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The Implementation Research Incubator Celebrates a Busy Year

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This post is one in a continuing series aiming to inform implementation research in social policy evaluations. Contributors from inside and outside MDRC share lessons from past program evaluations and insights from ongoing studies.

We're getting in the "year-end wrap-up" spirit a bit early here at the Incubator. In this post, we highlight some implementation research activities at MDRC over the past year and preview what's in store for 2018.

In 2017, MDRC's implementation researchers launched the [Implementation Research Incubator](#), where we aim to

- *share* ideas about implementation research data, methods, analysis, and findings;
- *foster* development of ideas and insights about implementation research;
- *integrate* understanding across policy domains and academic disciplines;
- *advance* transparent, rigorous implementation research; and
- *inform* implementation practice and scale-up of evidence-based programs.

We also conducted workshops on "Implementation Research in Randomized Controlled Trials" at four professional conferences: the [Society for Research in Educational Evaluation](#) (March), the [Public Management Research Conference](#) (June); the [Global Implementation Conference](#) (June); and the [National Association of Welfare Research and Statistics](#) (August). These sessions focused on program adaptation and how service provision differs between program and control groups (service contrast) — topics that we'll continue to work on during the coming year.

NEW PROJECTS

In 2017, MDRC started work on a number of projects in which implementation research will play a role. These include evaluations of education initiatives — the [P-TECH 9-14 school model](#), which incorporates employment opportunities into the curriculum; [The Finish Line: Graduation by Design](#), which uses behavioral science to analyze barriers to college completion; the scholarship and student services initiative [Detroit Promise Path](#); the [New World of Work](#) 21st-century skills training program; and [several K-12 projects](#) in the early stages — as well as programs promoting employment and income security, criminal justice reform initiatives, and a study of [innovation and effectiveness in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\) programs](#).

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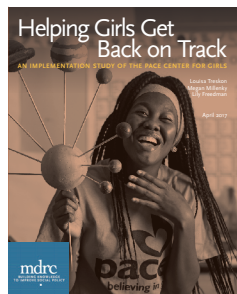
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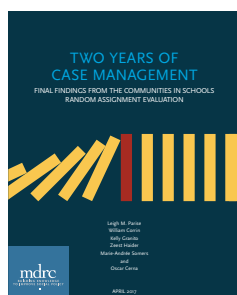
PUBLICATIONS

In 2017, implementation research was featured in or informed findings in more than two dozen project reports and other publications:



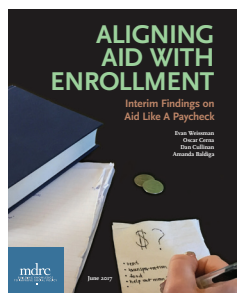
Youth

- Helping Girls Get Back on Track: An Implementation Study of the PACE Center for Girls
- Bringing Gender-Responsive Principles into Practice: Evidence from the Evaluation of the PACE Center for Girls
- An Introduction to the World of Work: A Study of the Implementation and Impacts of New York City's Summer Youth Employment Program
- Reengaging New York City's Disconnected Youth Through Work: Implementation and Early Impacts of the Young Adult Internship Program



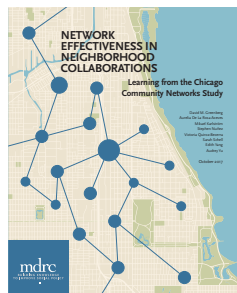
P-12 education

- Using Evaluation Systems for Teacher Improvement: Are School Districts Ready to Meet New Federal Goals?
- Two Years of Case Management: Final Findings from the Communities In Schools Random Assignment Evaluation
- Tiered Systems of Support: Lessons from MDRC Evaluations
- Lessons for Improving School Choice from Other Policy Areas
- Math in the Real World: Early Findings from a Study of the Dana Center Mathematics Pathways
- Group Work Is Not Cooperative Learning: An Evaluation of PowerTeaching in Middle Schools (A Report from the Investing in Innovation (i3) Evaluation)
- Every Step Counts: Building a School Choice Architecture
- Summer Boost: Challenges and Opportunities in Summer Programs for Rising Kindergarten Students



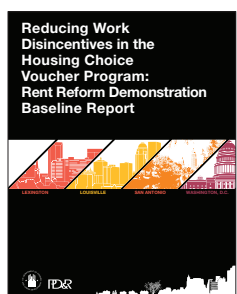
Postsecondary education

- Aligning Aid with Enrollment: Interim Findings on Aid Like A Paycheck
- Enhancing Promise Programs to Improve College Access and Success
- An Early Look at the Career Ready Internship Program
- Raising the Floor: New Approaches to Serving the Lowest-Skilled Students at Community Colleges in Texas and Beyond



Community initiatives

- Understanding Community Collaborations Through Social Network Analysis
- Power in Community Networks: How Community Organizations Collaborate to Improve Schools and Mobilize for Change
- Network Effectiveness in Neighborhood Collaborations: Learning from the Chicago Community Networks Study
- Beyond Reporting: Using Data as a Performance Management Tool



Financial incentives and employment services

- Reducing Work Disincentives in the Housing Choice Voucher Program: Rent Reform Demonstration Baseline Report
- Learning from the Work Rewards Demonstration: Final Results from the Family Self-Sufficiency Study in New York City
- Scaling Up a Place-Based Employment Program: Highlights from the Jobs Plus Pilot Program Evaluation

Families and children

- [Building Bridges and Bonds \(B3\) Study Design Report](#)

Behavioral science

- [Nudging Change in Human Services: Final Report of the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency \(BIAS\) Project](#)

Criminal justice

- [New York City's Pretrial Supervised Release Program: An Alternative to Bail](#)

Methods

- [MDRC's Approach to Using Predictive Analytics to Improve and Target Social Services Based on Risk](#)

LOOKING FORWARD

We're excited about upcoming Incubator posts planned for 2018:

- How implementation research fits within a broad paradigm of evidence-building and learning
- Implementation research findings from the 88-site [Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation \(MIHOPE\)](#)
- A framework and practical guide for understanding and measuring how service provision differs between program and control groups (service contrast) in randomized controlled trials
- How systematic implementation research, conducted at all stages of program development and evaluation, can inform the scale-up of evidence-based programs
- Implementation and process research findings from the [Family Self-Sufficiency Program Evaluation](#)
- A framework and practical guide for understanding and measuring how service provision differs between program and control groups (service contrast) in randomized controlled trials
- Practical strategies that our researchers use to conduct focus groups
- ... and more!

We'll see you back here in the new year!

