Philadelphia RCT

Context

In 2020, ParentChild+ received a grant from the William Penn Foundation to conduct a randomized controlled trial (RCT) in Philadelphia.

COVID forced us to postpone the start of the study by two years.

The RCT has two aims: to evaluate the impact of ParentChild+ on family well-being and child development.

The study was undertaken primarily to produce evidence of effectiveness per the particular federal MIECHV (an HHS home visiting funding stream) study design standards.

The study's overarching goal is to enable ParentChild+ to be added to the approved models eligible for federal funding.

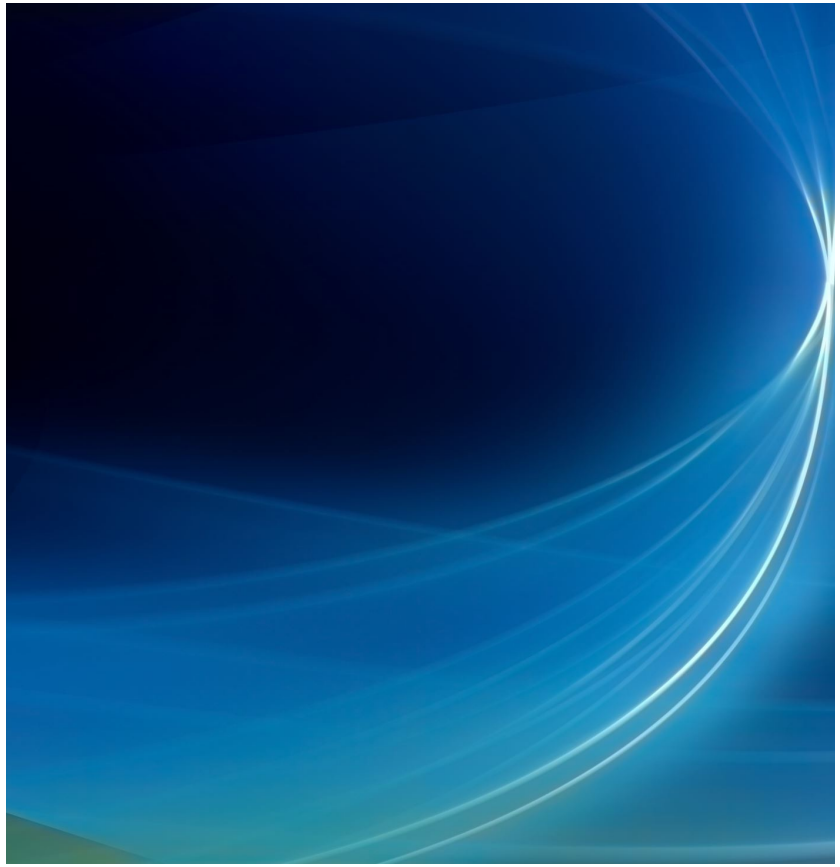
Recently, this goal became more important, because Congress increased the MIECHV funding line, meaning that new funding will open up and ParentChild+ should be in the best position to compete for it.

Request

We are requesting up to $160K to support the completion of the Philadelphia RCT.

To support recruitment activities in order to ensure we reach the target number in a timely fashion.

To support control group activities that enable us to retain the control group and reduce the risk of attrition that could put us outside the MIECHV design requirements.



Outreach & Recruitment Challenges: Post COVID

- Distrust of Research – The COVID pandemic, vaccine issues, etc. have increased distrust of research/researchers in communities of color, and as a result we are having a more difficult time recruiting families for the research study now underway in Philadelphia. It is taking more staff than initially budgeted for and may require higher incentives.
- One challenge is that in some neighborhoods, ParentChild+ is well-known and popular, and families only want it. They do not want to enroll in a research project where they have only a 50% chance of getting the program. We are now trying to recruit in neighborhoods where the program is less well-known.
- We are also seeing other issues, magnified by the pandemic and its economic impacts, interfering with recruitment:
  - Mental health issues making people more reluctant to participate: The pandemic has had a significant impact on mental health, and families dealing with those challenges are not interested in a research project.
  - Financial strain: Many families are experiencing financial strain due to job loss or reduced income. Families navigating a rapidly shifting employment landscape, often have scheduling challenges and are reluctant to commit to regular home visits.
  - Social isolation: The pandemic and the high levels of gun violence in Philadelphia have meant that families are significantly limiting out of home activities which has made recruitment and engagement for a research project challenging.
  - Health and safety concerns: Even as the pandemic subsides, families are concerned about health and safety, particularly for vulnerable family members.

Attrition

- Attrition threatens the internal validity of a randomized controlled trial (RCT) because it can introduce bias and undermine the randomization process.
- Attrition refers to losing participants (either from the program or control groups) during a study because they withdraw or are lost to follow-up.
- When participants drop out of a study, the remaining sample may not represent the original population. There may be systematic differences between those who remain and those who drop out.
- Moreover, attrition can affect the balance of covariates across treatment groups, a crucial feature of randomization. If attrition is differential across treatment groups, this can create imbalances in baseline characteristics that were supposed to be evenly distributed at the start of the trial.
- Attrition can compromise the internal validity of an RCT, by reducing the precision of estimates, introducing bias, and threatening the ability to draw causal inferences.
- To minimize the impact of attrition, RCTs should use strategies to minimize dropouts, such as incentives, reminders, and follow-up contacts, as well as analyze and report the reasons for dropout and any differences between those who dropped out and those who remained in the study.

- Attrition occurs when some members of the intervention or comparison groups do not have outcome data. Even if the groups were initially similar, attrition could cause bias in the impact estimates of random assignment evaluations.

- RCTs use random assignment to produce equivalent groups, but excessive attrition can result in discrepancies between the groups in the analytic sample.

- As a result, publications describing the findings of RCTs with substantial attrition can only be given a moderate rating by HomVEE which calculates both overall and differential attrition rates to quantify sample loss.

- The chart shows the highest differential attrition rate allowed to still be considered "low attrition" by HomVEE.