

May 23, 2008

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Advisors of the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy

FROM: Jon Baron

RE: Update on our work

Below is a brief update on recent developments in our efforts to advance evidence-based reforms in government programs. Please let me know if you have questions or would like additional information. Any advice you have would be much appreciated.

1. Congress to review new Coalition Initiative To Identify and Validate Social Interventions Meeting "Top Tier" Evidence of Effectiveness.

An abstract of our initiative is shown below, and here's a [link](#) to a 3-page overview (plus appendix). As you'll note, a unique aspect of this project is that Congress has expressed interest in our effort, and officially asked GAO to monitor and assess our work, and report on its validity. If GAO's review is favorable, the project is well-positioned to become a uniquely authoritative resource for Congressional, federal agency, and state and local policymakers. We've formed an expert Advisory Panel for this initiative that includes Jonathan Crane, Laurie Ekstrand, Deborah Gorman-Smith, Denise Gottfredson, Ron Haskins, Larry Orr, Steve Raudenbush, Howard Rolston, and Barry White (click [here](#) for their titles/affiliations).

Abstract: Several recent Congressional actions seek to focus funds in certain federal social programs on models and strategies meeting the "top tier" of evidence of effectiveness - i.e., "that have been shown, in well-designed randomized controlled trials, to produce sizeable, sustained effects on important outcomes." To assist federal agencies, grantees, and others in implementing these provisions effectively, the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy is launching an initiative to identify and validate models and strategies ("interventions") meeting this evidence standard. The Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs has expressed a strong interest in the Coalition's effort, believing it "could be valuable in helping agencies to implement [such] statutory requirements." The Committee has asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to monitor and assess the effort, and report to Congress on whether in fact it provides such value (click [here](#) for the letter from Chairman Lieberman, Ranking Member Collins, and Subcommittee Chairman Landrieu, requesting the GAO review and also describing the legislative provisions on top-tier evidence). Funding for this project is provided by the MacArthur Foundation and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.

2. The Second Chance Act - which per our input contains a 2% set-aside for rigorous evaluations of strategies to facilitate prisoner re-entry into the community - was signed into law in April (Public Law 110-199).

Specifically, the Act contains a provision that we helped develop to set aside 2% of program funds for evaluations that "include, to the maximum extent feasible, random assignment and generate evidence on which reentry approaches and strategies are most effective." The Act also contains other evidence-based provisions that we helped develop. Click [here](#) to see the relevant excerpts.

- 3. We've conducted a number of workshops for OMB, the federal agencies, and other stakeholders on evidence-based reform, which have been very well received based on the feedback forms and other measures.**

The workshops seek to provide participants with practical, cost-effective strategies to advance such reforms in their programs or policy areas. In recent months, we've conducted workshops at OMB, the Department of Education, and Department of Labor. Our most recent workshop for OMB (April 2008) was attended by over 60 OMB officials and staff. Our workshops are supported, in part, through a grant from the William T. Grant Foundation.

I hope this update is helpful.