

September 22, 2011

Board of Advisors

MEMORANDUM

Robert Boruch
University of Pennsylvania

TO: Board of Advisors of the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy

Jonathan Crane
Coalition for Evidence-Based
Policy

FROM: Jon Baron

David Ellwood
Harvard University

RE: Update on our work

Judith Gueron
MDRC

I'm pleased to report several important new developments in evidence-based policy:

Ron Haskins
Brookings Institution

- 1. Congress has now enacted six major initiatives incorporating the core evidence-based concepts we've promoted through our work with Executive Branch and Congressional officials.**

Blair Hull
Matlock Capital

The six are listed on our [home page](#); the latest is the Department of Labor's \$125 million Workforce Innovation Fund, enacted in April, which will fund development and scale-up of evidence-based interventions to improve education/employment outcomes for U.S. workers. A recent paper, co-authored by Ron Haskins and me and posted here on the [Brookings Institution's website](#), summarizes the six initiatives, places them in the larger policy context, and describes their origin, including the Coalition's key role.

Robert Hoyt
Jennison Associates

The paper was commissioned by the U.K. National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA). NESTA has approached us about establishing a U.K. organization modeled on the Coalition, and we are excited to be partnering with them in such an effort -- the "[U.K. Alliance for Evidence](#)."

David Kessler
Former FDA Commissioner

Jerry Lee
Jerry Lee Foundation

- 2. In July, we met with Congressional Budget Office (CBO) Director Doug Elmendorf and other top CBO officials to encourage CBO to clarify that, in "scoring" a program's budgetary cost, CBO will credit (i.e., subtract) any cost savings the program generates that have been demonstrated in rigorous experimental research.**

This would include, for example, any rigorously-proven savings to Medicaid and Food Stamps from an effective teen pregnancy prevention program. Such a CBO clarification would parallel similar budget-scoring guidance that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has provided to the federal agencies, based on the concepts that we've advanced. The idea is summarized [here](#) in a two-page paper we developed in collaboration with former CBO Director Robert Reischauer, who joined us in the meeting. As the paper describes: Given budget scoring's central role in the legislative process, such a CBO clarification would (i) create a strong new incentive for federal agencies and others to build credible evidence about programs' effects on federal budgetary spending; and (ii) provide an important advantage in obtaining Congressional funding to programs able to demonstrate partly-offsetting budget savings (such as the [Nurse-Family Partnership](#)). The CBO leadership was very receptive to the idea, and we will keep you posted on developments.

Dan Levy
Harvard University

Diane Ravitch
New York University

Howard Rolston
Abt Associates

Isabel Sawhill
Brookings Institution

Martin Seligman
University of Pennsylvania

Robert Solow
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- 3. A recent review of the Coalition, based on not-for-attribution interviews with federal policy officials and others, confirms the policy impact of our work, and contains valuable suggestions for our future activities.**

The review, [linked here](#) (five pages), was conducted by John Wallace, former Vice President of MDRC for Development and External Affairs. Regarding our policy impact: “The Coalition ... was given credit by multiple interviewees for OMB’s establishment of a requirement that many discretionary domestic programs be subject to rigorous evaluation ... [and] for certain pieces of legislation carrying similar requirements. As one interviewee stated, ‘The Coalition played a central role in securing this Administration’s commitment to high standards of evidence.’ And another interviewee stated, ‘The push for strong evidence would not have happened as quickly and widely and with so relatively little controversy without the Coalition.’” Among the key suggestions for the future: The Coalition should seek to advance evidence-based reforms in large federal entitlement programs, such as Medicare, Medicaid, and student aid.

4. Other new items that may be of interest:

- [National Board for Education Sciences \(NBES\) resolution urging Congress, in education legislation, to advance the use of credible evidence of effectiveness in decision-making](#) (2 pages). The resolution is an NBES, rather than a Coalition, document (I currently serve as NBES Chair).
- [Federal “Waivers” from *No Child Left Behind* Should Be Used To Build Credible Evidence About What Works in K-12 Education](#) (3 pages), co-authored by me and Bridget Terry Long, as Chair and Vice Chair of NBES.
- [HHS’s Home Visiting Program: Which Program Models Identified by HHS As “Evidence-Based” Are Most Likely To Produce Important Improvements in Lives of Children/Parents?](#) (8 pages + references), authored by the Coalition.
- [Coalition Comments on the Evaluation Plan for HHS’s Early Childhood Home Visiting Program](#) (2 pages), authored by the Coalition.

5. The Coalition is seeking to hire a new Project Leader – e.g., a recent master’s-level graduate in public policy or related field (see [position description](#)). We would be grateful for any help you could provide – e.g., by letting us know of strong candidates and/or encouraging them to apply.

I hope this update is helpful. Any thoughts or suggestions you have for our future work would be much appreciated. We're grateful to the MacArthur Foundation and the William T. Grant Foundation for their support of our work.