

Board of Advisors

October 24, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Advisors of the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy
FROM: Jon Baron
RE: Update - Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy

We're pleased to report the following key developments related to our work:

- 1. The federal government has taken a major step forward to institutionalize rigorous evidence standards, with the publication of [Common Evidence Guidelines](#) developed by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and National Science Foundation (NSF).** The Guidelines "identify the spectrum of study types that contribute to development and testing of interventions and strategies, and ... specify expectations for the contributions of each type of study." The Office of Management and Budget and Office of Science and Technology Policy helped facilitate the IES-NSF discussions, and although the Guidelines focus on education research, we believe their main concepts are also applicable to other fields of social policy research and evaluation.

Importantly, the Guidelines include a core concept we have advanced with federal officials over many years: "generally and when feasible, [impact studies] should use designs in which the treatment and comparison groups are randomly assigned." This concept has been a signature element of our work with federal officials since the Coalition's launch in 2001. We were pleased not only with the recommendation, but also its breadth: the Guidelines intend it to apply to the full range of studies designed to measure a program's impact, from early-stage "efficacy" studies to later-stage "scale-up" evaluations.

- 2. Using the IES-NSF Guidelines as a framework, the Coalition has published a short white paper – [Practical Evaluation Strategies for Building a Body of Proven-Effective Social Programs: Suggestions for Research and Program Funders](#) (six pages).** The paper provides concrete suggestions for using evaluations to identify interventions that produce sizable effects on important life outcomes, recognizing that most interventions, when rigorously evaluated, are found to produce weak or no effects compared to services-as-usual.

We hope this update is helpful. Any thoughts or suggestions you have on our work would be much appreciated.

Jon

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