2017 Linking TANF Families to Employment and Economic Opportunities Meeting

Strategies to Incorporate Behavioral Science into Program Delivery

Presented by: MEF Associates
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Goals of Today’s Session

1. Understand key benefits of incorporating behavioral science into program design
2. Review examples of behavioral interventions in human services agencies
3. Practice strategies to incorporate behavioral diagnosis and design at your agency
Behavioral Principles 101

- Realities of human behavior:
  - Limited attention
  - Put off pain and speed up pleasure
  - Not great at calculating costs and benefits
  - Limited self-control
  - Swayed by our family, peers, and people we respect
  - Deterred by small hassles
Many welfare-to-work policies and programs are based on an unrealistic picture of how we, as humans, think and behave.

TANF agencies sometimes design requirements with the assumption that clients will carefully consider each option, and follow through on intentions.

Research from psychology and other behavioral sciences have not been integrated into programs and polices to the same extent as traditional economics.
Examples of Behavioral Interventions in Human Services Agencies
Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency (BIAS): Overview

• Sponsored by Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) in ACF
• Goal: To learn how tools from behavioral science can be used to deliver program services more effectively and improve well-being of low-income children and families
The Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency (BIAS) Project

**WORK SUPPORT**
- Improved engagement in appointments and activities
  - CA
  - NY

**CHILD SUPPORT**
- Improved payment rates
  - OH
- Increased requests for order modifications
  - TX
  - WA

**CHILD CARE**
- Improved subsidy renewal rates
  - OK
- Increased use of high quality-rated providers
  - IN

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OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE
An Office of the Administration for Children & Families
Overview of BIAS Findings

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Impact Size (percentage points)

Number of Tests

-2 0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32

CA OH OH IN OH OH IN NY TX IN OH NY OH OH WA
Los Angeles Background

- California temporarily exempted some TANF families from the welfare-to-work program, but that exemption ended.

- To “reengage” families, parents were sent two mailings and two phone calls, but many parents still did not attend their mandatory appointment or reach other reengagement benchmarks.

Could Los Angeles increase the percentage of parents who became positively engaged?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bottleneck</th>
<th>Behavioral Concept</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not understand complicated, detailed materials</td>
<td>• Cognitive Load</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Limited Attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accustomed to receiving TANF with no mandate to participate</td>
<td>• Status Quo Bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ostrich Effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned to attend, but forgot or changed mind</td>
<td>• Prospective Memory Failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Procrastination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanted to attend, but had problems getting to meeting</td>
<td>• Hassle Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Limited Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faced more pressing concerns</td>
<td>• Psychology of Scarcity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Loss Frame

By not attending your appointment, you may:

❌ Miss out on jobs available now or training and education for your career.
❌ LOSE up to $2,508 a year in cash benefits.

Hi Jane,

See you at your appointment next week. We’ll make a plan for work, and make sure you don’t lose your cash benefits. Call me if you have any questions.

See you then,
John Smith
(555) 123-4567

Gain Frame

By attending your appointment, you may:

✔ Take advantage of jobs available now or training and education for your career.
✔ KEEP up to $2,508 a year in cash benefits.

Hi Jane,

See you at your appointment next week. We’ll make a plan for work, and make sure you continue to receive cash benefits. Call me if you have any questions.

See you then,
John Smith
(555) 123-4567
An additional behavioral notice increased reengagement by 3.6 percentage points.

This effect was largely driven by the loss-framed notice; increased reengagement by 4.4 percentage points.
Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency Next Generation (BIAS NG)

• Aims to expand the use of behavioral science to a wider range of programs and go beyond nudges

• Starting with two domains:
  – TANF (LA County, Monroe County, and Washington State)
  – Child Welfare (Allegheny County and LA County)
Group Activity: Practicing the Behavioral Diagnosis & Design Process
Behavioral Diagnosis and Design (BDD)

Define
Identify problems of interest

Diagnose
Gather data, create a process map and identify bottlenecks

Design
Brainstorm behavioral interventions

Test
Pilot behavioral interventions using random assignment

Source: ideas42 worked with MDRC in the early stages of the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency (BIAS) project to create the behavioral diagnosis and design framework used in the project.
Step 1: Define the Problem

- Measurable
- Improvement possible
- Policy-relevant
- Solution-neutral

Steps to Identify Problem:
- Interview staff (all levels)
- Interview clients
- Process mapping (client POV)
- Document review
- Cohort data analysis
Client applies for TANF (online or in-office)

TANF staff conduct brief telephone interview; schedules intake appointment

Client brings required information to intake appointment

TANF case manager asks clients invasive questions as part of assessment tool

TANF case manager reviews participation requirements, benefit options beyond TANF, sanction rules, next steps

Determined eligible and work-ready?

TANF staff refer to contracted WtW provider

WtW Provider mails client Job Club appointment letter

Client sets reminder and makes plan to attend

Client obtains childcare and transportation

Attends Job Club? (1 afternoon/week only)

Client uses skills and connections to obtain employment

WtW Provider facilitates skill-building and job search

Self-Sufficiency

Agency + Client Experience
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Identify Process Drop-Offs

Client applies for TANF (online or in-office)

- TANF staff conduct brief telephone interview; schedules intake appointment
- Client brings required information to intake appointment
- TANF case manager asks clients invasive questions as part of assessment tool
- TANF case manager reviews participation requirements, benefit options beyond TANF, sanction rules, next steps
- Determined eligible and work-ready?

- TANF staff refer to contracted WtW provider
- WtW Provider mails client Job Club appointment letter
- Client sets reminder and makes plan to attend
- Client obtains childcare and transportation
- Attends Job Club? (1 afternoon/week only)

Self-Sufficiency

- Client uses skills and connections to obtain employment
- WtW Provider facilitates skill-building and job search
Today’s Problem Definition

• 60% of parents do not attend their first job club session, which leads to low engagement in work-preparation activities.

Reframe as measurable goal:

• How might we increase attendance at initial job club sessions by 10 percentage points?
Behavioral Diagnosis and Design (BDD)

Define
- Identify problems of interest

Diagnose
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Design
- Brainstorm behavioral interventions

Test
- Pilot behavioral interventions using random assignment

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Step 2 Diagnose: Hypothesize the Behavioral Bottlenecks Driving your Problem

- Revisit Process Map and selected drop-off
- Empathize with client’s POV
  - Observe process
  - Review documents
  - Client interviews are key!
- Add “behavioral layer” using Know/Feel/Do bottlenecks:
  - What are clients thinking or feeling at each step?
  - What is keeping them from doing the step that is in their best interest?
Step 2 Diagnose: Hypothesize the Behavioral Bottlenecks Driving your Problem

**KNOW**
Knowledge and Awareness

**FEEL**
Motivation and Identity

**DO**
Planning and Follow-through
Let’s practice!
Client applies for TANF (online or in-office)

TANF staff conduct brief telephone interview; schedules intake appointment

Client brings required information to intake appointment

TANF case manager asks clients invasive questions as part of assessment tool

TANF case manager reviews participation requirements, benefit options beyond TANF, sanction rules, next steps

Determined eligible and work-ready?

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Attends Job Club? (1 afternoon/week only)
Add KFD Post-Its

Client applies for TANF (online or in-office)

TANF staff conduct brief telephone interview; schedules intake appointment

Client brings required information to intake appointment

TANF case manager asks clients invasive questions as part of assessment tool

Determined eligible and work-ready?

TANF case manager reviews participation requirements, benefit options beyond TANF, sanction rules, next steps

KNOW

FEEL

DO

TANF staff refer to contracted WtW provider

WtW Provider mails client Job Club appointment letter

Client sets reminder and makes plan to attend

Client obtains childcare and transportation

Attends Job Club? (1 afternoon/week only)
Today’s Hypothesized Behavioral Bottlenecks

1. **Cognitive overload**: Information presented to parents during orientation is complex and overwhelming; staff do not help parents distill information into concrete next steps that parents can remember.

2. **Negative Identity Priming**: Initial staff-parent interactions focus on barriers and past failures, which may reduce parents’ sense of efficacy or motivation.

3. **Planning fallacy**: Without a concrete plan, parents who express confidence about following through on next steps fail to do so.

4. **Hassle Factors**: Job club is offered once/week in the afternoon after staff lunch breaks, which parents share is inconvenient given their other household commitments.
Behavioral Diagnosis and Design (BDD)

1. **Define**
   - Identify problems of interest

2. **Diagnose**
   - Gather data, create a process map and identify bottlenecks

3. **Design**
   - Brainstorm behavioral interventions

4. **Test**
   - Pilot behavioral interventions using random assignment

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Step 3: Design

• **Revisit goal:** How might we increase attendance at initial job club sessions by 20%?

• **Agency levers:** Where does or could the agency interact with clients to shape behavior?

• **Address specific bottlenecks:** Use EAST Framework, placemat examples
  – Look to past BE research and everyday marketing for inspiration

• **Prototype** and seek **user feedback** prior to launch
Small Group Activity: What are your design ideas?

• How might we increase attendance at initial job club sessions by 10 percentage points?
• How can we make the process:
  – Easier?
  – More Attractive?
  – More Social?
  – More Timely?
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Share Out

(1-2 ideas/group)
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Wrapping Up

Define
- Identify problems of interest

Diagnose
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