NON-PROFIT SERVICE PROVIDERS AND EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY

NON-PROFIT SERVICE PROVIDERS

➢ $200 BILLION PER YEAR SPENT BY PRIVATE SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

➢ PROGRAMS TYPICALLY MONITOR OUTPUTS; RARELY MEASURE IMPACT

➢ EVIDENCE OF PROGRAM IMPACT IN THIS SECTOR IS NECESSARY FOR PROMOTING EVIDENCE-BASED POLICIES AND PROGRAMS NATIONALLY

CHALLENGES (FOR PROVIDERS)

➢ FUNDING IS NOT ALIGNED WITH MEASURING IMPACT

Most private and government funding for private providers does not require impact measurement, and consequently limited resources are available to build a body of evidence of what works.

➢ ACCESS TO DATA AND ANALYSIS IS LIMITED

Social service providers collect the necessary data for eligibility and for reporting, but lack access to administrative data to measure outcomes and the bandwidth to analyze it.

➢ NOT CONNECTED TO EVIDENCE OF WHAT WORKS

Providers looking to start a new, evidence-based program often have a difficult time finding information on validated programs and how to implement them.

RECOMMENDATIONS (FOR COMMISSION)

➢ **INCENTIVIZE IMPACT EVALUATION**

Funding for private service provider programs should require rigorous evaluation AND include appropriate funding to pay for it so providers can measure impact, but not cut into scarce program budget resources to do so.

➢ **PROVIDE ACCESS TO ADMINISTRATIVE DATA**

Providers need access to the administrative data sets that include key outcomes such as earnings records, government program participation (e.g. TANF, SNAP, SSDI), hospitalizations and health care utilization, arrest records and education records.

➢ **CREATE A WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE**

Make the best evidence available and easily accessible so that impactful programs are widely known and can be replicated throughout the private service provider sector.

WILSON SHEEHAN
LAB FOR ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITIES

REDUCING POVERTY AND IMPROVING LIVES
THROUGH EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

EXAMPLES OF LEO'S WORK WITH NON-PROFIT SERVICE PROVIDERS USING ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

EXAMPLE 1: HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

PROGRAM: The Homelessness Prevention Call Center (HPCC) in Chicago is one of the largest call centers in the nation, taking approximately 70,000 calls each year. The HPCC connects those at risk of homelessness with emergency financial assistance, but the availability of funding varies unpredictably on a day-to-day basis.

STUDY AND DATA: LEO'S study examines the impact of financial assistance for 4,500 individuals and families who called the HPCC between 2010 and 2012. In order to observe shelter entry for these callers, we linked the call center information to administrative data on entries into and exits from homeless shelters in Chicago.

RESULTS: Emergency financial assistance prevents homelessness.
- Assistance reduced shelter entry 6 months after the call by 76 percent; effect persists for more than a year.
- Impact of financial assistance is largest for those with especially low income.

EXAMPLE 2: JUVENILE DIVERSION

PROGRAM: Reading for Life (RFL) is a diversion program in St. Joseph County, Indiana designed for non-violent juvenile offenders. A unique and innovative alternative to prosecution in the court system, RFL allows participants to study works of literature in small groups led by trained volunteer mentors.

STUDY AND DATA: LEO's study examines the impact of RFL for 400 first time juvenile offenders randomly placed into RFL or into community service diversion between 2010 and 2014. In order to measure recidivism, we linked RFL enrollment data with administrative data collected by the Juvenile Justice Center and adult arrest records collected by the State.

RESULTS: The Reading for Life diversion program reduces two-year recidivism rates for prosecuted felonies by 50%.
- Participants were 36% less likely to be arrested
- Participants were 68% less likely to be prosecuted for a felony

The **Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities (LEO)** is a research lab housed in the Department of Economics at the University of Notre Dame. LEO matches top researchers with social service providers to conduct impact evaluations that identify the innovative, effective, and scalable programs and policies that support self-sufficiency. LEO's research is conducted by Notre Dame faculty as well as an interdisciplinary network of scholars from across the country with expertise in designing and evaluating the impact of domestic programs aimed at reducing poverty and improving lives. LEO disseminates its key findings to policymakers and front-line providers in order to support evidence-based policy and programming decisions that effectively and jointly reduce poverty in the United States.

Learn more at www.leo.nd.edu