



## What are the Effects of a Two-Generation Human Capital Program on Low-Income Parents' Education, Employment and Psychological Well-Being?

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The current brief explores the effects of a model two-generation human capital intervention, *CareerAdvance*®, on parent outcomes.
- *CareerAdvance*®, developed and run by the Community Action Project of Tulsa County (CAP Tulsa), is a healthcare training program designed for parents of children enrolled in CAP's Head Start programs.
- After one year, *CareerAdvance*® parents demonstrated higher rates of certification and employment in the healthcare sector (but not employment in general) than did matched comparison parents whose children were also in Head Start. The study did not find effects on parent income or average employment across all sectors in the short-term.
- Parents in *CareerAdvance*® also reported higher levels of optimism, self-efficacy, and career identity in contrast to the matched comparison group.
- In sum, we find that *CareerAdvance*® promoted parent education, employment and overall well-being even as parents juggled the demands of school, family and employment.

## CAREERADVANCE®

- *CareerAdvance*®, developed and run by the Community Action Project of Tulsa County (CAP Tulsa), is a model two-generation intervention that pairs early childhood education for children with career pathway training in the health care sector for parents.
- *CareerAdvance*® recruits parents from high quality Head Start centers and offers career certification programs in the healthcare field at no cost to families. Additional program elements include career coaching, weekly peer learning groups, financial incentives/in-kind assistance and wraparound child care.



## STUDY DESIGN

■ The study estimated the one-year effects of parent CareerAdvance® participation (healthcare career pathway training for parents combined with Head Start services for children) on parent outcomes compared to a matched comparison group that received Head Start services alone. Before the intervention began, the study selected a matched comparison group of parents who were similar to the CareerAdvance® participants based on observable characteristics.

■ Our sample included 287 CAP Tulsa Head Start parents and their young children, with 150 parents in CareerAdvance® and 137 parents in the matched comparison group. All study families were low-income (average income per year of \$15,190) with an average household size of four. The sample was ethnically and racially diverse: 40% Black, 28% White, 9% Hispanic, and 23% other non-Hispanic race (including Native American). Roughly one-third of the sample were single parents at program entry.

■ This represents the first study of this type of two-generation program and is the beginning of a series of evaluations of CareerAdvance®'s effects on parents and children.

■ We are also studying a scaled-up, less expensive version of the CareerAdvance® model. More time is needed to conduct cost-benefit analyses and measure longer-term gains.

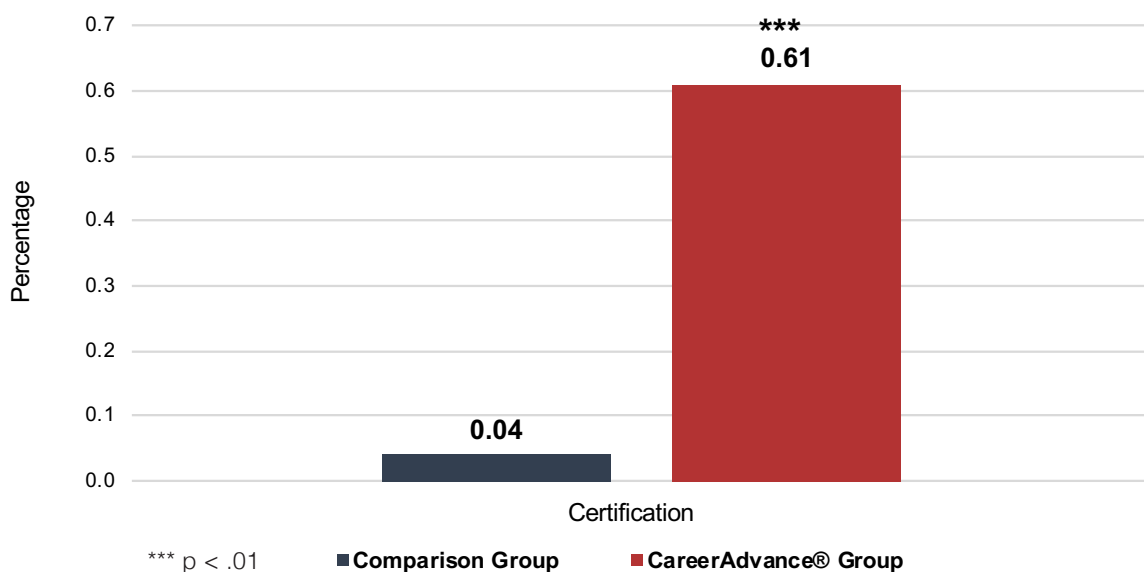
## KEY FINDINGS

Overall, CareerAdvance® promoted parent career certificate attainment, employment in the healthcare sector, and psychological well-being in one year.

### **CareerAdvance® promoted parent postsecondary educational attainment.**

■ After one year, 61% of participants attained a healthcare-applicable certificate compared to 4% of parents in the matched comparison group.

Figure 1. Effect of CareerAdvance® on Parent Certification in the Healthcare Sector

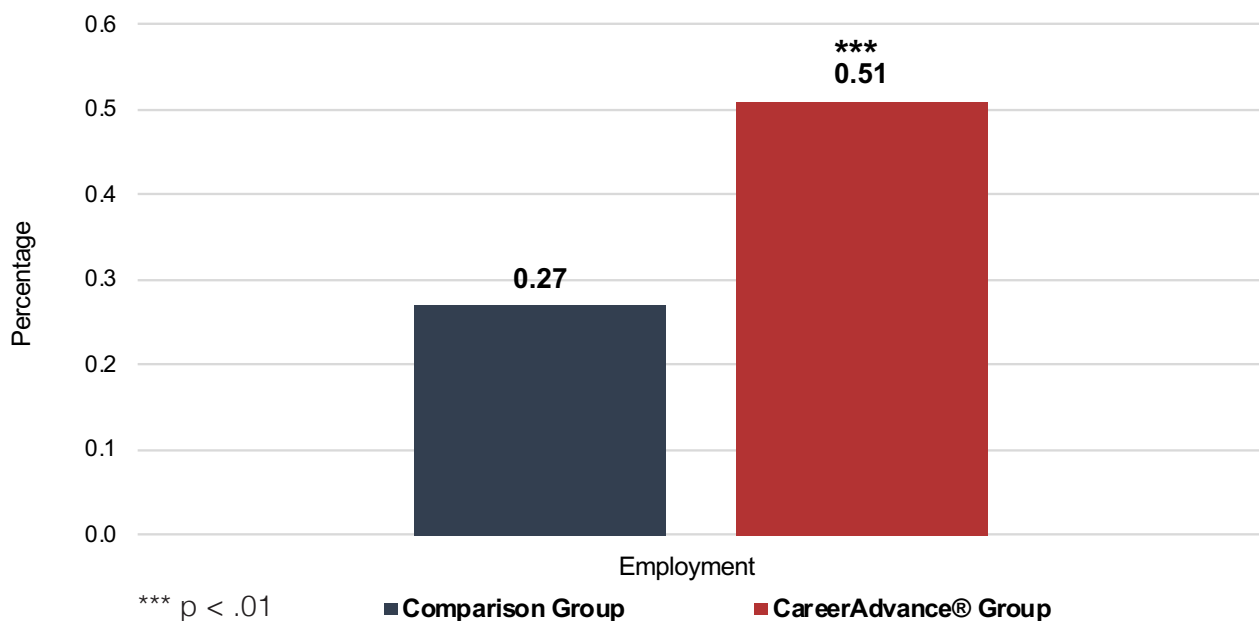




**CareerAdvance® achieved its goal of promoting healthcare employment.**

■ At the end of one year, 51% of program parents were employed in the healthcare sector compared to 27% of parents in the matched comparison group.

Figure 2. Effect of CareerAdvance® on Parent Employment in the Healthcare Sector after One Year



**Parents in the CareerAdvance® program shifted from full-time to part-time employment.**

■ Part-time work likely helped CareerAdvance® participants balance the competing demands of adding school to a job and family.

**CareerAdvance® parents did not report a change in material hardship or household income at the end of the first year of the program.**

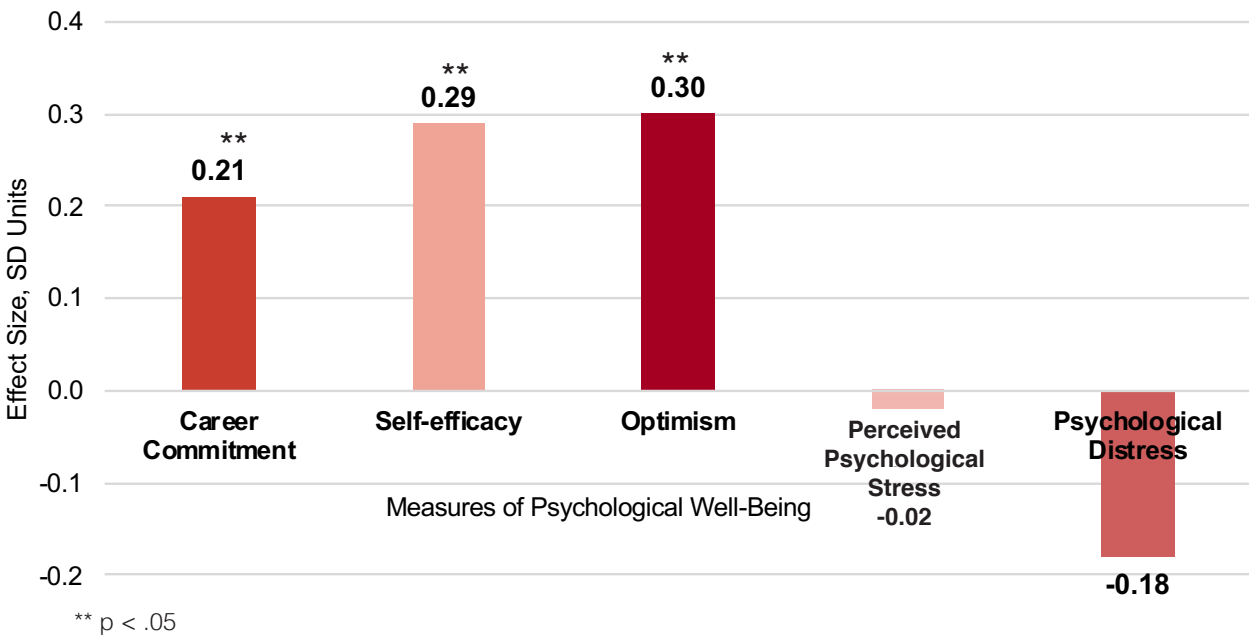
■ While participants experienced a \$1,300 decrease in average earnings by the end of the first year, these losses were offset by program incentive payments over the course of the year.

**CareerAdvance® participants demonstrated higher levels of psychological well-being than their matched comparison counterparts.**

■ At the end of year one, CareerAdvance® participants had stronger commitment to careers and higher levels of self-efficacy and optimism compared to the matched comparison group.

■ Despite the challenge of balancing work, school, and parenting, CareerAdvance® parents did not exhibit higher levels of stress and psychological distress compared to the matched comparison group.

Figure 3. Effect of CareerAdvance® on Parent Psychological Well-being





## CONCLUSION

- Overall, CareerAdvance® promoted parent career certificate attainment, employment in the healthcare sector, and psychological well-being.
- Notably, even as CareerAdvance® parents juggled the demands of school, family, and employment, they did not report higher levels of material hardship or stress compared to the matched comparison group.
- This study provides strong evidence that pairing high-quality Head Start services with job training for parents produces positive short-term outcomes for parents beyond the benefits of Head Start alone.

## PROGRAM / STUDY DESCRIPTION

- The program offered stackable training in three healthcare tracks —nursing, health information technology, and medical assisting— designed so that participants could make concrete progress, exit at various points with certificates, and return for further career advancement.
- CAP Tulsa developed close partnerships with community colleges and offered college coursework and trainings while children were in Head Start.
- Peer meetings with other participating parents were led by trained CAP Tulsa career coaches and took place at the Head Start centers.
- Incentives to reduce the financial burden of entering school (up to \$3,000 each year) were offered to parents for meeting grade or credit requirements, attending peer partner meetings, or attaining a certificate.
- In-kind assistance was provided to further help parents make ends meet, including bus passes, gas cards, and child care outside of Head Start’s normal hours.
- All families received full-day early care and education for children at Head Start programs.
- The study included multiple cohorts (cohorts 4-10 of the program) that started at staggered time points (fall and winter of each Head Start year, beginning in fall 2011 through fall 2014).
- To select the matched comparison group, we used propensity score matching, which adjusts for differences between groups in demographics and interest in pursuing educational and career activities.
- The study drew on parent surveys and administrative data from CAP Tulsa and the State of Oklahoma from 2011 to 2015.

