

# BRIEF ON THE IMPACT FINDINGS FROM THE YOUNG PARENTS DEMONSTRATION EVALUATION

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The Young Parents Demonstration (YPD) was a federal grant initiative, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (DOL/ETA) to test the effectiveness of enhanced services in improving educational and employment outcomes for at-risk parenting and expectant youth. The 17 public workforce agencies and non-profit community-based organizations receiving YPD grants were required to implement a differential experimental research design, whereby treatment group members received an additional level of services above and beyond the base level of services provided to the control group. The treatment interventions varied across grantees, with some grantees providing mentoring services and others providing guided employment, education, training and related supports. Overall, impact study results indicated that YPD treatment group services had no long-term observable and measurable impacts on employment and earnings. Additionally, no measurable impacts were observed on a considerable range of exploratory outcomes for treatment group participants, including quarterly employment and earnings, educational attainment, welfare receipt, marriage and family composition, and housing and food security.

## WHAT WAS YPD AND HOW WAS IT EVALUATED?

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (DOL/ETA), the Young Parents Demonstration (YPD) was a federal grant initiative to enhance the Department's existing programs to better serve at-risk and disadvantaged young parents and expectant parents, ages 16 to 24.<sup>1</sup> Through two grant competitions, DOL/ETA issued three rounds of awards to 17 organizations, including both local public workforce agencies and non-profit community-based organizations. The purpose of these grants was to test the effectiveness of enhanced services on improving educational and employment outcomes for at-risk parenting and expectant youth. YPD grantees served young parents and expectant parents in high-risk categories, including victims of child abuse, children of incarcerated parents, court-involved youth, youth at risk of court involvement, homeless and runaway youth, and others. Between November 2009 and June 2014, more than 3,700 young parents (and expectant parents) were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups under the demonstration. Table 1 provides an overview of the grantee organizations, locations, and number of youth randomly assigned by each grantee.<sup>2</sup>

YPD grantees were required to implement a differential experimental research design, whereby the treatment group received an enhanced service intervention above and beyond the base level of services provided to both the treatment and control groups. Most grantees provided education,

training, and employment-focused services, along with a considerable array of supportive services and ongoing case management as part of their base services packages for treatment and control groups. The 13 Rounds I/II grantees implemented one of two types of enhancements to the base service package for the treatment group members only: (1) mentoring (featuring volunteer or professional staff mentoring); or (2) guided employment, education, training and related supports. The four Round III grantees focused their treatment group intervention solely on mentoring services.

**Table 1: Overview of 17 YPD Grantees, Rounds I - III Grantees**

Grantee	Location	# of YPD Enrollees
<b>ROUNDS I/II YPD GRANTEEES</b>		
Little Rock Workforce Investment Board (WIB)	Little Rock, AK	207
Youth Co-Op, Inc.	Miami, FL	201
Employment and Employer Services (EES)	Chicago, IL	201
Lancaster County Workforce Investment Board (WIB)	Lancaster, PA	200
Human Resource Development Foundation, Inc. (HRDF)	Charleston, WV	194
The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)	New York, NY	168
Special Service for Groups/Occupational Therapy Training Program (OTTP)	Los Angeles, CA	160
City and County of Honolulu Workforce Investment Board (WIB)	Honolulu, HI	160
Every Woman’s Place, Inc. (EWP)	Muskegon, MI	154
Brighton Center, Inc.	Newport, KY	123
Good Samaritan Community Services (GSCS)	San Antonio, TX	107
Joint Orange-Chatham Community Action, Inc. (JOCCA)	Pittsboro, NC	91
The Center Foundation	Media, PA	66
<b>ROUND III YPD GRANTEEES</b>		
AltaMed Health Services	Los Angeles, CA	509
Dannon Project	Birmingham, AL	413
Asheville-Buncombe Community Christian Ministry (ABCCM)	Asheville, NC	400
Training Resources of America (TRA-LARE)	Worcester, MA	399

**Source:** Participant Tracking System

**Note:** Enrollment figures are from the Participant Tracking System (PTS) and based on numbers of youth randomly assigned to treatment and control groups by grantees using the PTS.

The treatment intervention across the three rounds of funding was aimed primarily at improving employment, earnings, and educational outcomes for treatment group participants to foster long-term self-sufficiency. Additionally, to varying degrees, grantees had secondary goals of reducing welfare dependency, enhancing parenting skills, reducing at-risk behavior (e.g., substance abuse, and criminal activity), and other associated outcomes.

In 2010, DOL/ETA contracted with Capital Research Corporation and the Urban Institute – along with subcontractors, Abt Associates/Abt SRBI, Westat, Inc., and The George Washington University – to conduct a process/implementation and an impact evaluation of YPD.<sup>3</sup> The aim of the process/implementation evaluation component was to provide DOL with a detailed description of the treatment and control group interventions as they were implemented in each site, including

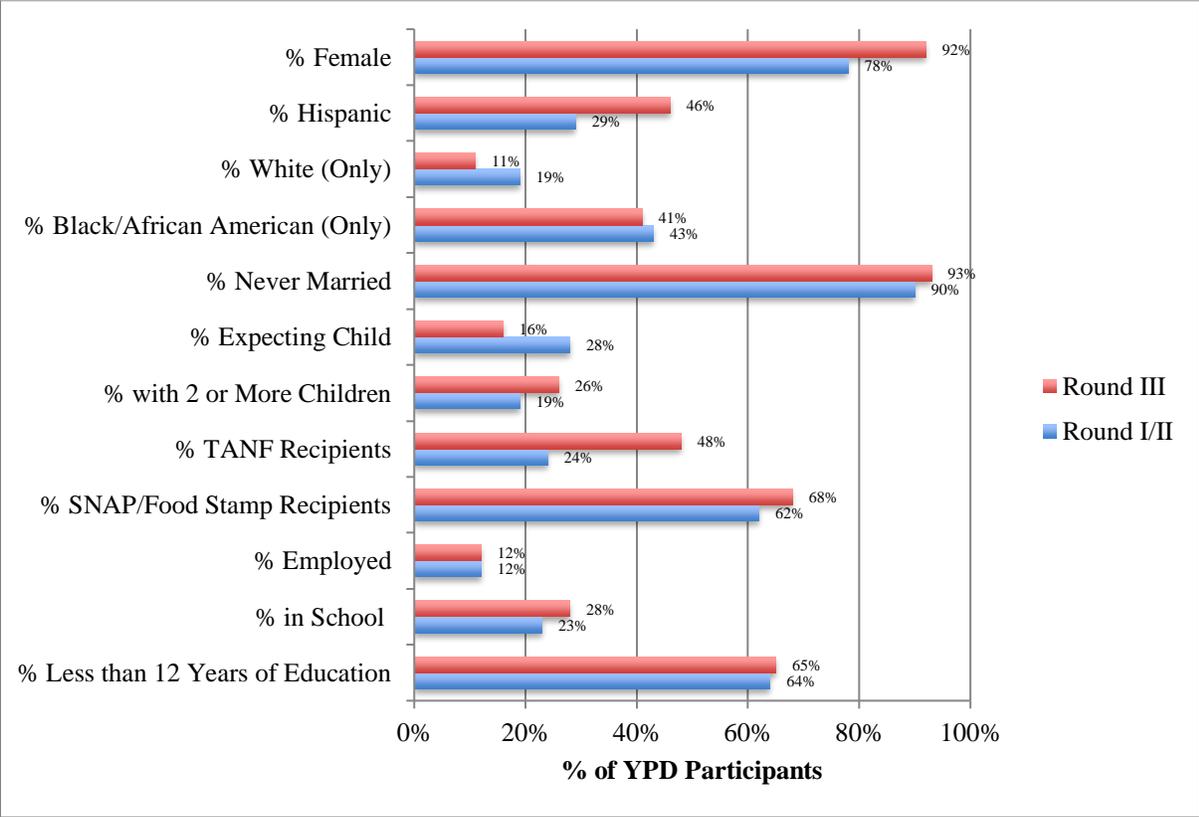
information about participant recruitment and intake procedures, participant flow through services, types and intensity of base and enhanced services made available to participants, grantee partnering with other organizations, key implementation challenges and how they were addressed, and program costs. The impact evaluation study component was aimed at estimating net impacts of the treatment intervention on educational, employment and earnings, welfare receipt, and other outcomes.

Separate evaluation reports were produced on: (1) the 13 Rounds I/II; and (2) the four Round III grantees.<sup>4</sup> This issue brief synthesizes impact results across these two evaluation reports. Study results summarized in this issue brief are based on four key data sources: (1) YPD participant-level data (collected via an automated Participant Tracking System [PTS] maintained by each grantee); (2) several rounds of site visits conducted by the research team to each YPD Round III grantee site, and a combination of site visits and in-depth telephone interviews with Rounds I/II grantees; (3) employment and earnings data, collected through the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) and matched to YPD participant data; and (4) for the four Round III grantees only, a participant follow-up survey conducted with YPD participants 18 months after random assignment.

## WHO WERE THE YPD PARTICIPANTS?

The demonstration effort was targeted on parenting and expectant youth, 16 to 24 years of age. DOL/ETA required YPD grantees to develop and implement a recruitment strategy that included methods for outreach, referral, and selection that would enable grantees to meet their goal of enrolling at least 100 participants under Rounds I/II grants and 400 participants under Round III grants. While recruitment strategies varied, grantees used a combination of outreach/marketing efforts and establishment of referral arrangements within their own organizations, or with other workforce and human services organizations to identify and recruit young parents to their YPD initiatives. As shown in Figure 1, while there were some slight differences across Rounds I/II and Round III, YPD participants were predominantly female, never married, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients, unemployed, and had less than 12 years of education. On average, participants were 20 years of age at the time of intake. Of the slightly more than one-tenth (12 percent) of participants employed at intake, most had low paying jobs (paying less than \$10 per hour). About one-quarter of YPD participants were enrolled in school at intake.

**Figure 1: Overview of Selected YPD Participant Characteristics at the Time of Intake, All YPD Participants, Rounds I/II and Round III**



Source: Participant Tracking System (Rounds I/II, N = 1,941; Rounds III, N = 1,595)

**WHAT WERE THE BASE SERVICES AND ENHANCED SERVICES UNDER YPD’S DIFFERENTIAL EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH DESIGN?**

The YPD program tested a differential treatment model, whereby both treatment and control group members received a base level of services, with treatment group members receiving an added increment of services. The base services package and the enhanced services varied substantially across the 17 Rounds I-III grantees, as highlighted below.

**BASE AND EXISTING SERVICES**

Most of the 17 Rounds I-III grantees operated programs that offered education, training, and employment-focused services to both the treatment and control groups, supplemented by supportive services and ongoing case management. YPD grantees included some combination of the following services in their base services package made available for both the treatment and control groups: post-secondary education; basic skills instruction; pre-GED/GED preparation; English as a Second Language (ESL) or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes; tutoring/study skills instruction; job readiness/life skills training/career counseling; occupational skills training (e.g., certified nursing assistant [CNA], patient care technician [PCT], phlebotomy

technician, industrial maintenance technician); OJT, work experience, or paid/unpaid internships; job development and placement; job retention services; parenting skills instruction/workshops; supportive services; mentoring;<sup>5</sup> case management; and financial/budgeting instruction. Though all sites adhered to the differential experimental research design, no two sites were the same in terms of their mix of services offered or how specific services were structured as part of the base services package.

### **YPD ENHANCED SERVICES (PROVIDED FOR TREATMENT GROUP MEMBERS ONLY)**

YPD Rounds I/II grantees were provided substantial latitude in developing their own particular mix of enhanced services available only to members of the treatment group. Seven of the 13 Rounds I/II grantees implemented interventions that focused primarily on specific education, training, and/or employment activities not available to members of the control group. The remaining six YPD Rounds I/II grantees implemented some type of mentoring initiative as an enhancement to their existing education, training, and employment services. Under Round III, YPD grantees were required to provide mentoring services as the enhancement to their base services package, offered exclusively for treatment group participants. In general, the goal of the mentoring initiatives (offered to treatment group participants in the six Rounds I/II and all Round III grantee sites) was to successfully link mentors with treatment group members so that they could develop a personal relationship in which the mentor provided ongoing guidance on development of life skills, as well as support and assistance in removing barriers to success and achieving personal, education, employment, and career advancement goals.

The analysis of utilization data collected for the Rounds I-III grantee sites that focused on mentoring as the enhanced service under the experimental research design indicated that substantial numbers of YPD participants either never engaged with their mentors or that they did not receive the dosage of mentoring originally envisioned under the demonstration. For example, during Round III, less than half (48 percent) of treatment group members received individual mentoring services during their involvement in the demonstration. Among those receiving individual mentoring services, those in the treatment group during Round III had on average 19.5 contacts and received 12.7 hours of mentoring services.

## WHAT WERE THE NET IMPACTS OF YPD ON PARTICIPANTS?

The main impact of interest under the three rounds of funding focused on the effects of YPD participation on employment and earnings.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, with the results of a follow-up survey at 18 months after random assignment for Round III participants, it was possible to explore impacts of YPD on educational outcomes and a range of other outcomes, such as effects on family composition and welfare receipt.

### EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS IMPACTS

The impact results with regard to employment and earnings were based on quarterly UI wage record data as well as the participant follow-up survey at 18 months (for Round III only). Under the study, it was possible to explore short-run and longer-run employment and earnings. For Rounds I/II grantees, positive and measurable impacts of YPD treatment group services were initially found on the cumulative earnings of program participants through two years after random assignment. However, analysis of annual earnings in the sixth year after random assignment for a subgroup of the Rounds I/II YPD participants indicated that by the sixth year there was not a measurable difference in annual earnings between the treatment and control groups. Regarding the four Round III grantees, no measurable impacts were found for a subgroup of participants for cumulative earnings through 18 months after random assignment or in terms of annual earnings at four years after random assignment.

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#### ROUNDS I/II EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS IMPACTS

As shown in Table 3, cumulative earnings were \$384, \$567, and \$677 higher at quarters four, six and eight after random assignment, respectively, for the Rounds I/II treatment group in comparison to the control group (results significant at the 0.10 level). In exploratory analyses, when earnings impacts were estimated for specific quarters (i.e., the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth quarters after random assignment), the estimated impacts were positive, but were not measurable (i.e., statistically significant) different from the control group. Table 4 provides estimated impacts of YPD on the quarterly employment rate (at quarters two, four, six and eight after random assignment). Regarding employment, while the Rounds I/II YPD interventions had a positive and measurable impact on whether a participant was employed during the fourth quarter after random assignment (significant at the 0.10 level), by the eighth quarter after random assignment, no employment impacts were detected.

Exploratory subgroup analyses through two years after random assignment for Rounds I/II grantees suggested that treatment group impacts were concentrated on the youngest cohort of participants. In terms of earnings, 16- and 17-year-old parenting and expectant youth during Rounds I/II consistently saw gains in cumulative earnings (in comparison to the control group) – \$894, \$1,262, and \$1,600 for quarters four, six, and eight after random assignment, respectively (results significant at the 0.05 level). The findings for high school-age youth, coupled with the lack of measurable findings for youth ages 18 and older, suggested that the overall YPD findings at two years after random assignment may have been driven by the impacts of YPD on youth ages 16 and 17.

**Table 3: Estimated Impact of YPD on Quarterly Earnings at Quarters Two, Four, Six, and Eight after Random Assignment (Regression-Adjusted Means), Rounds I/II**

Earnings	Sample Size	Treatment Group	Treatment Group	Estimated Impact (\$)	P-Value
		Observed Mean (\$)	Estimated Mean without YPD, Regression-Adjusted (\$)		
Quarter 2 after RA					
Quarterly Earnings	1,851	836	730	106	0.144
Quarter 4 after RA					
Quarterly Earnings	1,900	1,017	917	100	0.176
<b>Cumulative Earnings</b>	<b>1,908</b>	<b>3,346</b>	<b>2,962</b>	<b>384*</b>	<b>0.071</b>
Quarter 6 after RA					
Quarterly Earnings	1,879	1,113	1,055	58	0.463
<b>Cumulative Earnings</b>	<b>1,908</b>	<b>5,528</b>	<b>4,961</b>	<b>567*</b>	<b>0.073</b>
Quarter 8 after RA					
Quarterly Earnings	1,766	1,205	1,122	83	0.276
<b>Cumulative Earnings</b>	<b>1,886</b>	<b>7,750</b>	<b>7,073</b>	<b>677*</b>	<b>0.100</b>

**Source:** Authors' analysis of National Directory of New Hires data. N = 1,908.

**Notes:** OLS regression analysis, controlling for characteristics of YPD participants collected at intake (age, sex, race/ethnicity, marital status, expectant parent status, number of children, and employment and school status) as well as site fixed effects, is used to assess statistical significance. \*<0.1; \*\*<0.05; \*\*\*<0.01

**Table 4: Estimated Impact of YPD on Employment Status at Quarters Two, Four, Six, and Eight after Random Assignment (Regression-Adjusted Means), Rounds I/II**

Employment Status	Sample Size	Treatment Group	Treatment Group	Estimated Mean Impact (%)	P-Value
		Observed Mean (%)	Estimated Mean without YPD, Regression-Adjusted (%)		
Employed in Quarter 2 after RA	1,829	39.5	37.1	2.4	0.321
<b>Employed in Quarter 4 after RA</b>	<b>1,878</b>	<b>44.2</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>4.2*</b>	<b>0.066</b>
Employed in Quarter 6 after RA	1,858	47.4	44.8	2.6	0.277
Employed in Quarter 8 after RA	1,749	48.3	44.9	3.4	0.133
Ever Employed 4 Consecutive Quarters	1,851	36.6	34.0	2.6	0.268

**Source:** Authors' analysis of National Directory of New Hires data. N = 1,908.

**Notes:** Logistic regression analysis, controlling for characteristics of YPD participants collected at intake (age, sex, race/ethnicity, marital status, expectant parent status, number of children, and employment and school status) as well as site fixed effects, is used to assess statistical significance. \*<0.1; \*\*<0.05; \*\*\*<0.01

Exploratory impact results for YPD grantees individually through two years after random assignment revealed there were few cases where measurable employment and earnings impacts were detected. For example, three grantees (Brighton Center, Inc., City and County of Honolulu, and The Center for Employment Opportunities) had early earnings gains amongst the treatment group that were measurable (in comparison to the control group), but the impacts diminished by quarters six and eight after random assignment, and were no longer statistically significant. In contrast, later earnings gains at eight quarters after random assignment were found for the treatment group in two grantees (Human Resources Development Foundation and Joint Orange-Chatham Community Action, Inc.). Because the sample sizes for individual grantees were small, and results at the individual grantee level were not regression-adjusted due to small sample sizes, caution should be taken in interpreting results at the grantee-level. Additionally, the process/implementation study did not provide evidence to support or explain why participants in these sites might have experienced measurable earnings gains.

Although it was not possible to systematically collect a continuous stream of earnings data for Rounds I/II grantee participants beyond two years after random assignment, in February 2018, DOL (in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Child Support and Enforcement) was able to make available a follow-up batch of NDNH wage records matched to a subset of Rounds I/II participants for an eight-quarter period (beginning in quarter one of 2015 and ending in quarter two of 2017). An exploratory analysis of annual earnings at six years after random assignment for this subset of Rounds I and II participants indicated that there were no measurable (statistically significant) annual earnings differences at six years after random assignment between the treatment and the control groups.

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### ROUND III EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS IMPACTS

Using YPD participants' responses to the 18-Month Participant Follow-up Survey, the research team examined the impacts of the YPD treatment on the three primary outcomes of interest: employment status, cumulative earnings, and completion of high school (or an equivalent). Evaluation results did not show measurable impacts of the YPD treatment intervention (mentoring) on any of these three outcomes at 18 months after random assignment (see Table 5).

YPD participants (in the treatment and control groups) continued to exhibit economic disadvantage 18 months after random assignment (as they did at the time of YPD intake), even after receiving base and enhanced services from YPD grantees. For example, only 40 percent of the treatment group (compared with 43 percent of the control group) were employed at 18 months after entering YPD services, and average 18-month cumulative earnings – (\$4,044 for the treatment group versus \$3,484 for the control group) – were well below the poverty level. Additionally, only slightly more than half (54 percent of the treatment group versus 58 percent of the control group) of YPD Round III treatment group participants had finished high school (or an equivalent degree) at 18 months after random assignment in the YPD services with the mentoring enhancement.

**Table 5: Estimated Impact of YPD on Employment, Earnings and Education at 18-Months after Random Assignment (Regression-Adjusted Means), Round III**

Employment, Earnings and Educational Attainment	Sample Size	Treatment Group Observed Mean	Treatment Group Estimated Mean without YPD, Regression-Adjusted	Estimated Impact	P-Value
Employed (%)	724	40.2	42.5	-2.4	0.609
Cumulative earnings (\$)	741	4,044	3,484	560	0.242
Obtained high school diploma, GED, or some college (%)	720	53.6	58.1	-4.5	0.332

**Source:** Authors' analysis of the 18-Month Follow-up Survey; n = 744.

**Notes:** Logistic regression analysis was used to estimate the impacts of YPD on binary outcomes; Ordinary Least Squares regression was used to estimate the impact of YPD on continuous outcomes. Regression analyses included the following controls: characteristics of YPD participants collected at intake (age, sex, race/ethnicity, marital status, expectant parent status, number of children, and employment and school status) as well as site fixed effects. Analyses were weighted to account for survey non-response.

\*<0.1; \*\*<0.05; \*\*\*<0.01

Using data on a subsample of YPD Round III participants with earnings data from the National Directory of New Hires, the research team examined annual earnings for the fourth year after random assignment (Table 6). No measurable impacts of the YPD Round III treatment (mentoring) on annual earnings in year four after random assignment were found. The impact of YPD on earnings in year four was -\$257. The treatment group earned \$7,771 in year 4 (compared to \$8,028 for the control group).<sup>7</sup> The evaluation also examined the impact of the YPD treatment on annual earnings in year four (using unadjusted means) by participants' age at intake into the program and by grantee. No measurable impacts of the treatment intervention on annual earnings in year four by age of participants or by grantee were found.

**Table 6: Impact of YPD on Annual Earnings in Year Four after Random Assignment (Regression-Adjusted Means)**

Earnings	Number of Observations Used	Treatment Group: Observed Mean (\$)	Treatment Group: Estimated Mean without YPD, Regression-Adjusted (\$)	Estimated Impact (\$)	P-Value
Annual Earnings in Year 4	658	7771	8028	-257	0.821

**Source:** Authors' analysis of National Directory of New Hires data. N = 685.

**Notes.** Regression analysis, controlling for characteristics of YPD participants collected at intake (age, sex, race/ethnicity, marital status, expectant parent status, number of children, and employment and school status) as well as site fixed effects, is used to assess statistical significance. \*<0.1; \*\*<0.05; \*\*\*<0.01

## **EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND OTHER OUTCOMES OF INTEREST (ROUND III ONLY)**

Using YPD participants' responses to the 18-Month Follow-up Survey, the research team found no significant impacts of the treatment (i.e., mentoring) on the educational attainment for Round III participants (see Table 5, earlier). In addition to no measurable impacts of the intervention on educational attainment, the analysis indicated that about half (54 percent) of YPD Round III treatment group participants had finished high school, completed a GED program, or had attended some college at 18 months after random assignment.

Data from the Round III Participant Follow-up Survey allowed for exploratory analyses of impacts of YPD on other participant outcomes at 18 months after random assignment, such as welfare receipt, family income, economic stability and family composition. As shown in Table 7, both YPD treatment and control group participants experienced challenges on several economic and social indicators at 18 months after random assignment. Family income was very low – on average, treatment group (cumulative) household income was \$11,458 (versus \$10,308 for the control group) over the 18-month period following random assignment. Though family income was below the poverty level, less than half (41 percent) of YPD treatment group participants (compared with 43 percent of the control group) received governmental cash assistance. Slightly less than three quarters of YPD treatment group participants (72 percent for both the treatment and control groups) received SNAP assistance; the same proportions of treatment and control group members (70 percent) received Medicaid at some point during the 18 months following random assignment. Despite many receiving SNAP assistance and Medicaid, the low resources of these households likely drove other participant outcomes during the 18-month period. Only 41 percent of YPD treatment group participants (versus 37 percent of the control group) reported being food secure and one-third reported that at some point since random assignment they had been unable to pay their mortgage, rent, or utility bills.

**Table 7: Estimated Impact of YPD on Other Outcomes 18 Months After Random Assignment [Unadjusted Means], Round III**

Characteristic	Sample Size	Treatment Group: Observed Mean	Treatment Group: Estimated Mean without YPD, Regression-Adjusted	Estimated Impact	P-Value
Family income during the past 18-months (mean \$)	614	11,458	10,308	1,150	0.293
Received cash assistance from a state or county welfare program in the past 18-months (%)	717	40.9	43.0	-2.1	0.470
Received SNAP in the past 18-months (%)	724	72.3	72.4	-0.1	0.796
Food secure in the past 18-months (%)	723	41.1	37.2	3.9	0.346
YPD participant covered by Medicaid or a similar state program (%)	716	70.2	69.8	0.5	0.799
YPD participants' children covered by Medicaid or a similar state program in the past 18-months (%)	718	87.9	87.2	0.8	0.528
Received child care assistance in the past 18-months (%)	724	38.6	35.5	3.1	0.286
Had (or expecting) another child in the past 18-months (%)	720	43.6	41.2	2.4	0.442
Receives (or pays) child support in the past 18-months (%)	735	17.0	17.5	-0.6	0.831
Able to pay mortgage, rent or utility bills in the past 18-months (%)	721	67.2	67.7	-0.5	0.942

**Source:** Authors' analysis of the 18-Month Follow-up Survey; n = 744.

**Notes:** Logistic regression analysis was used to estimate the impacts of YPD on binary outcomes; Ordinary Least Squares regression was used to estimate the impact of YPD on continuous outcomes. Regression analyses included the following controls: characteristics of YPD participants collected at intake (age, sex, race/ethnicity, marital status, expectant parent status, number of children, and employment and school status) as well as site fixed effects. Analyses were weighted to account for survey non-response.

\*<0.1; \*\*<0.05; \*\*\*<0.01

### WHAT WERE THE LIMITATIONS RESEARCHERS ENCOUNTERED IN CONDUCTING THE IMPACT ANALYSIS?

The evaluation team encountered four key challenges in conducting the impact analyses that constrained the analysis. First, for all but employment and earnings analyses, the evaluation effort relied upon self-reported participant survey data collected 18 months after random assignment. In addition to limitations regarding self-reporting, the number of YPD participants responding to the follow-up survey was lower than anticipated, resulting in reduced power and limiting the research team's ability to detect measurable differences.

Second, treatment group and control members in all three rounds of YPD grants both received a considerable dosage of base services, with the enhanced services perhaps only adding at the margin to the services received by some (and perhaps many) treatment group members through the

Rounds I-III grantees and their partner resources. As noted earlier, for example, utilization data collected as part of the Participant Tracking System indicated that only about half of the Round III treatment group members received individual mentoring services. A further complicating factor that may have narrowed the differences in employment and earnings outcomes between treatment and control group members for Rounds I-III was that outside of the YPD intervention there was a range of other services available to both groups (e.g., provided in schools, through child support agencies and welfare offices, and through employment and training initiatives available at American Job Centers and through other local programs).

Third, the target population for the demonstration effort, at-risk expectant and parenting youth, can be challenging to initially engage, and then retain, in services. Both treatment and control group members often did not receive the full dosage of available services. Additionally, because of early attrition from the grantees' YPD programs, some treatment and control group participants received little (or no) dosage of the base or (for treatment group members) enhanced services. According to grantee site administrators during site visits, and data collected via the PTS, attrition and low-dosage of services substantially affected both treatment and control group participants. For example, grantees that provided mentoring as the enhanced service found that it was often difficult to get participants to engage with the mentors in meaningful and sustained ways. Hence, a combination of: (1) providing substantive services to both the treatment and control groups; and (2) a lack of a substantial dosage of treatment group services may partially (and potentially largely) explain the lack of measurable effects of treatment group services on YPD participants.

Finally, the impact analyses were hindered by small sample sizes, particularly for the Round III results and for the Rounds I/II annual earnings analysis at six years after random assignment. Smaller sample sizes (based on subgroups for which data were available) may have made it difficult to detect measurable impacts across key outcomes of interest by reducing the analytic power needed to attribute statistical significance to differences in outcomes between the treatment and control groups.<sup>8</sup>

## WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF YPD RESULTS FOR SERVING YOUNG PARENTS?

Overall, the findings from the YPD evaluation show that the provision of enhanced services to young parents, on top of a substantial set of base services, had no measurable effect or a short-run effect that faded over time on participants' earnings. In the case where mentoring was the enhanced service, YPD also did not have a measurable effect on other key outcomes such as educational attainment, public assistance receipt, family income, economic stability and family composition. While the findings may lead one to believe that the treatment – the enhanced services – did not work for helping young parents, the implementation and evaluation challenges may underlie the YPD results.

Overall, the YPD impact findings, especially on employment and earnings, are not surprising. First, few impact studies on at-risk youth interventions examine employment and earnings outcomes. The YPD evaluation is one of a few studies that not only estimates earnings in the short run but also over a long follow-up period. However, a lack of measurable impacts on employment and earnings aligns with the existing studies of at-risk youth interventions where either no measurable impacts

were found or where early positive measurable impacts were found to fade over time, such as in randomized controlled trials of Job Corps, the Teenage Parent Demonstration, the Quantum Opportunities Project, Upward Bound, the Latin American Youth Center's Promoter Pathway Program, and the Summer Career Exploration Program in Philadelphia.

However, the YPD Round III findings on the impacts of mentoring contrast with some of the positive and measurable findings on education, employment, behavioral, or other relevant outcomes for at-risk youth from studies of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program and other mentoring initiatives. These studies found positive and measurable impacts on a range of educational outcomes, as well as a reduced likelihood of youth becoming involved in or remaining involved in criminal activity or beginning to abuse substances. While YPD assessed these types of outcomes, data limitations, the low dosage of mentoring that the grantees provided, and the "newness" of the mentoring services implemented (not at a "steady state") by the grantees may explain the null effects of the treatment.

Moving forward, the YPD demonstration – and specifically the lack of measurable participant impacts on employment and earnings, educational attainment, and a range of other outcomes – while not providing a roadmap for effective strategies for serving at-risk parenting youth, does suggest how DOL/ETA, other human services organizations, and foundations might identify and test other effective approaches to serving at-risk youth in the future. It is possible that future studies of mentoring (and other interventions grantees tested during YPD) could yield positive, measurable impacts for at-risk youth not found in YPD, if: (1) sample sizes are larger to provide better powered analyses to more precisely estimate impacts between the treatment and control groups; (2) demonstration sites are able to better engage participants in mentoring and provide a more substantial dosage of mentoring to participants, develop their programs and services more fully, and serve young parents for a longer period of time; (3) to the extent feasible, demonstration sites ensure that the contrasts between the services to the treatment and control groups are more distinct and consistent across sites so the evaluation can more strongly tie measurable impacts to specific interventions; and (4) participant outcomes (including educational attainment, employment and earnings, involvement with the criminal justice system, and other outcomes associated with long-term self-sufficiency) are followed for a period of five or more years to determine what may appear to be early impacts fade over time.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, "Notice of Availability of Funds and Solicitation of Grant Applications (SGA) to Fund Demonstration Projects," *Federal Register*, Vol. 73, No. 193, October 3, 2008, p. 57670 (available at: <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2008-10-03/pdf/E8-23319.pdf>). Accessed August 28, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Rounds I and II grants were consolidated under one round of funding to 13 grantees, awarded in June 2009; the four Round III grant awards were issued two years later, in June 2011. For both the impact and implementation analyses, Rounds I and II grants were grouped together, while the Round III analyses were conducted separately.

<sup>3</sup> DOL's Chief Evaluation Office contributed funding for matching participant data with National Directory of New Hires data, as well as funds to complete the evaluation.

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<sup>4</sup> See: Trutko, J., Eyster, L., Vericker, T., O'Brien, C., Barnow, B., Trutko, A., Mendonca, S., Dodkowitz, A. & Sick, N. (2018). Young Parents Demonstration Program: Rounds 1 and II Grantee Implementation and Impact Results. Washington, DC: Capital Research Corporation; and Trutko, J., Eyster, L., Vericker, T., O'Brien, C., Trutko, A., Mendonca, S., Dodkowitz, A. & Sick, N. (2018). Young Parents Demonstration Program: Round III Grantee Implementation and Impact Results. Washington, DC: Capital Research Corporation.

<sup>5</sup> As shown in Table 2 (earlier), two of the 13 Rounds I/II grantees, Little Rock WIB and The Center Foundation, offered mentoring as part of their base service package, while enhancing these base services with educational or workforce development services.

<sup>6</sup> The evaluation included one confirmatory analysis on the impact of the Rounds I/II grants on cumulative earnings at two years after random assignment. Due to the focus of the grants and data limitations, the remainder of the analyses are considered exploratory.

<sup>7</sup> The research team also conducted a sensitivity analysis to determine whether small sample sizes could be impeding ability to detect statistically significant findings. For one quarter – quarter 13 after random assignment – all but two YPD participants had quarterly earnings records. The research team estimated the impact of the YPD treatment (mentoring) on quarterly earnings in quarter 13 after random assignment and found no measurable impact. This result taken together with the small impact estimate on earnings in year four provides more evidence that YPD did not have a measurable impact on earnings.

<sup>8</sup> With a planned sample size of 1,306, the analyses were powered to detect differences as low as \$679 and 8 percentage points for earnings and employment, respectively. The actual sample sizes achieved were roughly half of what was originally planned.