CHARACTERISTICS OF TANF PARTICIPANTS

Families with children under age six participating in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) must participate in education & training or other work-related activities for 20 hours per week. However, with high rates of financial hardship, poor health, and exposure to violence and adversity, families may have difficulty reaching self-sufficiency.

These hardships are closely linked to work-limiting conditions such as:
- Poor academic achievement
- Cardiovascular disease
- Poor cognitive functions
- Poor financial literacy
- Abseentism
- Child hospitalizations
- Food, housing, & energy insecurity
- Depression and other mental health limitations

BUILDING WEALTH AND HEALTH NETWORK DESIGN

- We conducted a randomized controlled trial of an intervention intended to evaluate a new model of public benefits provision with 103 primary caregivers of children under 6 years old.
- The intervention aimed at increasing financial, human, and social capital in order to improve financial security and maternal and child health.
- A trauma-informed approach to financial empowerment and asset-building activities would leverage participants’ own strengths to become self-sufficient.

OUR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

- Mean age of participants was 25 years, and youngest child was 30 months. The majority were women (94.2%), never married (83.5%), unemployed (94.2%), and without a bank account (66%).
- Measures include:
  - Career Readiness
  - Family economic hardship

Participant Hardship and Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>% of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any concern of child’s development</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair/poor health</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Insecurity</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Insecurity</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exposure to Adversity and Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>% of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ever saw someone being killed by another person</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more ACEs</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever been picked up, arrested, or taken away by police</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngest child’s other parent ever spent time in jail or prison</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever saw someone get shot with gun</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE REVERSE SIDE
CONCLUSIONS POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Many families with young children participating in TANF demonstrate very high levels of adversity and economic hardship.
- TANF programs meant to encourage participation in the workforce must utilize comprehensive approaches to support families who have experienced trauma and adversity.
- Trauma-informed approaches to career readiness such as Building Wealth and Health Network, offer families opportunities for success in the workforce.
- Implement two-generation interventions that address mental health and economic stability of caregivers simultaneously with the health and development of children.

Definitions

1. **Career Readiness**
   - Employment Hope: psychological empowerment, future-oriented self-motivation, utilization of skills and resources, and goal-orientation
   - General Self-Efficacy: individual self-efficacy in addressing daily challenges, adapting after stressful events

2. **Family Economic Hardship**
   - U.S. Household Food Security Measure: 18-item measure developed by USDA; food insecurity defined as lack of access to enough food for an active and healthy life
   - Energy Security: inability to pay heating and cooling bills and/or having service cut off
   - Housing Insecurity: overcrowding in the home or multiple moves in a year

3. **Physical & Mental Health**
   - Physical Health (parent and child): self-rated as excellent, good, fair, or poor
   - CES-D (parent): 10-item screener assessing various symptoms of depression
   - Parent’s Evaluation of Developmental Status (child): 10-question measure of parent-assessed developmental risk in several domains

4. **Exposure to Adversity, Violence, & Criminal Justice**
   - Adverse Childhood Experiences: 10-item retrospective survey of experiences before age 18 including abuse, neglect, and household instability
   - Survey of Exposure to Community Violence: self-report of victimization or witnessing community violence
   - Interaction with Criminal Justice: if participant, child, or child’s other parent spent time in jail or prison

Next Steps

- The Randomized Controlled Trial is complete and our research team is currently analyzing outcomes. Information related to our findings will be available on our website soon.
- We have also enhanced the intervention per participant feedback and will begin analyzing this group in 2017. Information about this group will be available on our website as well.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please see the following article: