



Families & Research at OPRE

National Academies of Science
Science of Families Planning Workshop
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Administration for Children & Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Administration for Children and Families

- Responsible for federal programs that promote the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals, and communities.

Administration for Children and Families

Examples of Programs/Services

- Adoption & Foster Care
- Child Abuse & Neglect
- Child Care Subsidy Program
- Child Support
- Disabilities
- Head Start
- Strengthening Families/Healthy Marriage Initiative
- TANF
- Refugee Resettlement

Administration for Children and Families Mission

- n families and individuals empowered to increase their own economic independence and productivity;
- n strong, healthy, supportive communities that have a positive impact on the quality of life and the development of children;
- n partnerships with individuals, front-line service providers, communities, American Indian tribes, Native communities, states, and Congress that enable solutions which transcend traditional agency boundaries;
- n services planned, reformed, and integrated to improve needed access;
- n and a strong commitment to working with people with developmental disabilities, refugees, and migrants to address their needs, strengths, and abilities.

Administration for Children and Families Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation

The Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) is the principal advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families. A central focus of OPRE's research and evaluation strategy is to develop reliable, credible information to inform program policy choices, particularly in major program areas such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Head Start, child care and child welfare.

Administration for Children and Families Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation

The Office provides guidance, analysis, technical assistance, and oversight to ACF programs on:

- strategic planning aimed at measurable results;
- performance measurement;
- research and evaluation methodologies;
- demonstration testing and model development;
- statistical, policy and program analysis;
- research synthesis and
- dissemination of research and demonstration findings

Administration for Children and Families Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation Divisions

- n The Division of Economic Independence oversees and manages the research programs under the Social Security Act (TANF), including managing and coordinating cross-cutting, leading-edge studies and special initiatives to promote family focused services, parental responsibility, employment, and economic independence.
- n The Division of Child and Family Development oversees and manages the research, demonstration, and evaluation activities related to child welfare and for the Office of Head Start and the Child Care Bureau.

Strengthening Families Research and Evaluation Projects

Impact Evaluations

- Building Strong Families

This project is evaluating the impacts of voluntary programs that provide relationship and marriage education classes and supportive services (e.g., case management, linkages to other services such as employment or housing) to low-income, romantically involved, unwed new parents. The evaluation utilizes a rigorous random assignment design and will assess short and longer-term outcomes for adults and children in the program and control groups. Project Period: September, 2002 to December 2012

- Supporting Healthy Marriage

This study evaluates the impacts on adults and children of voluntary, marriage and relationship educational programs with support services designed to help low-income married couples strengthen and sustain their marriages. The study will measure a range of short and longer-term outcomes for adults and children in the program and control groups. Project Period: September 2003 to September 2013.

Strengthening Families Research and Evaluation Projects (cont.)

- Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Approaches Evaluation

This project will evaluate the effectiveness of multiple types of pregnancy prevention programs, including comprehensive sex education, STD prevention, and abstinence based programs, using a rigorous random assignment evaluation design. Project Period: September 2008 to September 2015. This project is poised to evaluate programs that may be funded as part of the Administration's Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative as outlined in the FY 2010 budget.

Strengthening Families Research and Evaluation Projects (cont.)

Other Strengthening Families Research

- Hispanic Healthy Marriage Initiative: Grantee Implementation Evaluation.
This study will assess how selected programs are refining and adapting materials and programs to address the cultural and linguistic needs of Hispanic families. Project Period: September 2007 to September 2011.
- Exploration of Low-Income Couples' Decision-Making Processes.
Building on similar work with middle income couples, this project will examine the mechanisms and factors which influence low-income couples in important areas of decision making (e.g., seeking, obtaining, and advancing in employment; living arrangements and relationship status; childbearing, etc.). Project Period: September 2007 to September 2009.
- OPRE supports research grants related to family structure, healthy relationships and father involvement, the latter in collaboration with OFA. There are currently five research grants in this area awarded to universities or other research institutes. Findings from one are expected by the end of 2009, another in 2010 and the remaining three in 2011.

Early Childhood and Child Welfare

n Head Start Studies

Include the first nationally representative experimental evaluation of the program, an evaluation of the Early Head Start program, a survey monitoring children's experiences and outcomes, studies of special populations, and a range of studies of quality improvement efforts. Major projects in this area include the Head Start Impact Study, Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES), Head Start CARES, and the Early Head Start Evaluation.

n Child Welfare Projects

Investigate the experiences of children and their families who suffer from, or are at risk of suffering from, abuse, neglect, and homelessness. Major projects in this area include Evaluation of Independent Living Programs and the National Study of Child and Adolescent Well-Being.

Early Childhood and Child Welfare (cont.)

n Child Care Projects

Include research examining child care policies, quality child care, professional development and other topics of interest to the program office. Major projects in this area include the Design Phase of a study on the supply and demand of early childhood education, National Study of Child Care for Low-Income Families and the Evaluation of Child Care Subsidy Strategies.

Objectives for NAS Workshop

1. Research relevant to low-income and vulnerable families
 - Measuring family processes associated with economic hardship (including family strengths)
 - Defining and measuring family hardship
2. Measuring family processes across diverse family structures, and links to child outcomes
(single parent families, step families, co-parenting in separated families, multiple partner fertility, extended families, immigrant families, step-families, etc.)
 - who are the key people in a child's life?
3. Children's Socio-emotional and Behavioral Outcomes (not just health)
4. Attention to age of child and culture
5. Culturally appropriate methodologies

Critical consideration about appropriate measurement and methodology in these domains could help guide our thinking/prioritizing/selection of methodologies in our evaluation and research projects.

For more Information

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/>

www.researchconnections.org

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