

Research and Policy Collaboration for Early Intervention

ICDR Disability Employment Symposium

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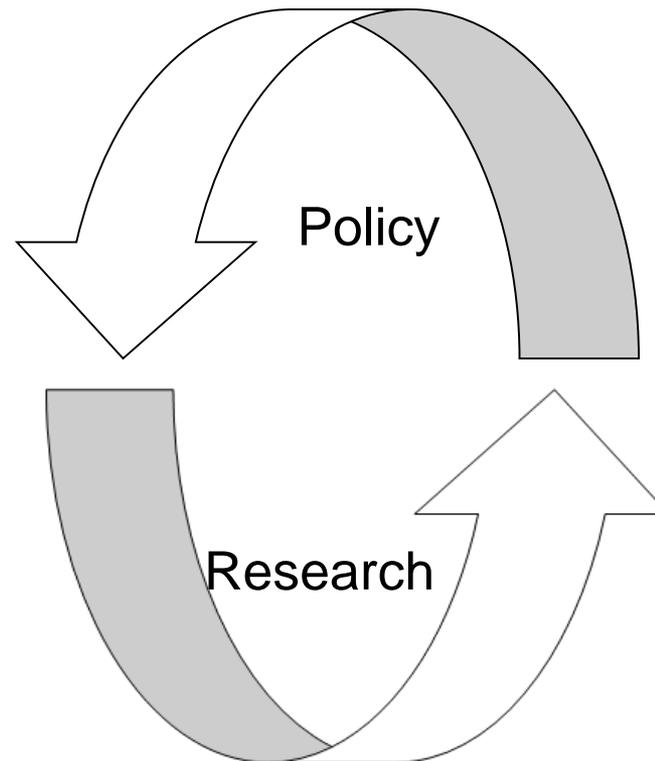


**Social Security Administration
Office of Retirement and Disability Policy**

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The Policy-Research Cycle

Ideally, policy and research should be processes that feed each other



Iterative Interaction Between Research and Policy Development

- Policy roles:
 - Reviews research for new needs and questions of interest
 - Defines both broad and narrow needs and questions of interests
 - Develops potential policy changes to be tested
- Research Roles:
 - Develops data and analyses to answer policy questions
 - Helps interpret research findings (separating the chaff from wheat)
 - Provides data to support policy development and program design
 - Helps develop the structure of the program so it produces testable findings that can be replicated



Example:
Development and Design of the Early
Intervention Demonstration



Recent Research Pointing to a Need For Early Intervention

- Programs:
 - Ticket to Work (TTW) program (started in 2002)
 - Had positive impact on enrollment but did not increase exits from SSA disability cash benefits.
 - Outcomes were better for younger beneficiaries with mental illness
 - The Mental Health Treatment Study (MHTS)
 - Had success in improving work outcomes, but not at levels that would allow beneficiaries to leave SSA disability cash benefits
- Both programs worked with beneficiaries already on benefits.
- The Policy Question:
 - *Would earlier intervention, before benefit receipt, lead to better results with less dependence on SSA benefits?*



Other evidence from Small “Niche” Demos

- A Valuable Part of the Development Process
 - Smaller, Faster, Cheaper
- Findings from CMS’s Demonstration to Maintain Independence and Employment (DMIE), earlier proof of concept on Early Intervention:
 - Suggested early intervention services may reduce applications for SSA benefits in the first 24 months after services,

But

- Effects were small and not statistically significant
- Niche populations that would not scale up
- How do we develop a test to convince the skeptics?



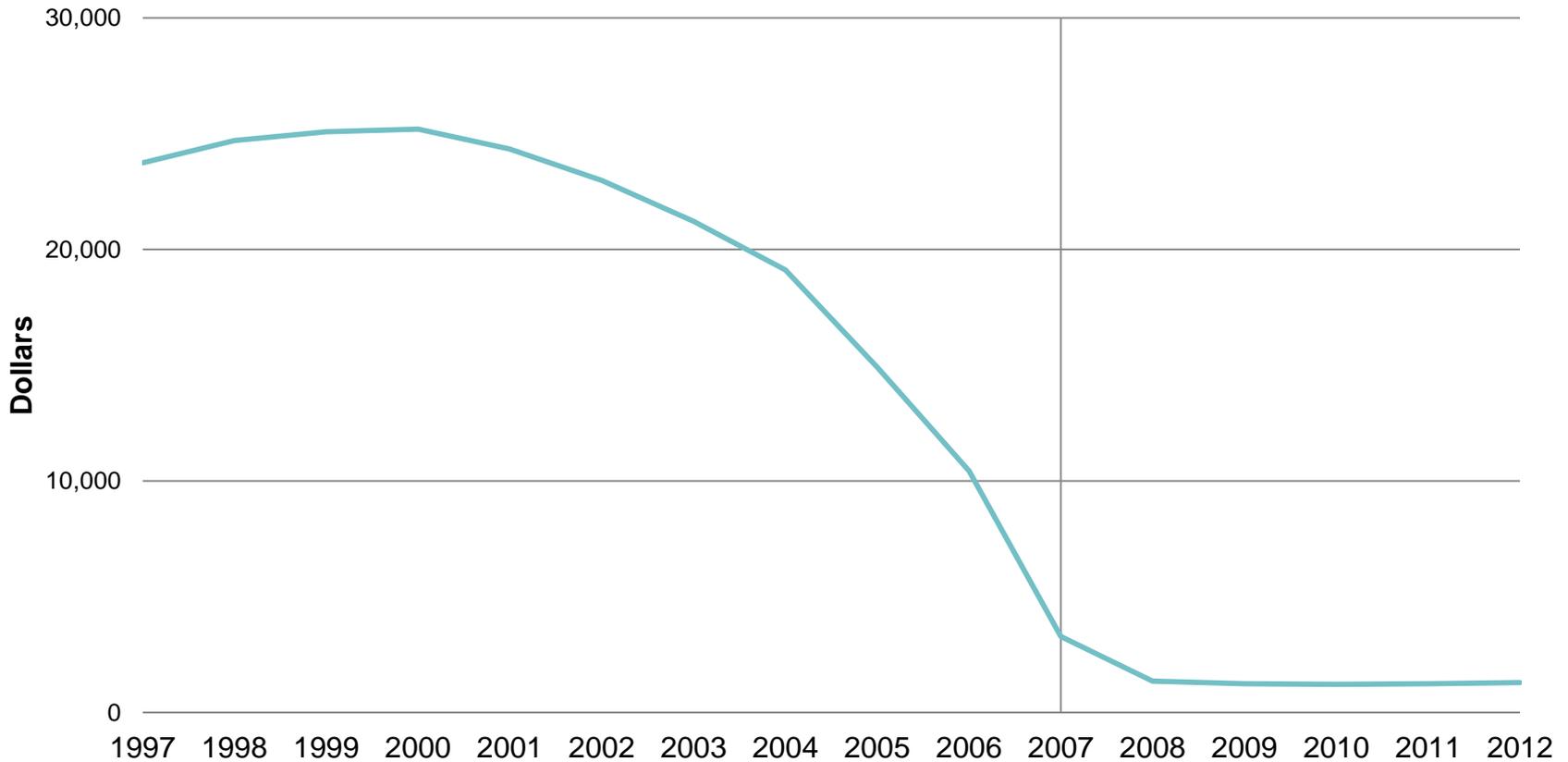
How Can Research Support Policy Development

- Brainstorming with Policy teams on design options
 - Example: Early Intervention included 5 agencies and OMB on policy development
- Use data to:
 - Validate the approach
 - Confirm the need
 - Assess alternative approaches/populations
 - Establish time horizons



Refine Policy Development: Should We Expect Better Results from Early Intervention?

Earnings Before and After Award, 2007 Awards



Refine Policy Development: Can We Define A Scalable Population?

Individuals with initial denials in 2008, by award status by end of 2012

	Number	Percent
Awarded benefits in 2008-2009	135,877	16.0
Awarded benefits in 2010-2012	159,298	18.8
Not awarded benefits by end of 2012	552,862	65.2
Total	848,037	100.0

Source: SDR data merged to DAF12.

- *Shows 35% of initially denied applicants are awarded benefits within five years.*



How Can Research Assist in Program Development and Intervention Design?



Data to Support Program Expectations

Researchers can help to:

- Estimate realistic service costs up front
 - If the demonstration is successful, is a full scale program affordable?
- Estimate success required to cover costs
 - What are the range of benefits that need to be included?
 - If broader outcomes are needed, can we measure them?



Data to Support Development of the Target Population

Researchers can help to:

- Develop realistic estimates of the target population willing to participate
- Define the target population clearly in advance (to avoid mission creep)
- Design a random assignment protocol to obtain valid program impacts with controls over participant selection/randomization
- Design the program to be scalable



Data to Help to Validity

Researchers can help:

- Develop ways to measure and maintain program fidelity
- Define measurable program outcomes of interest



When to Develop the Evaluation

- Advantages to Designing evaluation up front and implementing it from the start:
 - Assures the data necessary to evaluate the program will be collected and retained
 - Allows the evaluator to understand how the program was actually implemented and how closely it followed the program design
 - Assures you have the sample sizes up front that will be sufficient to determine success for sub-samples or subtopics of interest in the end

The key is to work backwards from the information you need at the end to convince the skeptics.



Researchers and Policy need to work together to develop Data to support policy analyses



Data Determines the Range of Help That Research Can Provide

- Researchers need the support of policy planners so they can build data that will support the planning process.
 - Data must be reliable, comprehensive, and flexible enough to inform a range of demonstration designs.
 - Must be developed prior to, or as part of, the design and implementation process.
- Policy questions push data development, and research data supports policy development, design, and implementation.



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