

FINANCIAL EDUCATION AS AN INTERVENTION TO CHANGE SOCIAL WORKERS' PRACTICE BEHAVIORS IN FINANCIAL CAPABILITY PRACTICE

Financial Capability and Asset Building Convening Event
April 2015
St. Louis, MO

Jodi Jacobson Frey, PhD, Christine Callahan, PhD, Sally
Hageman, MSW, & Karen Hopkins, PhD
University of Maryland

Philip Osteen, PhD (Florida State University)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND RESEARCH TEAM

The researchers acknowledge and thank the Maryland CASH Campaign for their leadership on this project and funding for the evaluation study. The researchers also thank the Annie E. Casey Foundation for funding the overall project. We thank them for their support and acknowledge that the findings and conclusions presented in this presentation are those of the authors alone, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Foundation or any other organization. Additional contributions to the research methods and project were from Dr. J. Michael Collins and Mr. Collin O'Rourke (University of Wisconsin-Madison) and the Aspen Institute.

Both projects were supported by the Financial Social Work Initiative, School of Social Work, University of Maryland, Baltimore
(www.ssw.umaryland.edu/fsw)

Additional contributors include: Lucy Bill, Lara Henneman, Jungyai Ko, and Robin McKinney

INTRODUCTION TO STUDY AND BACKGROUND

- ▶ Increased numbers of clients presenting in human service settings with issues related to finances or complex problems exacerbated by financial stress
- ▶ Lack of formal training for human services providers to assess and respond appropriately to client financial issues
- ▶ Lack of research evaluating the impact of training on providers and their actual direct practice behaviors

MARYLAND AND BALTIMORE STATS

- ▶ One in four individuals lives below the poverty line (US Census Bureau)
 - ▶ 33% of children live in poverty (AECF Kids Count, 2012)
 - ▶ One in four households receives food stamps and 83% of children enrolled in Baltimore City Public Schools eligible for free/reduced-price meals (Baltimore Sun)
 - ▶ 34.8% of households in MD lack enough liquid savings to survive for three months at the poverty line. This is 2x for HH of color (CFED, 2014)



PRIMARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Evaluate Maryland CASH Campaign's Financial Stability Pathway (FSP) training for providers in 7 human service organizations located within and around Baltimore City (5 non-profit organizations & 2 Employee Assistance Programs, EAPs).

METHODS

- ▶ One group, longitudinal research design comprised of a pre-test, post-test (immediately after training), and follow-up (9 months) surveys
- ▶ Outcomes: providers' knowledge and behaviors, self-efficacy and practice behaviors

FINANCIAL STABILITY TRAINING OVERVIEW

- ▶ Providers trained by Maryland CASH Campaign in financial stability and to use the use of the Maryland CASH Smart Referral Tool on the Baltimore City Local Page of the Asset Platform
- ▶ Training focused on how providers can assess financial problems and help individuals and families manage their current financial situations; improve future financial outlook; address emotional concerns and problems related to their finances
- ▶ Participants were offered monthly consultation and meetings with researchers and Maryland CASH staff

TRAINING – KEY POINTS

- ▶ 1 full day (plus additional support with FSP)
- ▶ Designed to increase personal understanding of finances, access to financial resources, and confidence to deliver FSW services
- ▶ Includes concepts from financial literacy, behavioral economics, financial counseling and coaching, self-assessment, Money Habitudes, goal setting, motivational interviewing, and community and online resources for financial products and services

MARYLAND CASH CAMPAIGN

- ▶ CASH stands for *Creating Assets, Savings and Hope*.
- ▶ Statewide network dedicated to improving the financial security of working families.
 - ▶ Capacity Building and Training
 - ▶ Financial education (Maryland CASH Academy)
 - ▶ Research and Advocacy
- ▶ More information: www.mdcash.org



PROJECT MODEL

- ▶ Financial Stability Pathway (FSP) project connects financial stability service providers to:
 - ▶ Other providers through trainings, calls and referrals
 - ▶ Online technology to streamline referrals through the Smart Referral Tool © and a project-specific website on the Asset Platform
 - ▶ Research opportunities to build the evidence base for asset development, and for linking service delivery

The Financial Stability Pathway Project connects low to moderate income clients to:

Free Tax Preparation
Financial Education
Financial Coaching
Certified Credit Counseling
Budget Counseling
Benefit Screening
Access to Financial Products

FINANCIAL STABILITY PATHWAY TRAINING FOR PROVIDERS: OVERVIEW

- ▶ Financial stability
- ▶ Use of Maryland CASH Smart Referral Tool on the Baltimore City Local Page of the Asset Platform (Aspen Institute)
- ▶ Assessment of financial problems
- ▶ Help individuals and families manage: 1) current financial situations; 2) improve future financial outlook; 3) address emotional concerns & problems related to finances
- ▶ Monthly consultation and meetings with researchers and Maryland CASH staff

- Home
- The FSP
- FAQ
- Contact

Welcome to the Baltimore Local Page!

Get to your favorite tools on the AssetPlatform and check out what's new!

Go

RESOURCES

- Budgeting
- Savings
- Debt
- Credit Score
- Insurance/Safety Net
- Organizational Resources



Photos by Tom McCarthy Jr. www.tommccarthyjr.com

The Baltimore Smart Referral Tool

Practitioner Spotlight



March 15, 2013

Judy Hines, Credit Counselor at Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Maryland and Delaware.

Judy Hines is a veteran credit counselor and warrior against debt. She has worked for Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Maryland and Delaware for 35 years, and has seen a lot of changes at the agency and in the financial world. She says, "One thing that has remained constant is the difficulty of working with someone to stick to a budget that works. To go on and be successful, you have to make some hard changes." Judy learned to be creative over the years with suggestions to help people facing large amounts of consumer debt to cope with the stress of it all. "If someone is used to contributing to church or charity, I'll tell them to consider volunteering. Time is valuable too." Judy is currently posted at the CCCS-Parkville office, but talks to people all around the region. She enjoys counseling, and focuses on helping people to refine their options and reach the resources that are available. That's why she likes the FSP, and connecting clients to other resources which they might need. She noted, "everyone I talk to

Poll Results

Which of the following do you think holds the most opportunity for low-income residents of Baltimore City?

- Job Training
- Financial Education

Baltimore News and Links

NEW! Want to work on new skills to get a better job? See what training programs are available in Baltimore city: <http://www.trainbaltimore.org/>

For a comprehensive list of resources available in the Baltimore area, please view the Baltimore Gas & Electric Community Resource Guide, or "Purple Book".

To request to learn more about City of Baltimore services, please visit 311 Online



The Baltimore Smart Referral Tool

Client Name:

Client Zip Code:

Client Gender:

1. What do you feel is your level of financial stress today?

- High.
- Moderate.
- Low.
- No stress at all.

2. If you needed \$2,000 for an emergency, where would you get it?

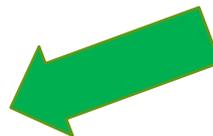
- I have at least \$2,000 in savings.
- I have other assets I could sell or cash out (like a car or a retirement account).
- I could borrow the money from family or friends.
- I would get a credit card advance, a payday loan, or other new debt.
- I would not be able to get the money.
- Prefer not to answer.

3. Have you ever created a personal or family budget?

- Yes, I have a budget and I use it regularly.
- Yes, I did a budget once, but don't use it regularly.
- No, I don't think that it would help.
- Not yet. I don't know how to create a budget, but would like to learn.

- Smart Referral Tool[©]
- Designed to be used in 10 minutes or less
- Outputs:
 - financial goal
 - referral service information
 - one-pager (can also email)

About 38% of respondents chose “Not yet. I don’t know how to create a budget but I’d like to learn.”



MEASURES

- ▶ Pretest: baseline understanding of providers' knowledge, confidence to work with clients on financial problems, practice behaviors and financial behaviors
- ▶ 7 sections to survey + open-ended questions
- ▶ Post-Test (immediately following training)
- ▶ Follow-Up (9 months after training)

MEASURES (CONTINUED)

- ▶ Section I: demographics and professional experience
- ▶ Section II: prior training/education on financial capability
- ▶ Section III: work setting and client practice behaviors
- ▶ Section IV: perceived preparedness to deliver financial services to clients within their current work setting
- ▶ Section V: financial well-being assessed using the Personal Financial Wellness Scale (PFW; Prawitz et al, 2006).

MEASURES (CONTINUED)

- ▶ Section VI: personal financial knowledge assessed using 3 indices (credit, savings, and other financial topics) from the University of Michigan's quiz, "What's Your Financial IQ," part of the broader national study, Survey of Consumers (Hilgert et al., 2003)
- ▶ Section VII: financial behaviors assessed using the Financial Management Behavior Scale-Revised (FMBS; Dew & Xiao, 2011)

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

- ▶ Final $N=24$ (57% overall response rate)
- ▶ Majority (72%) female
- ▶ 53% White, 31% Black, 9% Hispanic
- ▶ 60% Master's degree or higher
- ▶ Age: $M=45.1$ years (range=26-67)
- ▶ 44% social workers
- ▶ Experience: $M=15$ years (range=1-45)
- ▶ Current Employer: $M=7.5$ years (range 1-34)

RESULTS FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- ▶ Majority (70%) reported prior training or education
- ▶ Majority (62.5%) reported completing additional training at follow-up
- ▶ Follow-up training in areas of managing personal finances, behavioral economics, financial counseling / coaching, financial products, financial values and habits, financial products and more

RESULTS FOR PROVIDERS' WORK SETTINGS AND PRACTICE BEHAVIORS WITH CLIENTS

- ▶ Majority of providers' clients are concerned about not having enough income to cover expenses (84.4%, T1 and 91.7%, T3)
 - ▶ This is not just a problem among poor and unemployed individuals – significant number of clients seen in Employee Assistance Programs
- ▶ Almost all providers reported participating in activities to continue learning from FSP training, including reviewing materials and recommended articles and websites from the FSP training, seeking additional training on financial issues relevant to their client population, and participating in monthly FSP site conference calls

RESULTS FOR PROVIDERS' WORK SETTINGS AND PRACTICE BEHAVIORS WITH CLIENTS

- ▶ Financial practice behaviors from training significantly improved between T1 and T3
 - ▶ Providers reported an increase in how often they addressed clients' value systems and beliefs around money and finances.
 - ▶ Other practices included discussing financial choices with clients, working with clients to set both short-term and long-term financial goals, and discussing behavior change around finances

RESULTS FOR PROVIDERS' WORK SETTINGS AND PRACTICE BEHAVIORS WITH CLIENTS

One participant commented:

“A client had difficulty paying her debts and to refrain from spending on things which she ‘might need’ in the future. I used the Money Habitudes cards to help her understand her relationship with money and material goods, and then set up some goals with her to begin to be more conscious of her spending habits and to begin saving money, while paying down her debts”

RESULTS FOR PERCEIVED PREPAREDNESS TO DELIVER FINANCIAL SERVICES TO CLIENTS

- ▶ Participants overall self-efficacy and confidence improved after the FSP training and at follow-up nine months later, especially in knowing how to navigate and use the FSP online tools to help clients and in knowing where to refer clients for additional financial services. For example, one participant commented, *“One thing that has improved since the FSP training is the ability to refer people to partner organizations, since I have met the service providers there.”*

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONFIDENCE AND PRACTICE BEHAVIORS

- ▶ Linear regression model...
 - ▶ Changes in preparedness and confidence significantly predict practice behaviors at follow-up after controlling for initial practice behaviors: R^2 was 0.78 ($F_{(2,19)}=34.80$, $p<.001$)

RESULTS FOR PERSONAL WELL-BEING AND FINANCIAL KNOWLEDGE

- ▶ Scores on the Personal Financial Wellness Scale (PWS) did not significantly change over time
- ▶ Knowledge measures for credit, savings, and other financial knowledge did not significantly change over time
- ▶ Some items had high correct percentages (80% or higher) at T1 and therefore, there was not much room to improve on some of the items

RESULTS FOR PERSONAL FINANCIAL BEHAVIORS

- ▶ While there were no significant changes in participants' personal financial behaviors across the evaluation period, it is important to note that the providers reported being consistently engaged in “good” or “desired” personal financial practice behaviors, such as paying bills on time, keeping a record of expenses, saving money, contributing to a retirement account, and purchasing or maintaining adequate insurance.

DISCUSSION

▶ Strengths

- ▶ New area of research within human service , including social work, field
- ▶ Results set a benchmark for future studies
- ▶ Longitudinal design used
- ▶ Survey developed by experts and measures were reliable

▶ Limitations

- ▶ Small sample – difficult to generalize
- ▶ Lack of a control group
- ▶ Reliance on self-report measures
- ▶ Drop off in response rate by T3

DISCUSSION (CONTINUED)

- ▶ Training, especially with support post-training, can influence self-efficacy and practice behaviors
- ▶ Self-efficacy is critical in supporting social workers to provide FSW services
- ▶ FSW training continues to be popular at the introduction and now advanced levels.
- ▶ To learn more about the Financial Social Work Initiative and to join the Consortium, see www.ssw.umaryland.edu/fsw

FINANCIAL SOCIAL WORK INITIATIVE STATUS UPDATE - EDUCATION

▶ MSW Program

- ▶ 3-credit dual concentration course
- ▶ Field Placements

▶ CPE Program

- ▶ Introduction to Financial Stability for Adults
- ▶ Numerous advanced courses on topics such as: medical debt, ethics and financial social work, financial coaching, using financial tools online
- ▶ Special topics courses such as Money Habitudes and Financial Stability for Service Members and their families

▶ BSW Program

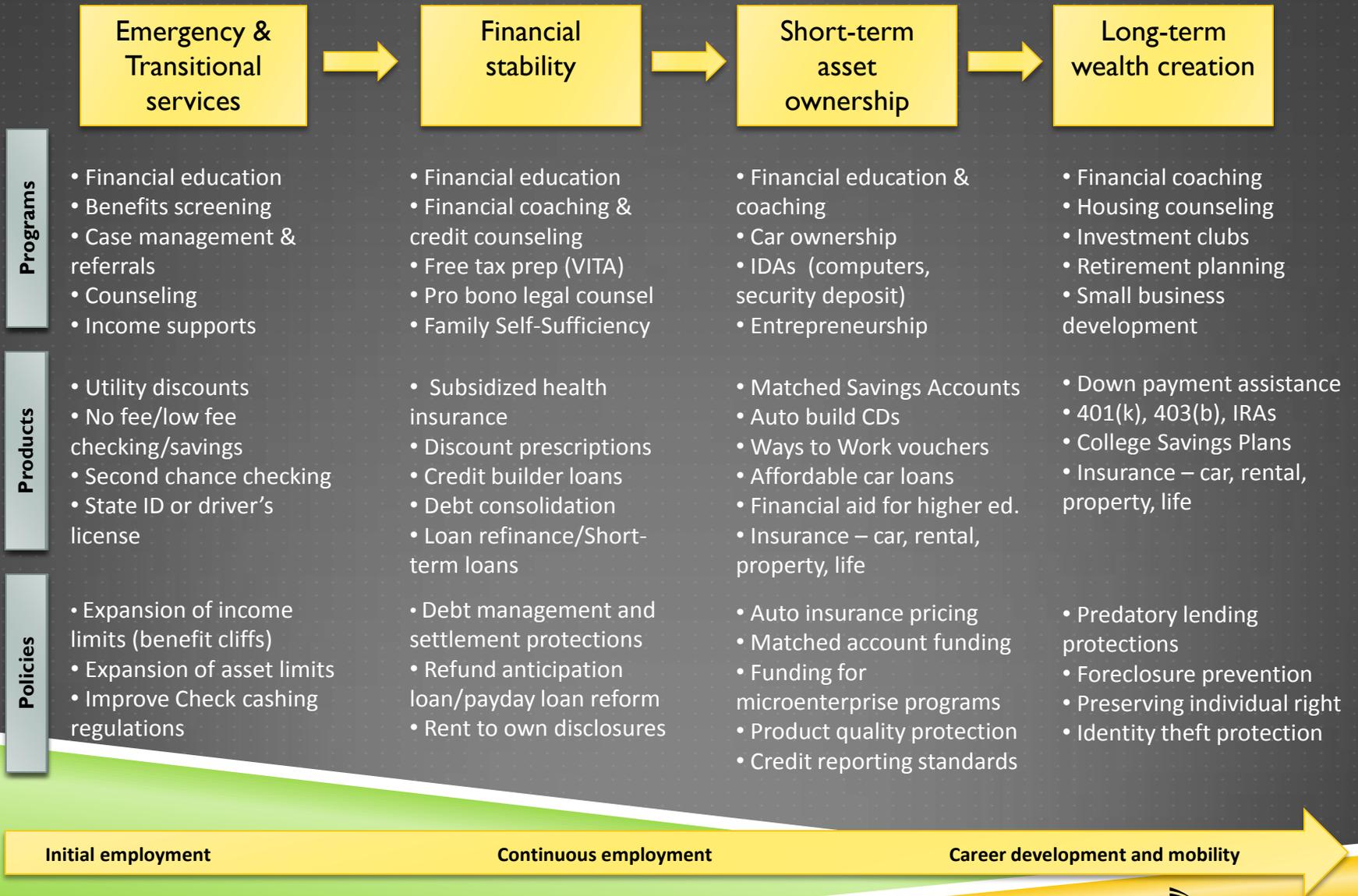
- ▶ Workshop series funded through the Hrabowski Innovation Fund



ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL FOOTPRINT

- ▶ National communication facilitated through University's online scholar network and listserv
- ▶ Society for Social Work Research – Special Interest Group on Financial Capability and Asset Building (FCAB)
- ▶ FCAB Social Work Research Consortium
 - ▶ 54 members representing 48 Schools of Social Work have joined – impact on recent SW Education Policy and Accreditation Standards
 - ▶ FCAB Convening Event (April 2015 in St. Louis)

Asset Building Continuum



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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT
DR. JODI JACOBSON FREY AT
JFREY@SSW.UMARYLAND.EDU

OR VISIT THE FINANCIAL SOCIAL
WORK INITIATIVE AT
WWW.SSW.UMARYLAND.EDU/FSW