

*Opioid Use Disorder, Treatment, and Barriers to  
Employment Among TANF Recipients*

**Kentucky's Targeted Assessment Program**

*Barbara Ramlow, Melissa Delaney, and Carl Leukefeld  
University of Kentucky Center on Drug & Alcohol Research*

# Kentucky's Targeted Assessment Program (TAP)

- Implemented through partnership with the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Department for Community-Based Services
- Supported with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds to assist parents involved in Kentucky's public assistance and child welfare systems within federally mandated timeframes

# Purpose of TAP

- To identify & address barriers to self-sufficiency, family stability, & safety:
  - Substance Use (SU)
  - Mental Health (MH)
  - Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)
  - Learning Problems (LP)
  - Basic Needs



# TAP participant story

“Sandy”

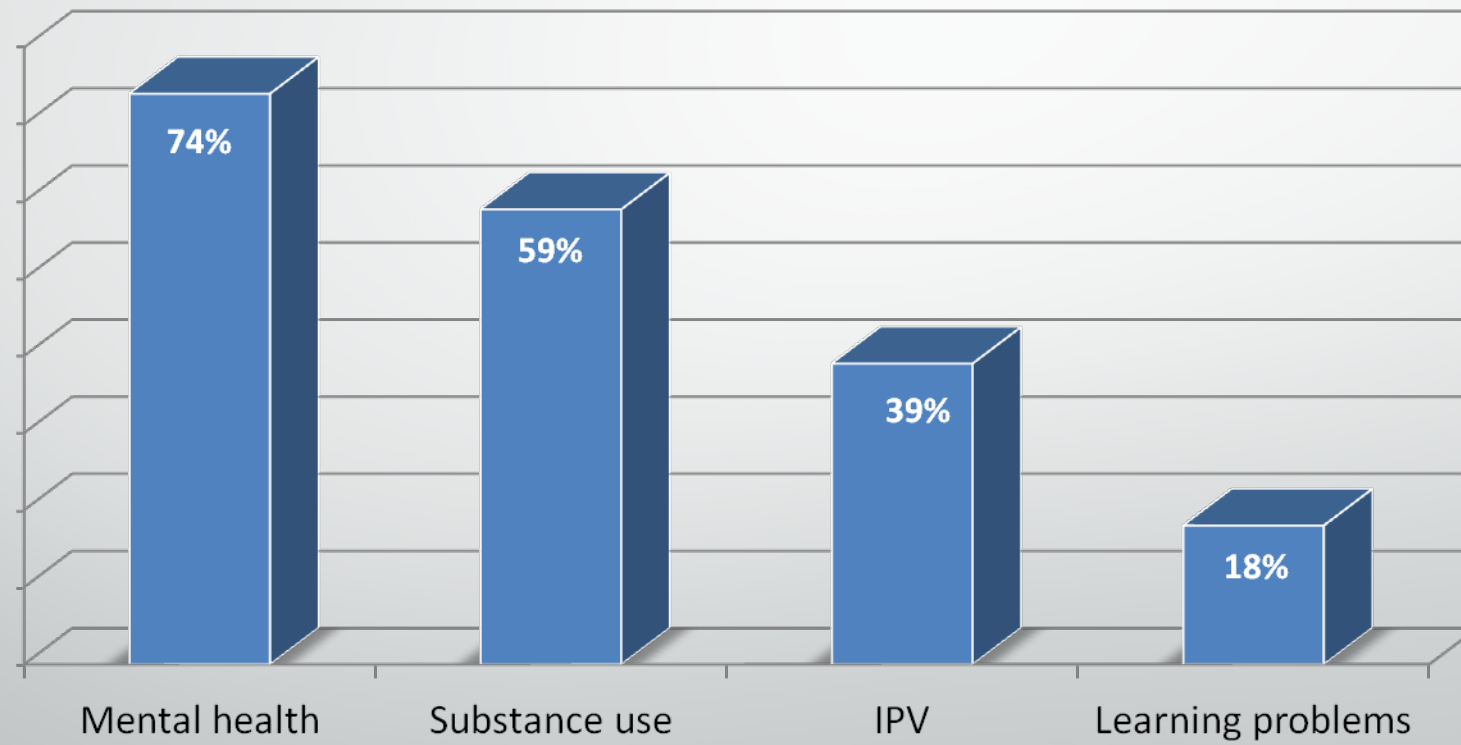
# Barriers to employment

- Estimates of drug & alcohol use disorders are almost double those for individuals who receive TANF
- Women receiving TANF with substance use disorders report co-occurring depression, anxiety, and high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Studies have shown intimate partner violence to be higher among women receiving TANF than other low-income women not receiving TANF
- Mental health problems have been found to be more prevalent in this population, as have Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and adult trauma

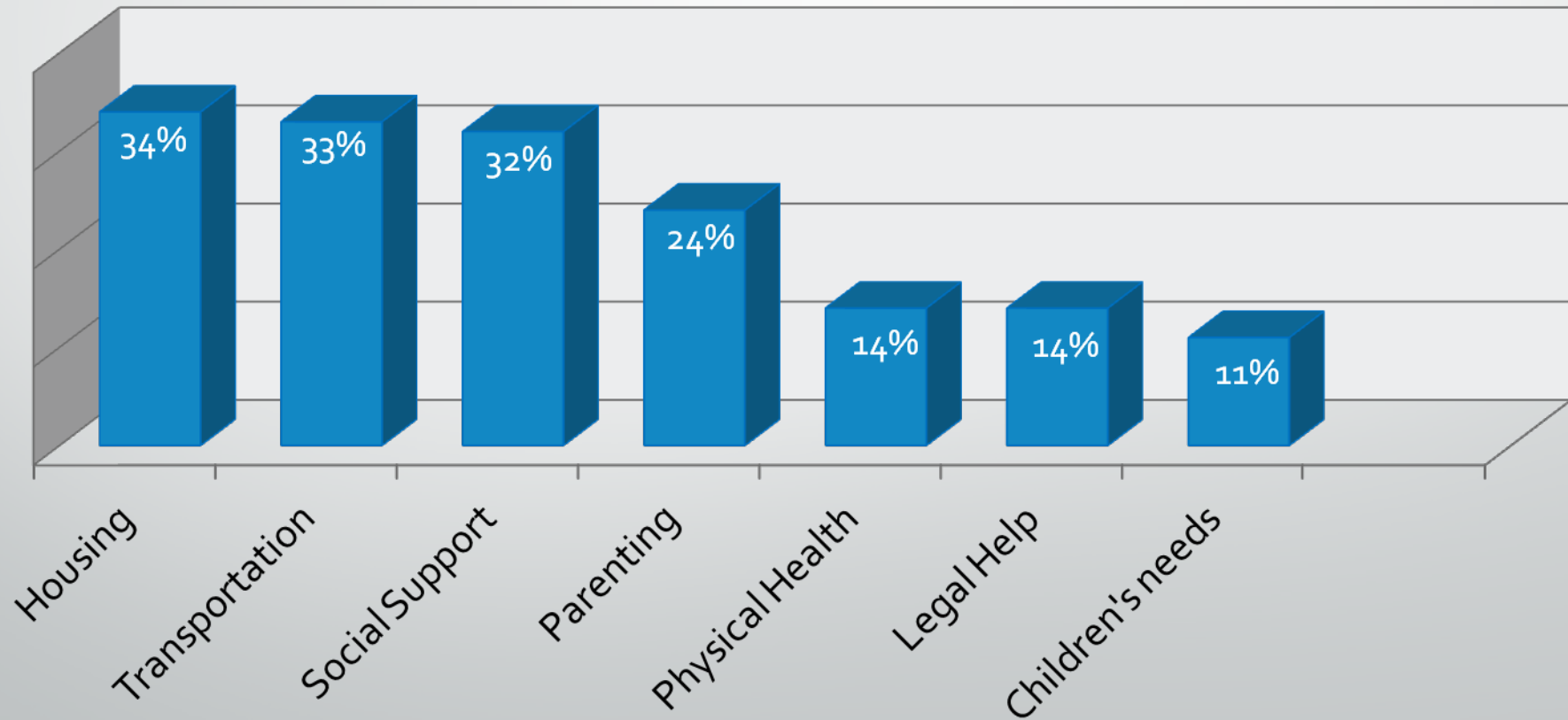
## Barriers to employment

- Surveys of TANF caseloads in three states estimated that 20-50% of women have some type of learning problem and 20-25% have IQs of less than 80
- Unmet basic needs have been strongly correlated with mental health and intimate partner violence
- The presence of multiple barriers continues to be the strongest predictor of non-participation in work activities and continues to be linked to poor employment among low-income parents

Percent of TAP participants assessed with mental health, substance use, intimate partner violence, learning problems barriers in FY 2017 (n=2,237)

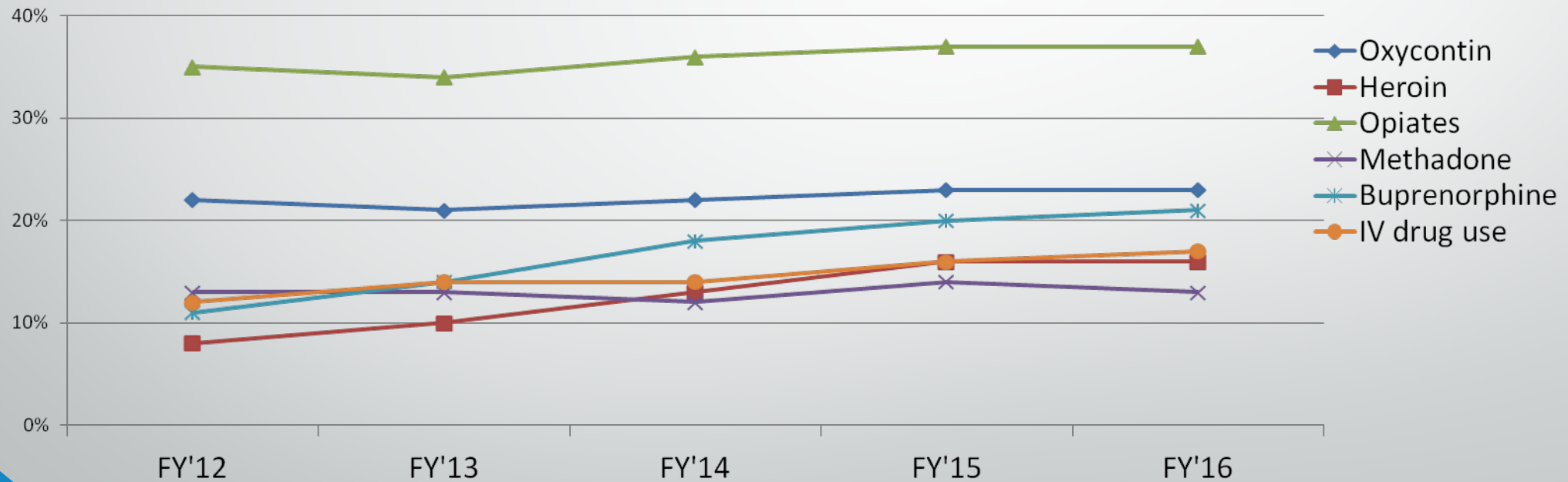


# Percent of TAP participants reporting unmet basic needs in FY 2017 (n=2,237)





# Percent of TAP participants (n=12,191) self-reporting opioid use at baseline assessment in lifetime (FY 2012 through FY 2016)





# Targeted Assessment Program (TAP)

- 58 Targeted Assessment Specialists co-located in Department of Community-Based Services (DCBS) offices in 35 Kentucky counties
- Referrals from child welfare and public assistance agencies

# Key Practices

- Co-location of TAP staff with DCBS staff
- Holistic assessment of barriers & strengths
- Strengths-based engagement, pre-treatment, & case management
- Customized service plan created with the participant in consultation with the DCBS referring worker

# Key Practices

- Motivational interviewing & pretreatment to increase treatment effectiveness
- Assistance with basic needs barriers
- Ongoing follow-up with participants, referral source, and community partners (including job readiness programs, community services sites, employers)
- Consultation & training
- Advocacy
- Multi-agency participation and collaboration at local, regional, & state level

## TAP Outcomes

FY 2017 “countable” work activity by TAP participants

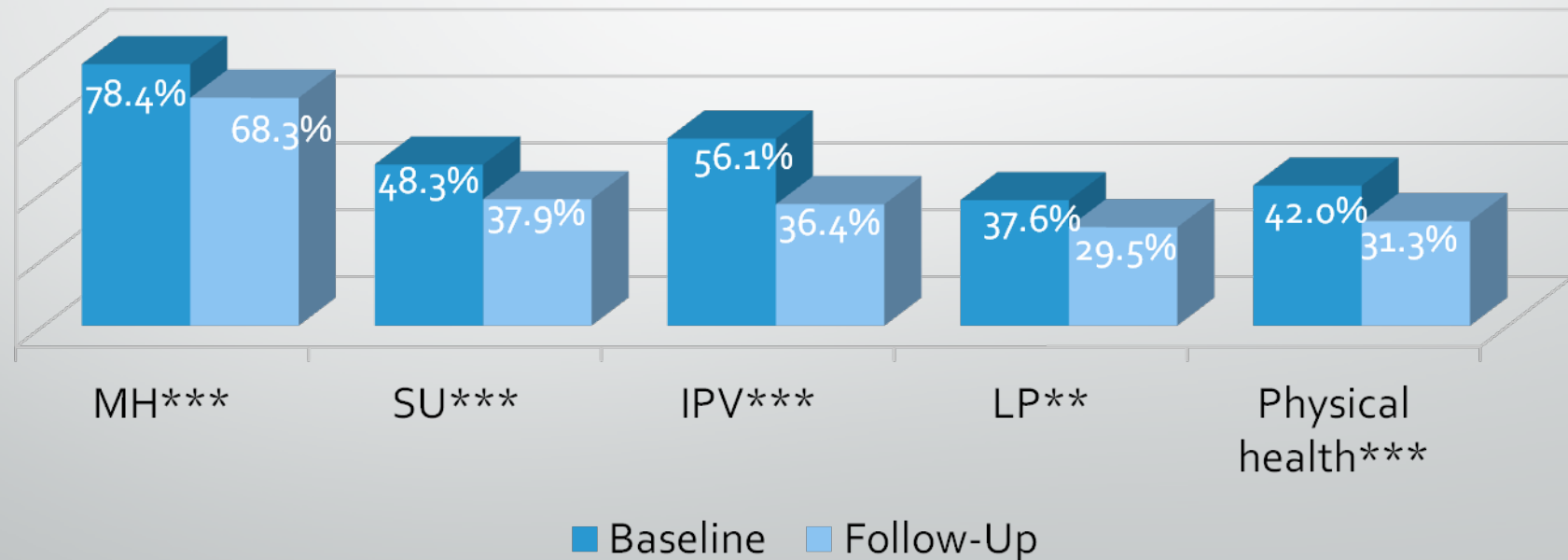
- Two-thirds (65%) of terminating assessed TAP participants enrolled in the Kentucky Works Program participated in a countable work activity within 6 months of TAP assessment
- The average amount of time to enrollment in a countable work activity was 7 weeks

# TAP Outcomes

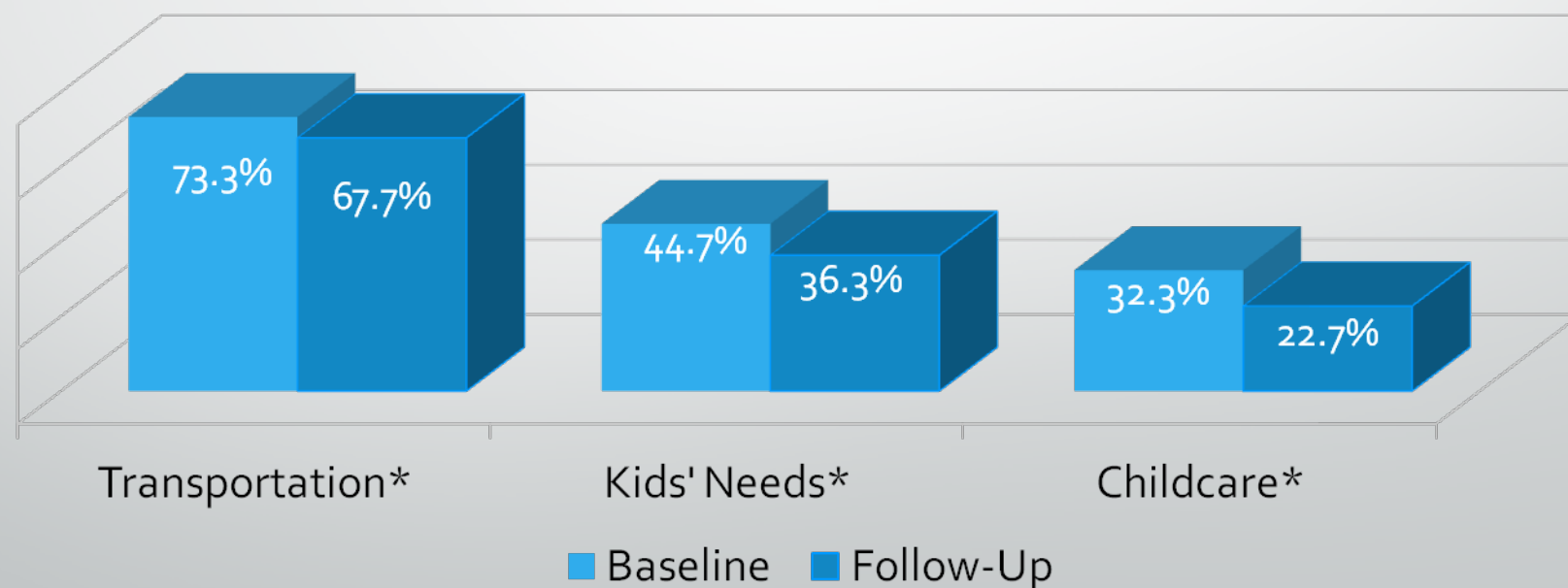
## TAP Follow-up Study (Leukefeld et al., 2012)

- There were statistically significant decreases from baseline to 6-month follow-up (n=322) for:
  - Mental health symptoms
  - Substance use
  - IPV
  - Percentage of participants with an open child welfare case
  - Percentage of participants experiencing work difficulty
  - Reliance on TANF decreased while employment increased

At 6-month follow-up (n=322), the percent of participants with assessed barriers significantly decreased

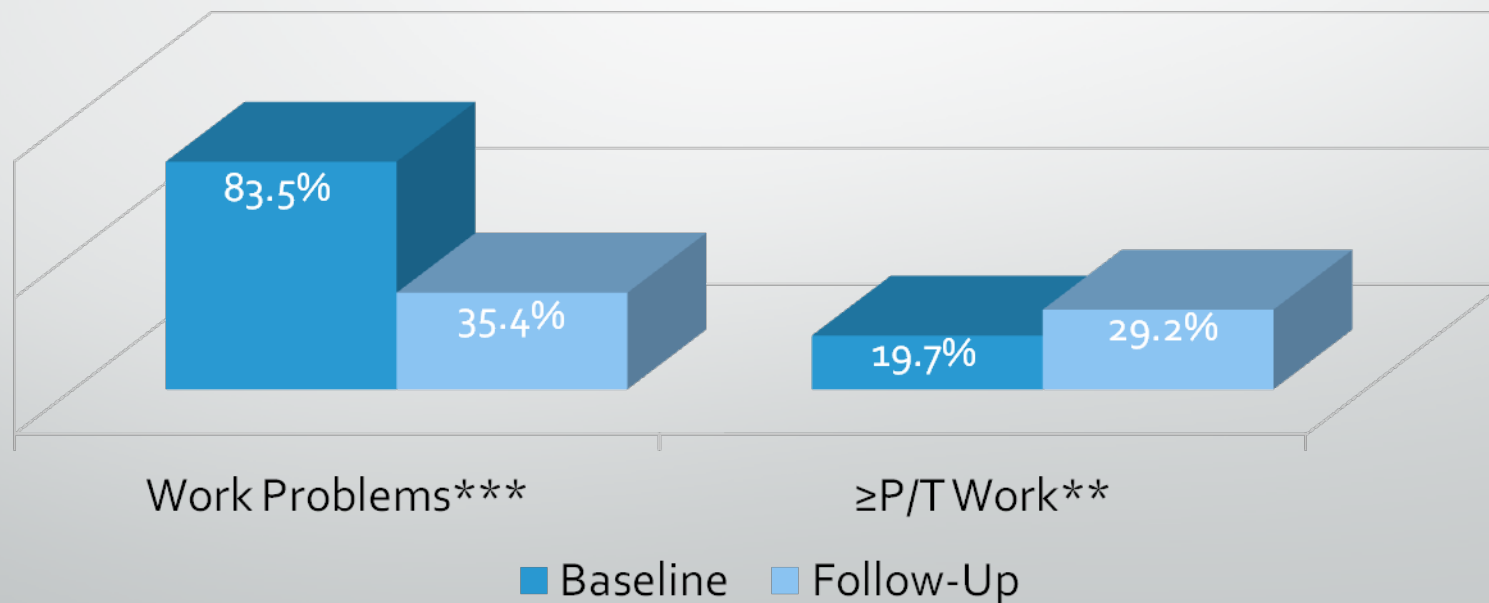


Participants also reported significant decreases in unmet basic needs at 6-month follow-up (n=322)

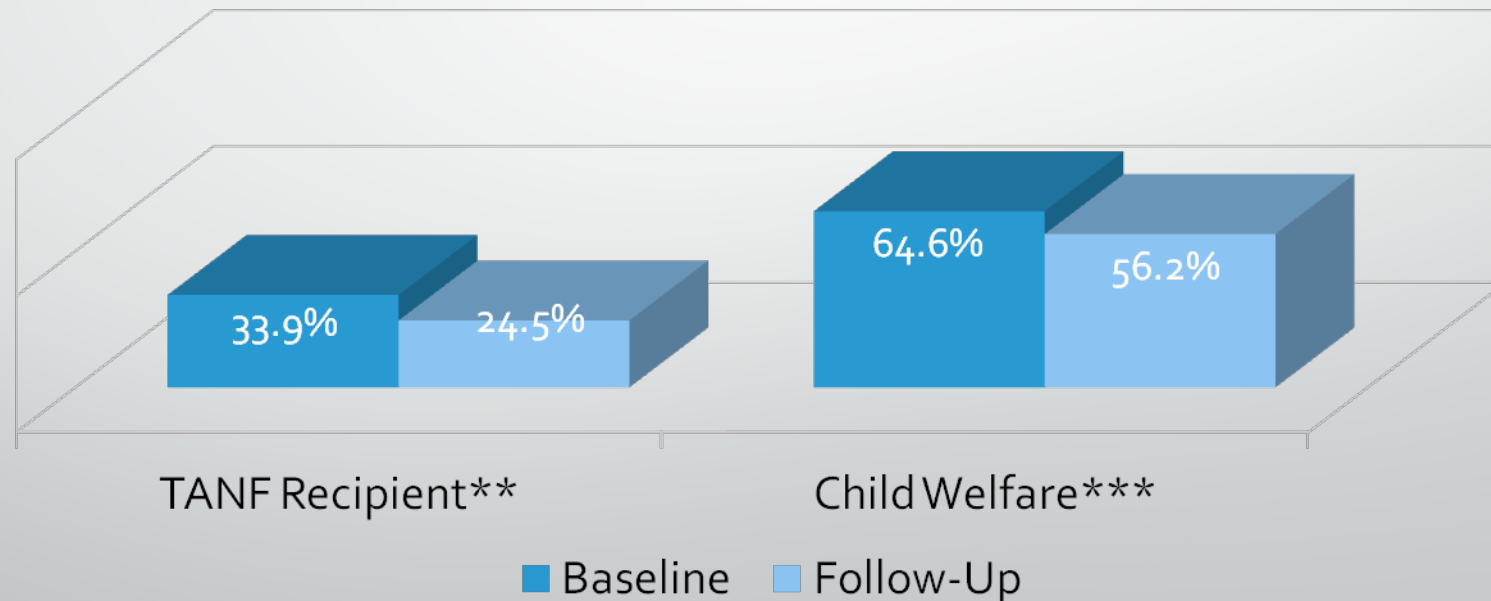




# Participants reported significant changes in employment-related outcomes at 6-month follow-up (n=322)

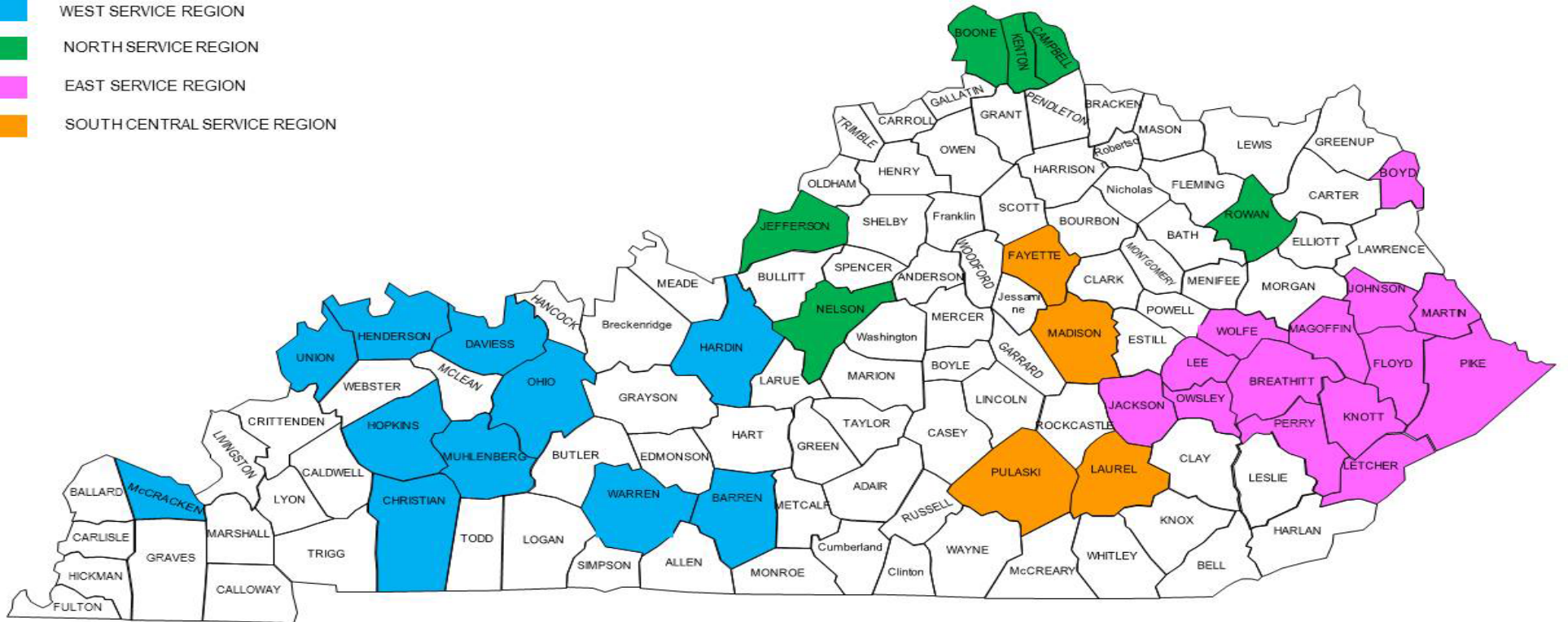


Participants reported significant decreases in welfare receipt and child welfare involvement at 6-month follow-up (n=322)



# Kentucky's TAP Sites

-  WEST SERVICE REGION
-  NORTH SERVICE REGION
-  EAST SERVICE REGION
-  SOUTH CENTRAL SERVICE REGION



# References

Delaney, M. & Leukefeld, C., TAP Baseline Opioid Use Data: 2012-2016, Report for the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services Opioid Task Force, December 19, 2016.

Leukefeld, C., Carlton, E., Staton-Tindall, M., & Delaney, M. Six-Month Follow-Up Changes for TANF-Eligible Clients Involved in Kentucky's Targeted Assessment Program. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 00:1-16, 2012

Ellerbe, T., Carlton, E., Ramlow, B., Leukefeld, C., Delaney, M., & Staton-Tindall, M. Helping low-income mothers overcome multiple barriers to self-sufficiency: Strategies and implications for human services professionals. *Families in Society*, 92(3), 289-294, 2011.



# Contact Information

Barbara Ramlow, Director

Targeted Assessment Program

University of Kentucky

Center on Drug & Alcohol Research

643 Maxwellton Court

Lexington, KY 40508

(859) 257-5971

[barbara.ramlow@uky.edu](mailto:barbara.ramlow@uky.edu)



# Contact Information

Carl Leukefeld

Professor and Principal Investigator

Targeted Assessment Program

University of Kentucky

111 College of Medicine Office Building

Lexington, KY 40536

(859) 323-5308

[cleukef@email.uky.edu](mailto:cleukef@email.uky.edu)