Mother Up

The Mother Up pre-pilot program is an evaluation of a guaranteed income project targeting Black mothers in Washington, D.C., with current or prior involvement with the child welfare system.

The Challenge

Black mothers face disproportionately higher levels of intervention with the child welfare system for issues that appear to be related more often to poverty and racial injustice.

The Study

The Mother Up program has completed two phases of its pre-pilot program (the first run solely by Mother's Outreach Network) and began recruiting participants for Phase III in November 2025. The A2J Lab has been involved in Phase II and III thus far. In both phases, participants were randomized into one of two groups:

- **Direct Cash Transfers Group:** Guaranteed income group
- **Compensated Research Group:** Compensated for survey and interview participation only

	Phase II	Phase III
Timing	2024-2025	2025-present
Participants	19	Target: 30
Guaranteed Income Assistance	$500/month for 1 year	$500/month for 3 years
Additional Support	Research participation compensation	Research participation compensation; Advocacy, empowerment, and legal services from MON
Eligibility	Black mothers in the Washington, D.C. area; Children of recipients must remain in the home; recent child welfare interaction	Black mothers in the Washington, D.C. area; Child removed from home within previous 36 months

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Phase II Takeaways

The goal of the Phase II pre-pilot was not to produce conclusive results but rather to determine whether a full-scale randomized controlled trial would be feasible and what results could be expected based on these initial results. These findings suggested that a larger-scale study would be feasible and offered preliminary insight into the results a larger trial might yield.

> *"This small pre-pilot did suggest that poverty leads to CPS agency involvement, and that financial support could help end oversight and avoid future involvement. If a full study showed the same evidence, that's what we'd conclude."*
> *– Jim Greiner, Faculty Director, Access to Justice Lab*

Phase III Goal

The goal of the Phase III pre-pilot program is to build on the Phase II findings to move closer to a full-scale randomized controlled trial, which would entail more participants and funding.

What We'll Learn

In partnership with the Mother's Outreach Network, the Mother Up program will study whether monthly direct cash transfers to these mothers would assist in either resolving ongoing Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) cases or preventing future interaction with CFSA.

Research Team

Access to Justice Lab
Mothers Outreach Network

Funders

Mothers Outreach Network
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

RESOURCES

Report

Final Report: Mother Up Phase Two Pre-pilot

Podcast

Proof Over Precedent, Episodes 41-42

Articles

Mother Up Study Links Child Neglect, Poverty, and Guaranteed Income

Testing the Poverty-Child Welfare Connection: Pre-Pilot Study Explores Guaranteed Income

Turning Proof into Policy: Evidence for Guaranteed Income to Support Black Mothers

Access to Justice Lab, Harvard Law School
1607 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02138