains in participants’ economic well-being (specifically, earnings) over time.

Seeking to address this question, West Virginia Community and Technical College System (WVCTCS) will be implementing ASAP at two community colleges, with an explicit focus on increasing completion of occupationally-focused degrees that are aligned with high-wage jobs in the local economy (e.g., advanced manufacturing, IT, welding, healthcare). West Virginia University-Parkersburg and Blue Ridge Community and Technical College will deliver ASAP to a total of 600 students over six years. Arnold Ventures funding will pay for (i) program delivery at a cost of approximately $6,600 total per student over three years, and (ii) technical assistance from CUNY to ensure close fidelity to the ASAP model.

Under a separate grant, Arnold Ventures is funding an RCT of the ASAP replication at WVCTCS to determine whether the graduation impacts found in the two prior RCTs can be reproduced in West Virginia and, if so, whether these impacts lead to increased earnings over time.
A randomized controlled trial of the ASAP model in two West Virginia community colleges, aimed at increasing occupationally-focused degree completion and earnings

**Grant Recipient:** Economic Mobility Corporation

**Principal Investigators:** Anne Roder, Ph.D., Economic Mobility Corporation  
Mark Elliott, Economic Mobility Corporation

**Term:** March 2020 – April 2028

**Funding:** $589,300

**Summary:** Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) is a comprehensive community college program that provides academic, personal, and financial supports to low-income students. In prior well-conducted RCTs, ASAP has been found to produce sizable impacts on (largely two-year) degree completion – a 10 percentage point gain at the six-year follow-up in the City University of New York RCT, and a 16 percentage point gain in the Ohio replication RCT at the three-year follow-up.

In partnership with the West Virginia Community and Technical College System (WVCTCS), Economic Mobility Corporation (Mobility) will be conducting an RCT of ASAP with a focus on students in occupationally-focused programs (e.g., advanced manufacturing, IT, nursing) that are aligned with higher-wage jobs in the local economy. Two West Virginia community colleges will recruit a sample of 1,200 students over a period of three years, and Mobility will randomly assign the students to either a treatment group offered the ASAP program or to a control group. The study’s primary outcome will be degree or credential completion three years after random assignment, measured with data from the participating colleges and the National Student Clearinghouse.

In addition, the study will measure initial workforce earnings three years after random assignment, using state unemployment insurance (UI) records from West Virginia and neighboring jurisdictions (Virginia, Maryland, Ohio, and Washington, DC). The study will also include a cost-effectiveness analysis, comparing the costs associated with college attendance for both treatment and control students and examining differences between the groups in cost per outcome achieved. If this RCT finds sizable impacts on degree completion (as in the prior ASAP RCTs) as well as workforce earnings (given the project’s occupational focus), the findings would provide community colleges and policy officials across the country with a credible path forward to improve life outcomes for low-income individuals in their communities.
• A randomized controlled trial of Creating Birds of a Feather – an intervention aimed at increasing student success in college

**Grant recipient:** University of California, Santa Barbara

**Principal Investigators:** Hunter Gehlbach, Ph. D., University of California, Santa Barbara
  Michael Gottfried, Ph. D., University of California, Santa Barbara

**Term:** September 2016 – April 2019

**Funding:** $209,242

**Summary:** This study is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of a brief, low-cost intervention designed to improve relationships between college instructors and their students by identifying and highlighting interests and values that they share, with the goal of improving students’ academic achievement. A previous RCT of this intervention, conducted with a sample of 25 high school teachers and 315 of their students, found significant improvements in students’ grades over one school year, with particularly large effects for Black and Latino students.

The current study seeks to replicate these previous findings in a college setting, with a much larger sample and a longer-term follow-up. The target sample in the current study is 150 teachers and 2,500 students. The study will use school record data from the college to measure (i) student achievement using objective end-of-course exams, (ii) future course enrollments, and (iii) college persistence over two years.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
A randomized controlled trial of Bottom Line, an program that provides one-on-one guidance to help low-income, first-generation students get into and graduate from college

Grant recipient: Bottom Line, Inc.

Principal Investigator: Ben Castleman, Ph. D., University of Virginia

Term: June 2015 – September 2021

Funding: $100,000 from LJAF ($59,000 from another philanthropic funder)

Summary: This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Bottom Line – a program that provides one-on-one guidance to help low-income, first-generation students get into and graduate from college. This study is measuring college enrollment, persistence, and completion outcomes for a sample of about 2,400 students over a seven-year period, using administrative data from the National Student Clearinghouse. Early impact findings are shown here.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
A randomized controlled trial of College Forward - a program that provides individualized coaching to help low-income students get into and graduate from college

**Grant recipient:** College Forward

**Principal Investigator:** Ben Castleman, Ph. D., University of Virginia

**Term:** October 2015 – October 2024

**Funding:** $98,377 from LJAF (the Greater Texas Foundation is providing $24,000 in co-funding)

**Summary:** This study is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of College Forward — a program that provides individualized coaching from trained AmeriCorps volunteers to help low-income students get into and graduate from college. The program is backed by promising evidence from a prior quasi-experimental study, which found positive impacts on college enrollment and persistence. This RCT will be a large, multi-site study measuring college enrollment, persistence, and completion with a sample of approximately 2,000 high school students from Houston and Austin, Texas. The students will be tracked over an eight-year period using administrative data from the National Student Clearinghouse to measure key college-related outcomes.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
• Long-term follow-up of a randomized controlled trial to evaluate North Carolina’s Early College High Schools

Grant Recipient: University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Principal Investigators: Julie Edmunds, Ph.D., University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Fatih Unlu, Ph.D., RAND Corporation
Elizabeth Glennie, Ph.D., RTI International
Dayanand Manoli, Ph.D., University of Texas at Austin

Term: December 2018 – February 2024

Funding: $499,865

Summary: This project is a long-term follow-up of a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of North Carolina’s Early College High Schools – a high school educational intervention backed by promising initial evidence of effects on postsecondary degree attainment. The state’s Early College High Schools are typically located on college campuses and seek to enroll high school students who are underrepresented in college (e.g., would-be first generation college students, racial and ethnic minorities, low-income students). Most of the Early College High Schools are designed so that students graduate high school in five years with two years of transferable college credit or an associate’s degree.

Between 2005 and 2010, 4,054 students applied to one of 19 over-subscribed Early College High Schools in North Carolina, and were randomly assigned via lottery to either a treatment group that was admitted to an Early College High School or to a control group that was not admitted. The study was well-conducted, and the study team recently published six-year follow-up findings (i.e., one year after scheduled high school graduation for the treatment group and two years after scheduled high school graduation for the control group). The study found that the Early College High Schools produced sizable, statistically significant impacts on the likelihood of ever enrolling in postsecondary education, and the likelihood of attaining a postsecondary credential (usually an associate’s degree).

Under this project, the researchers will extend follow-up using data from the National Student Clearinghouse to determine whether the Early College High Schools produce impacts on bachelor’s degree completion 10 years after random assignment. The researchers will also use administrative records to determine whether the Early College High Schools produce downstream impacts on employment and earnings 12 years after random assignment. Finally, they will conduct a cost analysis of the intervention.
Randomized controlled trials investigating the near and medium-term impacts of behavioral nudge interventions to improve college entry and persistence among low-income students

Grant recipient: The Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia

Principal Investigator: Ben Castleman, Ph. D., University of Virginia

Term: January 2016 - October 2017

Funding: $110,620

Summary: This grant will fund two projects.

In the first project, the study team, in collaboration with The Common Application, will conduct a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to evaluate the impact of various text-messaging strategies to encourage student completion of college financial aid application forms, with a national sample of 350,000 economically-disadvantaged high school seniors. The Dell Foundation is the primary funder of the study. The total cost of the project is $695,000 (LJAF’s contribution is $60,000).

In the second project, the study team will measure the longer-term outcomes of three RCTs that evaluated various interventions to encourage economically-disadvantaged high school seniors to complete financial aid forms and other items needed for college matriculation. The RCTs are high-quality studies that found promising effects on short-term outcomes (e.g., college matriculation). Longer-term follow-up will be valuable to determine whether these effects are sustained over time and lead to more policy-important outcomes (e.g., college persistence and completion).

The pre-specified analysis plans for the two projects are linked here and here.
A randomized controlled trial of One Million Degrees, a program providing financial, academic, professional, and personal supports for low-income community college students

Grant recipient: University of Chicago

Principal Investigators: Marianne Bertrand, Ph. D., University of Chicago
  Kelly Hallberg, Ph. D., University of Chicago

Term: September 2016 – January 2025

Funding: $146,842

Summary: This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of One Million Degrees (OMD), a program that provides wrap-around financial, academic, professional, and personal supports for low-income community college students in Chicago. Prior evidence suggests this intervention could provide sizable impacts – it shares some key features with the City University of New York’s Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), which has been found in a large, well-conducted RCT to nearly double the graduation rate (from 22% for control group students to 40% for ASAP students, over a 3-year period).

OMD’s ongoing expansion in Chicago provides an opportunity to embed a randomized evaluation. The study sample will consist of approximately 1,071 students from all seven Chicago City Colleges and a nearby suburban community college (Harper College), and will use administrative data sources to measure college enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment, as well as workforce outcomes, over an 8-year period.

This study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
A randomized controlled trial of up-front performance incentives for instructors and students in community colleges

**Grant recipient:** Regents of the University of California

**Principal Investigators:** Sally Sadoff, Ph. D., University of California San Diego  
Andy Brownback, Ph. D., University of Arkansas

**Term:** August 2016 – December 2022

**Funding:** $312,147

**Summary:** This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of performance incentives for community college instructors and their students. The instructors’ incentive consists of an upfront bonus worth up to 50% of their per course salary. If their students exceed pre-established performance targets, instructors earn additional payments, while failure to meet the targets results in the instructors repaying a portion of their upfront bonus. Students receive incentives as well in the form of vouchers for a free summer course if they successfully complete a selected course during the spring semester. As with the teacher incentive, the voucher is provided upfront at the start of spring semester, but students can lose the voucher if they fail to successfully complete the targeted course. The design of the intervention is informed by prior RCTs in Louisiana, Arizona, California, Florida, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Illinois and Mexico, which have found that 1) incentives for teachers and/or students can improve achievement at least in the short term and 2) upfront incentives are particularly powerful.

The study sample will consist of approximately 140 instructors and 6,000 students at Ivy Tech Community College in Indiana, and will use administrative data sources to measure student performance on an objective final exam, credit accumulation, degree completion, and employment over six years.

This study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
Replication randomized controlled trial of Stay the Course, an intervention designed to increase college persistence and completion by low-income community college students

Grant Recipient: University of Notre Dame

Term: June 2017 – July 2019

Principal Investigators: Melissa S. Kearney, Ph.D., University of Maryland
James X. Sullivan, Ph.D., University of Notre Dame
William Evans, Ph.D., University of Notre Dame

Funding: $129,529

Summary: This grant will support the continuation of an ongoing randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Stay the Course, an intervention designed to improve postsecondary persistence and graduation outcomes for low-income community college students through case management and access to emergency cash assistance. Stay the Course shares some similarities with the evidence-based City University of New York Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) in that it seeks to reduce financial, academic, and other barriers to community college students remaining in school. While Stay the Course’s services are less comprehensive than ASAP’s, it is also less costly to implement – about $5,600 per student total for three years of enrollment for Stay the Course versus about $14,000 per student for ASAP.

Stay the Course was previously evaluated in a well-conducted pilot RCT at one campus of Tarrant County College, a large community college system in Fort Worth, Texas. That study found that the program produced a promising increase in the likelihood that students remained enrolled in postsecondary education six semesters after random assignment (50% of the Stay the Course group was still enrolled vs. 44% of the control group, an impact that was close to statistical significance). A possible reason the program did not produce impacts that were large enough to reach full statistical significance (at the 0.05 level) is that only 22% of students in the Stay the Course group ever participated in the program.

The LJAF grant will support longer-term follow-up of a replication RCT of the program that is currently underway with a sample of 261 students at a different Tarrant County College campus. Compared to the pilot study, this study has achieved a much higher program participation rate among treatment group members (87%), and so is better powered to detect program impacts. After one year of follow-up, the new study’s initial findings on postsecondary enrollment are consistent with the promising findings from the pilot trial.

This grant will support continued data collection, analysis, and reporting on the impacts of Stay the Course for two additional years, providing outcome data three years after random assignment. Data collection will include school records and program participation data from Tarrant County College, as well as enrollment and degree data from the National Student Clearinghouse.

This study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
Evaluation of Tacoma Housing Authority’s College Housing Assistance Program (CHAP), which provides rental assistance vouchers to homeless or “near-homeless” community college students

Grant Recipient: Temple University

Principal Investigator: Sara Goldrick-Rab, Ph.D., Temple University

Term: March 2018 – November 2023

Funding: Up to $331,050

Summary: This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of the Tacoma Housing Authority’s College Housing Assistance Program (CHAP). CHAP is financed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Moving to Work program and provides rental assistance vouchers to currently enrolled Tacoma Community College students who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness (“near-homeless”).

The prior evidence on CHAP, while not yet demonstrated in an RCT, suggests it has potential to improve academic completion outcomes among a targeted population of homeless and near-homeless students. Substantiating this evidence with a well-conducted and relatively low-cost RCT will be of value given the existence of a dedicated funding stream for the program and the expressed interest of other housing authorities to implement similar programs, thus demonstrating a viable path to scale up if proven effective.

Under this project, the study will randomly assign approximately 300 near-homeless students via lottery to receive an offer of a CHAP voucher or to a control group not offered a voucher. The researchers will collect and analyze administrative data to ascertain CHAP’s effects on academic completion, homelessness, healthcare utilization, and, if initial effects on these outcomes are sufficiently promising, on employment and earnings under an optional extension.

The study’s pre-analysis plan is linked here.
REGULATORY POLICY (HEALTH, SAFETY, ENVIRONMENTAL)

- Evaluation of automated enforcement of outdoor water restrictions in Fresno, California

**Grant Recipient:** University of Chicago

**Principal Investigator:** Michael Greenstone, Ph.D., Energy and Environment Lab, University of Chicago

**Term:** April 2018 – June 2020

**Funding:** $233,162

**Summary:** This is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) designed to help the City of Fresno, California identify the most effective outdoor water restriction enforcement strategy to maximize water conservation while minimizing public complaints. Like many water-scarce areas in the United States, Fresno seeks to conserve water by limiting when households can water their lawns, particularly during the hot and dry summer months when drought risk is highest. However, 2016 water meter data indicates that, in a given summer month, over half of Fresno single-family households likely violate these restrictions based on their level of water use.

Historically, Fresno has used a costly system to enforce outdoor water restrictions, under which city employees (“water cops”) visited individual households with recent high water use to visually inspect their lawns for evidence of watering during restricted times, and issued a fine if they found such evidence. However, the city plans to move to a more efficient, automated system to identify and fine violators of water restrictions using data from recently installed smart water meters, which provide near real-time, hourly household water usage data. Because this is a new system, it is unknown what combination of fine threshold (i.e., the amount of water use that would trigger a fine) and fine amount will result in the most water conservation while not being so stringent as to provoke widespread citizen complaints.

This study will randomly assign approximately 100,000 Fresno single-family households with hourly water meters to one of 12 different strategies for promoting water conservation, comprised of various combinations of fine thresholds and fine amounts, or to the existing strategy (i.e., water cops and the existing fine amount).

The study will measure average daily household water use in each of the randomly-assigned groups using data collected by the smart meters during the summers of 2018 and 2019. The City’s Department of Public Utilities will use the study’s findings regarding the optimal fine threshold-level combination to shape its water conservation policies.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
A randomized controlled trial of Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) workplace inspections

Grant recipient: David Levine

Principal Investigator: David Levine, Ph. D., University of California Berkeley

Term: July 2014 - November 2015

Funding: $96,000 from LJAF ($57,000 from other philanthropic sources)

Summary: This project was a large, multi-site RCT of workplace health and safety inspections conducted by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). For a sample of about 13,000 business establishments eligible for a randomized inspection, the study tested whether being randomly chosen for inspection affects establishments’ subsequent injury rates and business outcomes (e.g., sales, business closures) over a three-to-four year period – all measured through administrative data from OSHA and other sources. The study is now completed.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
**HEALTHCARE DELIVERY**

- **Expansion of the Transitional Care Model across Four Health Systems**

  **Grant Recipient:** University of Pennsylvania (Penn)

  **Term:** January 2020 – 2022

  **Funding:** $4,021,341

  **Summary:** The Transitional Care Model (TCM) is a nurse-led hospital discharge and home follow-up program for chronically ill older adults, aimed at preventing health complications and re-hospitalizations. TCM is delivered by Master’s level transitional care nurses who work with older adults, their families, doctors and other health team members while older adults are hospitalized to develop individualized plans of care and, following discharge, accompany older adults to their physician visits and conduct an average of 12 home visits over three months to monitor symptoms and ensure the patient is taking medications. TCM is backed by uniquely promising evidence of sizable reductions in rehospitalizations and net healthcare costs. Two well-conducted RCTs in Philadelphia, published in 1999 and 2004, found reductions in rehospitalizations of 30-50%, and net healthcare cost savings of approximately $4,500 per patient, within 5-12 months after patient discharge.

  Mary Naylor, the developer of TCM at Penn, will partner with four health systems (including nine hospitals) that serve diverse populations in five states – Washington, Michigan, California, Missouri, and Ohio. Penn and its partners will deliver TCM to a total of 800 patients. The cost per patient will be approximately $3,400, which includes start-up and other costs unique to a demonstration (the steady-state cost of TCM is about $1,200 per patient). The grant will also fund technical assistance to ensure faithful TCM replication, an assessment of implementation fidelity at each site, and recruitment of a sample of patients for the randomized controlled trial (RCT) evaluation of the project conducted by Mathematica. This RCT will determine whether the impacts found in prior RCTs can be reproduced under expanded implementation conditions in health systems that are diverse in terms of geographic location, patient demographics, post-acute services offered, and hospital size.
RCT evaluation of the Transitional Care Model across four hospital systems

Grant Recipient: Mathematica Policy Research

Principal Investigators: Randall Brown, Ph.D., Mathematica
Arkadipta Ghosh, Ph.D., Mathematica

Term: December 2019 – April 2024

Funding: $1,978,653

Summary: TCM is a nurse-led hospital discharge and home follow-up program for chronically ill older adults, aimed at preventing health complications and re-hospitalizations and improving patients’ experience with care. TCM is delivered by a Master’s level transitional care nurse who works with the patient, his/her family, and the patient’s doctors while the patient is hospitalized to develop an individualized plan of care and, following discharge, accompanies the patient to his/her first physician visit and conducts an average of 12 home visits over three months to monitor symptoms and ensure the patient is taking medications. The nurses also will help patients address depression and social needs that can increase their risk of readmission.

TCM is backed by uniquely promising evidence of sizable reductions in rehospitalizations and net healthcare costs. Two well-conducted RCTs in Philadelphia, published in 1999 and 2004, found reductions in rehospitalizations of 30-50%, and net healthcare cost savings of approximately $4,500 per patient, within 5-12 months after patient discharge.

Under this project, the developer of TCM at UPenn will partner with four health systems (including nine hospitals) that serve diverse populations in five states – Washington, Michigan, California, Missouri, and Ohio. UPenn and the hospitals will participate in an RCT to determine whether the impacts found in the prior RCTs can be reproduced under expanded implementation conditions in health systems that are diverse in terms of geographic location, patient demographics, post-acute services offered, payer mix, and hospital size. Mathematica will enroll a total sample of 1,600 patients (800 treatment and 800 control), with each hospital system contributing 400 patients to the sample. The study will estimate program effects on hospital readmissions, and healthcare costs and utilization, over the 12 months post-random assignment using data from administrative records (obtained from Medicare claims, Medicare Advantage plans, and hospitals). The study will also estimate program effects on health-related quality of life measured in a one-time survey administered 3 months post-random assignment. The study will also investigate how program impacts vary across health system, patient characteristics (including primary diagnosis), insurer, and fidelity to the intervention.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
**SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION**

- **Evaluation of peer navigators for emergency department patients presenting with an opioid overdose**

**Grant Recipient:** Rhode Island Hospital

**Principal Investigators:** Francesca Beaudoin, M.D., Ph.D., Rhode Island Hospital  
Brandon Marshall, Ph.D., Brown University

**Term:** July 2018 – December 2022

**Funding:** $801,819

**Summary:** This is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of a peer navigator program for emergency department (ED) patients presenting with an opioid overdose in Rhode Island, which has had one of the highest rates of overdose mortality in the nation. Peer navigators are individuals in long-term recovery for opioid addiction who have undergone extensive training to provide ED patients with recovery support and referrals to treatment, and remain engaged with patients for at least 90 days after their discharge from the ED. The peer navigator program was launched in 2014 at Rhode Island Hospital, which treats the majority of the state’s overdose patients.

The state currently plans to increase the number of certified peer navigators in Rhode Island in 2018 and would likely further expand the program should it be shown in this RCT to be more effective than standard care. Additionally, jurisdictions in New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New Jersey have, or are in the process of, creating programs based on the Rhode Island peer navigator model, with several other states expressing an interest in doing so.

Besides being a rapidly expanding approach to addressing the opioid crisis, the peer navigator model shares many similarities with the Recovery Coach model, which has been found in a large, well-conducted RCT to produce promising effects on substance use (e.g., a 29% reduction in the likelihood of mothers delivering a substance-exposed infant).

This study will randomly assign approximately 650 ED patients admitted for an opioid overdose to either a group that will receive peer navigator services or a control group that will receive usual care (i.e., a brief, one-time session with a social worker in the ED). Random assignment will take place on a rolling basis as patients present in the ED during the two-year study enrollment period.

The study’s primary outcomes will be (i) engagement in formal addiction treatment from a licensed substance abuse treatment provider within 30 days following patients’ original ED visit, and (ii) repeat ED visits for an opioid overdose within 18 months of the original ED visit. These outcomes will be measured using administrative data collected through Rhode Island’s overdose surveillance platform.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
• Replication randomized controlled trial of PROSPER, a community-wide system for delivering evidence-based substance misuse prevention programs for youth

Grant Recipient: Iowa State University of Science and Technology

Term: March 2017 – July 2022

Principal Investigator: Richard Spoth, Ph. D., Iowa State University

Funding: $1,500,000

Summary: This project is a replication and extension trial of PROmoting School-community-university Partnerships to Enhance Resilience (PROSPER), a program-delivery system through which land grant universities partner with community teams to implement evidence-based programs for preventing youth substance misuse and other problem behaviors. A prior well-conducted randomized controlled trial (RCT) with a sample of 28 school districts in Pennsylvania and Iowa found sizable, sustained effects on important substance use outcomes, including (at a 6.5 year follow-up) school-wide reductions of 10-35% in illicit drug use initiation by youth who were non-users in 6th grade (prior to program delivery); and reductions in substance use for the full sample – non-users and users (e.g., 14% lower likelihood of past-month cigarette use).

This RCT will evaluate PROSPER combined with Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT). SBIRT applies a brief, web-based screening tool to identify youth who are at greatest risk of developing serious behavioral problems including substance misuse, so that these youth and their families can receive in-depth support. The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation will fund most of the program delivery expenses, along with a process evaluation.

The study sample will include 28 school districts in Iowa with over 2,500 participating 6th graders (none of the districts will have participated in the prior RCT). The districts will be randomly assigned to PROSPER + SBIRT versus a delayed intervention control group. The primary outcome measures will be non-medical prescription opioid use, marijuana use, and other illicit drug use, measured over a 3.5 year follow-up period (end of 9th grade). If sizable impacts are found, the study team will seek a follow-up grant from LJAF and/or other funders for longer-term follow-up (end of 12th grade), to determine whether the effects endure.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
A randomized controlled trial of PROSPER – a community-wide substance abuse prevention program for youth

Grant recipient: The Pennsylvania State University

Principal Investigator: Max Crowley, Ph. D., The Pennsylvania State University

Term: July 2016 – September 2018

Funding: $150,000

Summary: The project is a study to determine whether the positive, long-term impacts on youth substance use found in a prior well-conducted randomized controlled trial (RCT) translate into reductions in youth Medicaid utilization and costs. Specifically, this study will build on an RCT of Promoting School-community-university Partnerships to Enhance Resilience (PROSPER), a program-delivery system in which universities partner with community teams to implement evidence-based programs for preventing youth substance abuse and other problem behaviors. The original RCT of PROSPER had a sample of 28 rural towns and small cities in Iowa and Pennsylvania. At a 6.5-year (end of 12th grade) follow-up, PROSPER was found to produce (i) community-wide reductions of 10-35% in illicit drug use initiation by youth who were non-users in 6th grade (prior to program delivery), and (ii) moderate reductions in substance use for the full sample – non-users and users (e.g., 14% lower likelihood of past-month cigarette use).

For the new analysis, the study’s sample will consist of 33,000 youth in the communities randomly assigned in the PROSPER RCT described above. The study will use administrative Medicaid data to measure sample members’ health care utilization and Medicaid costs between the ages of 12 and 18.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
• Expansion of the LifeSkills Training substance use prevention curriculum for middle school students in Minnesota

Grant Recipient: Minnesota Department of Human Services and Department of Management and Budget

Term: March 2019 – September 2024

Funding: $2,493,724

Summary: LifeSkills Training (LST)—a middle school substance use prevention program—has the strongest evidence of sizable and sustained impacts of any such prevention program rigorously evaluated to date. In two well-conducted, independent randomized controlled trials (RCTs), LST was found to produce 10-20% reductions in the likelihood of youth smoking or drinking heavily, five to six years after random assignment. One of the RCTs also measured illicit drug use and found suggestive evidence of sizable reductions.

Under this project, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, in partnership with the state’s Department of Management and Budget, will work with school districts across the state of Minnesota to provide LST to around 14,000 middle school students at 40 schools over four years. These funds will cover the cost of curriculum materials and training of teachers (about $30 per student per year) plus additional costs (about $60 per student per year) primarily for recruiting schools into the project and insuring teachers receive the necessary technical assistance to ensure faithful implementation of the intervention.

Participating Minnesota school districts, in partnership with state agencies, will also participate in an RCT to determine whether the large impacts found in the prior RCTs of LST in Iowa and New York State can be reproduced on a bigger scale in Minnesota. Importantly, this will be the first large RCT of LST since the start of the opioid epidemic and will be the first to directly measure LST’s effects on youth opioid use.
Randomized Controlled Trial Evaluation of LifeSkills Training in Minnesota

Grant Recipient: MDRC

Principal Investigator: Marie-Andrée Somers, EdD., MDRC

Term: January 2020 – January 2028

Funding: $1,777,511

Summary: This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to evaluate LifeSkills Training (LST) – a middle school substance use prevention program – that has been found in two prior well-conducted RCTs to produce 10-30% reductions in rates of youth smoking, drunkenness, and marijuana use five to six years after random assignment, with one study also finding suggestive evidence of sizable reductions in prescription drug (e.g., opioid) misuse.

This RCT will determine whether the sizable impacts found in prior RCTs of LST can be reproduced on a larger scale in a different jurisdiction and time period than the previous trials, which took place in the late 1990s and early 2000s when substance use patterns were substantially different (e.g., before the introduction of electronic cigarettes to the United States and the opioid epidemic).

MDRC will partner with Minnesota’s Department of Human Services and Minnesota Management and Budget to recruit approximately 60 middle schools to participate in the RCT. The study will track substance use outcomes for the approximately 4,500 6th and 7th grade students entering these middle schools in the fall of 2020. The study’s primary outcomes will be students’ likelihood of ever using a tobacco product (including e-cigarettes), and likelihood of ever using marijuana. The study will also measure important secondary outcomes, including youth opioid and alcohol use. All outcomes will be measured through two surveys – one two years after random assignment and the second six years after random assignment, when sample students will be in 11th or 12th grade.

The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked here.
**CIVIC INVOLVEMENT**

- **Evaluation of Online Voter Turnout Tool**

  **Grant Recipient:** Vote.org (a non-partisan 501c3)

  **Principal Investigators:** Donghee Jo, Ph.D., Northeastern University  
  Enrico Cantoni, Ph.D., University of Bologna  
  Cory Smith, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

  **Term:** September 2018 – October 2019

  **Funding:** $148,520

  **Summary:** This is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of a voter turnout tool developed by BallotReady, a non-partisan social enterprise whose website, BallotReady.org, will provide information on 2018 electoral candidates in all 50 states. The turnout tool will be posted on BallotReady.org and will include three components: (i) a series of specific questions to encourage website visitors to make a plan to vote, (ii) prompts for users to sign up for reminders about when and where to vote, and (iii) a platform where users can easily share their intent to vote with their friends on social network websites.

  The first two components of the intervention – making a plan to vote and receiving reminders about voting – have been found in large well-conducted RCTs to significantly increase voter turnout by 3-4 percentage points, though the interventions tested in those studies were not web-based. Researchers piloted the turnout tool earlier this year to determine whether visitors to BallotReady.org would actually use it, and found that 92% of users who were sent directly to the turnout tool engaged with it in some way (i.e., answered the voting plan questions and/or signed up for voting reminders).

  This study’s sample will consist of roughly 150,000 visitors to BallotReady.org in the lead up to the November midterm elections. Sample members will be drawn from seven states – Florida, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, New Jersey, Arkansas, and North Carolina – which were selected in part based on their collective representativeness of the national electorate in terms of two-party vote share in the 2014 midterm election.

  Visitors will be randomly assigned at the household level to either (i) a treatment group that will be sent directly to the turnout tool after inputting their address on the site (as was done in the pilot), or (ii) a control group that will not be able to access the turnout tool and would instead be sent straight to BallotReady’s usual informational site after inputting their address. The treatment group will still be able to access the informational portion of the site, but only after being exposed to the turnout tool.

  The study will measure impacts on voter turnout using data from publicly available voting records.

  The study’s pre-specified analysis plan is linked [here](#).
UNPLANNED PREGNANCY PREVENTION

- Long-term follow-up of a randomized controlled trial to evaluate Teen Options to Prevent Pregnancy (T.O.P.P.)

**Grant Recipient:** Mathematica Policy Research

**Principal Investigators:** Brian Goesling, Ph.D., Mathematica Policy Research

**Term:** March 2019 – April 2021

**Funding:** $275,442

**Summary:** This project is a long-term follow-up of a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Teen Options to Prevent Pregnancy (T.O.P.P.) – a program for low-income adolescent mothers, delivered by nurse educators and a social worker, which aims to reduce rapid repeat pregnancy and promote healthy birth spacing.

The T.O.P.P. program was evaluated in a well-conducted RCT with a sample of 598 low-income adolescent mothers (ages 10 to 19) who were randomly assigned to either receive the T.O.P.P. program or to a control group that did not receive the program. The study found that T.O.P.P. produced large, statistically significant reductions in the likelihood of rapid repeat pregnancies and births in the 18 to 30 months after random assignment. For the full sample, the program reduced the rate of repeat pregnancy during the 18 months after random assignment by about half (21% for the T.O.P.P. group vs. 39% for the control group). For the subsample of mothers ages 18 or 19 at the start of the program for whom the study obtained state birth records, the program reduced the rate of new births during the 30 months after random assignment by about one-third (24% for the T.O.P.P. group vs. 36% for the control group). Both effects were statistically significant.

Under this project, the researchers will extend follow-up using administrative records to determine whether T.O.P.P. produces impacts on the primary outcome of repeat births over a longer period (four years after random assignment). The researchers will also determine whether T.O.P.P. produces downstream impacts on mothers’ education, employment, earnings, and public assistance benefit receipt (Medicaid, SNAP, WIC, and TANF) four years after random assignment.
Expansion/replication of Teen Options to Prevent Pregnancy (T.O.P.P.) in 11 New York City hospitals

Grant Recipient: PAGNY Health and Research Foundation (PHRF)

Term: October 2019 – November 2023

Funding: $2,417,229

Summary: Under this project, PAGNY Health and Research Foundation (PHRF) will deliver the Teen Options to Prevent Pregnancy (T.O.P.P.) program to 500 low-income, teenage mothers recruited from 11 public hospitals in the New York City Health and Hospital (H+H) system. T.O.P.P. provides teenage mothers with facilitated access to contraceptive services and up to 18 months of personalized contraceptive counseling delivered by a nurse educator trained in motivational interviewing. In a prior well-conducted randomized controlled trial (RCT) in Ohio, T.O.P.P. was found to reduce repeat pregnancy at the 18-month follow-up from 39% in the control group to 21% in the treatment group and to reduce repeat births at the 30-month follow-up from 36% in the control group to 24% in the treatment group.

As a condition of grant award, PHRF will participate in an RCT to determine whether the large impacts found in the prior RCT can be reproduced under expanded implementation conditions in a new geographic setting.
• Replication RCT of Teen Options to Prevent Pregnancy (T.O.P.P.) in 11 New York City hospitals

**Grant Recipient:** Mathematica

**Principal Investigators:** Brian Goesling, Ph.D., Mathematica Policy Research  
Jessica Harding, Ph.D., Mathematica Policy Research

**Term:** October 2019 – November 2024

**Funding:** $1,957,089

**Summary:** This project is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of the Teen Options to Prevent Pregnancy (T.O.P.P.) program for low-income teenage mothers as implemented in 11 public hospitals in the New York City Health and Hospital (H+H) system. T.O.P.P. provides teenage mothers with facilitated access to contraceptive services and 18 months of personalized counseling delivered by a nurse educator trained in motivational interviewing. In a prior well-conducted randomized controlled trial (RCT) in Ohio, T.O.P.P. was found to reduce repeat pregnancy at the 18-month follow-up from 39% in the control group to 21% in the treatment group and to reduce repeat births 6 to 30 months after study enrollment from 36% in the control group to 24% in the treatment group.

Researchers from Mathematica will enroll a sample of 1,000 low-income teenage mothers recruited from the 11 H+H hospitals and randomly assign 500 mothers to be offered T.O.P.P. and 500 to a control group with access to existing standard-of-care services. The study’s primary outcome will be repeat pregnancy measured with survey data collected 18 months after random assignment. In addition, the study will (i) measure repeat births over the 18 months using both survey data and administrative records; (ii) measure fidelity of program implementation; and (iii) conduct a detailed cost analysis of the intervention.

The study’s pre-specified pre-analysis plan is linked [here](#).