



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
- Poor financial literacy
- Food, housing, and energy insecurity
- Poor physical disease
- Absenteeism
- Depression and other mental health limitations
- Poor cognitive functions
- Child hospitalizations

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.

TANF as is

- Quarterly surveys for 15 months

Control Group

Financial Empowerment classes

- 3 hours/week for 28 weeks
- Financial literacy curriculum designed for adults with little to low income

Matched Savings

- 1:1 matches of up to \$20 per month for a full year

Partial Intervention

Trauma-informed Peer Support

- 2.5 hours/week for 28 weeks
- SELF curriculum from Sanctuary Model®

Financial Empowerment classes

- 3 hours/week for 28 weeks
- Financial literacy curriculum designed for adults with little to low income

Matched Savings

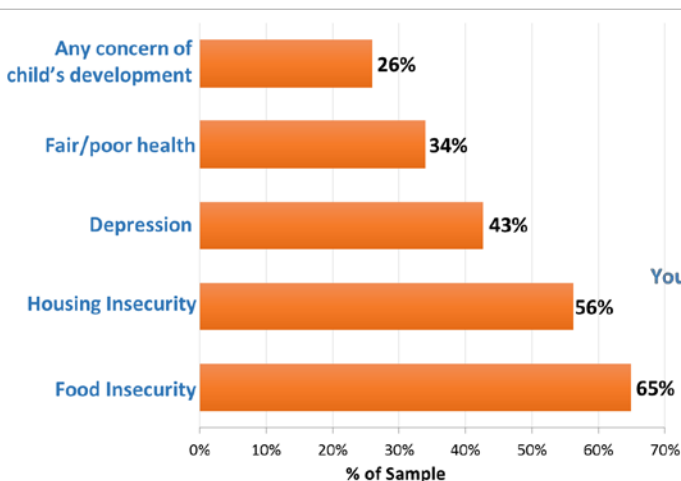
- 1:1 matches of up to \$20 per month for a full year

Full Intervention

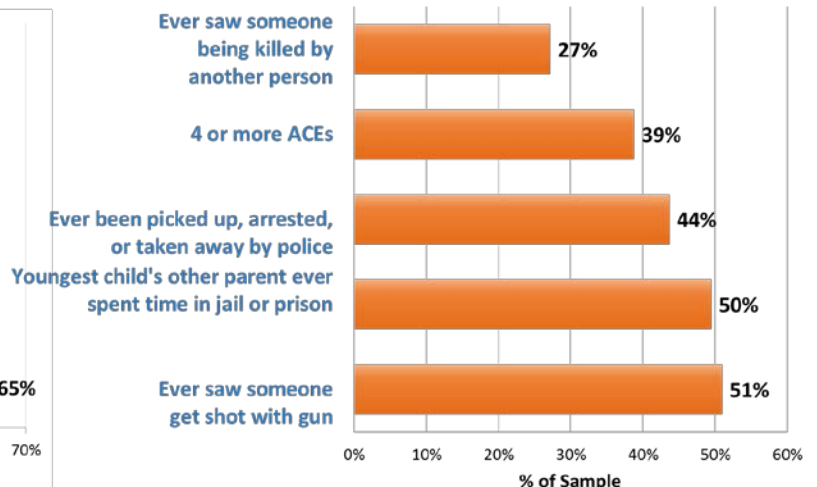
OUR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

- ▶ 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 Readiness¹
 - Career Readiness¹
 - Family economic hardship²

Participant Hardship and Health



Exposure to Adversity and Violence



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

¹Career 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

²Family 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

³Physical & 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

⁴Exposure 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:

Sun J, Patel F, Kirzner R, Newton-Famous N, Owens C, Welles S, and Chilton M. (2016) The Building Wealth and Health Network: methods and baseline characteristics from a randomized controlled trial for families with young children participating in temporary assistance for needy families (TANF). *BMC Public Health*, 16: 583.



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