

Selected Projects 2002–2016

Demonstration and Impact Evaluation of the Short-Time Compensation Program (2013-2016)

Social Dynamics is part of the Westat team awarded a contract with the U.S. DOL's Chief Evaluation Office to conduct a study of short-time compensation (STC) programs as described in the Middle Class Tax Relief and Jobs Creation Act of 2012. This impact study includes a cost analysis and cross-site implementation analysis. The impact study will focus on demonstration innovations targeted at increasing employer participation in STC. Social Dynamics is leading the implementation analysis, which will address fidelity to program requirements and barriers and facilitators to implementation. The Westat team also includes George Washington University and W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

Evaluation of the Disability Employment Initiative (2011–2014)

The Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Evaluation is a comprehensive implementation/process, outcome, and random assignment impact study. The implementation component includes the collection of information on systems change and the strategies implemented by each of the 23 DEI State grantees. The outcome evaluation provides findings on customer-level outcomes, while the impact evaluation focuses on measuring the efficacy of the DEI grants. The DEI Evaluation involves close collaboration with states to collect qualitative and quantitative data. As part of the data collection activities, Social Dynamics conducts site visits, focus groups with customers, and telephone interviews with stakeholders. In addition, Social Dynamics developed a detailed Systems Change Coding Scheme to document and measure local workforce development systems. Social Dynamics is being supported in this effort by Altarum Institute, Berkeley Policy Associates, and Mathematica Policy Research.

Women Veterans Employment Research (WVER) Project (2013-2014)

Female veterans represent the most rapidly increasing segment of the veteran population in the U.S., yet their distinctive employment and training needs are often unrecognized. Social Dynamics is the prime contractor on a project designed to address the gaps in research and policies that may further understanding of the complex needs and issues of women veterans. The Department of Labor's Women's Bureau has contracted the Social Dynamics team to conduct research and produce deliverables aimed at informing the Federal government's work of supporting employment and training opportunities for women veterans. The project includes producing a comprehensive literature review, white paper, and final report related to employment for women veterans, as well as developing policy options that may improve working conditions and opportunities for women veterans and identifying gaps in existing research on the topic of employment and women veterans.

Individualized Learning Plans Research & Demonstration Project (2011–2013)

Under contract to ODEP, Social Dynamics, in partnership with the Institute for Educational Leadership, provides research and analytical services that explore the use of Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs) that facilitate postsecondary academic and employment outcomes. In this capacity, Social Dynamics conducts statistical multivariate analyses of data on youth with disabilities in transition, parent and school personnel surveys, and focus group data. Recently, Social Dynamics completed a comprehensive national analysis of ILP and Individualized Education Program (IEP) policies and practices in the U.S. Current research efforts will result in the production of several informational guides, a Policy Brief, and a final report that will explore the key findings of the 5-year project.

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Business Case for Hiring People with Disabilities (2012-2013)

ODEP has recognized that employer involvement and support is essential to integrating people with disabilities into the labor market. Making the business case for hiring this population is critical. Under contract with ODEP, Social Dynamics will work with Wharton Business School to create the Business Case for Hiring People with Disabilities. This effort will identify information that emphasizes state-of-the-art employment practices and resources for hiring people with disabilities. For this project, in addition to organizing and convening Virtual Business Leadership Information Exchange sessions, Social Dynamics will research and produce a White Paper and several policy documents to facilitate the use of the final Business Case by policymakers and business leaders.

Evaluating and Documenting the Initial Results of the Office of Disability Employment Policy's Employment First Leadership State Mentoring Program (2012)

More than two decades after the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 was passed, individuals with disabilities still face significant barriers to labor market participation and employment. Under contract to ODEP, and in partnership with the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston and Altarum Institute, Social Dynamics will evaluate ODEP's Employment First Leadership State Mentoring Program (EFLSMP), which aims to assist four pilot states in developing and implementing programs that support employment for individuals with disabilities. The program reflects the "Employment First" principle, which refers to policies and practices that support integrated, community-based employment as the first option for employment for youth and adults with significant disabilities. Social Dynamics will design a survey to assess the value of a national Employment First Community of Practice, conduct focus groups, and produce four state case studies on the four states. The final report will assess the value and efficacy of ODEP's Employment First initiative.

Universal Design Employment Project (2012)

Social Dynamics completed a pilot demonstration project designed to expand and promote the adoption and implementation of "Universal Design" flexible workplace strategies that will assist in the recruitment, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities and other individuals with complex life situations. The project was intended to examine how various models/types of workforce flexibility can support and sustain employment. Social Dynamics collaborated with consultants to provide direct technical assistance to employers to implement flexible workplaces, particularly concerning flexibility around job tasks. The consultants then documented the role of workplace flexibility as a means to increasing worker engagement and productivity, and as a recruitment tool for employers.

Workplace Flexibility Toolkit (2012)

Social Dynamics worked closely with ODEP's Workforce Systems team to develop a fully accessible, Web-based Workplace Flexibility Toolkit (<http://www.dol.gov/odep/workplaceflexibility/>). The research team collected information on pertinent resources to be included in the toolkit from workplace flexibility subject matter experts who participated in the agencies' Advancing Workplace Flexibility Policies and Practices forum. The research team provided input on the relevant workplace flexibility research literature and resources to be included in the toolkit. These resources included research, existing policies and practices, training materials, and technical assistance resources for researchers, policymakers, public and private employers, and employees across a number of industries. The Workplace Flexibility Toolkit was developed to be continuously updated so that resources remain relevant and current.

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Research and Analysis of Workplace Flexibility Programs: Profiles of Innovative Workplace Flexibility Practices (2012)

Under contract with the Women's Bureau, Social Dynamics conducted an analysis of workplace flexibility programs across the U.S. Programs were selected from a number of industries with workers in low-wage and hourly jobs, as well as workers in white collar and professional positions. The research team investigated potential companies to be included in the project and subsequently selected programs to be profiled. The profiles cover policies that address the when, where, and/or how work is done with flexibility. The profiles provide descriptions of the policies, as well as examples of implementation. They included: (1) Teleworking; (2) Innovative Shift Scheduling; (3) Compressed Work Weeks; (4) Paid Sick Days; (5) Phased Return to Work; (6) Phased Retirement; (7) Babies-at-Work Programs; and (8) Workplace Programs that Support Military Employees, Veterans, and their Families.

Equal Pay Data Collection Research (2011)

The Women's Bureau contracted with Social Dynamics to conduct original research on the subject of how employers collect and maintain data that would be needed to assess gender-related pay inequity. The work included a literature review of recent studies on pay inequality and interviews with Human Resources and Payroll professionals, as well as with experts in those fields. Since payroll tasks are now almost universally computerized, research was also done on the technology and services that are used in this work, the businesses that provide it, and the increasing concerns for security in protecting data that is stored in both paper and digital forms. A prognosis was made of how payroll and HR information will be maintained in the next three to five years. This final report offered recommendations for future pay equity policies.

Women's Bureau Latina Research and Analysis (2011)

Using the Decennial Census from 1910–2000, the 2009 American Community Survey (ACS), and the Current Population Survey (CPS) from 1970–1980, Social Dynamics examined the racial/ethnic disparities in the socioeconomic, occupational, and educational advancement of Latinas in the U.S. The final technical report focused on three topics. First, it provided historical statistical data on Latinas dating back from 1930–2009. Second, it provided a review of the factors that influence trends in Latinas' socioeconomic, occupational, and educational advancements. And third, it provided an overview of policies and programs that show promise in terms of helping Latinas achieve social and economic parity with other racial/ethnic groups in the U.S.

Workplace Flexibility Research and Analysis (2011)

Under contract with the Women's Bureau, Social Dynamics employed its expertise in cost-benefit analysis to provide forecasts that estimate the return on investment (ROI) of programs funded through Federal grant programs, public subsidies, and variations in program eligibility criteria, completing the Phase I and Phase II reports on Workplace Flexibility Research and Analysis. Using logistic regression and odds ratios, Social Dynamics investigated the characteristics of low-wage workers and people who work in small businesses (Phase I), the hospitality industry and the manufacturing industry (Phase II), and the workplace flexibility policies and practices that low-wage workers and the employees in these businesses have access to. This work included a literature review, interviews with key stakeholders, the creation of measurement frameworks, and the production of two technical reports for a wide audience.

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ODEP Forum: Advancing Workplace Flexibility Policies and Practices (2011)

This project required Social Dynamics to administer and coordinate ODEP's workplace flexibility forum, Advancing Workplace Flexibility Policies and Practices. Social Dynamics worked with ODEP and the Women's Bureau to identify, contact, and gather workplace flexibility subject matter experts and panel participants to discuss effective workplace flexibility strategies and resources for people with complex employment situations, including people with disabilities. A Forum Summary Report that summarized all relevant discussions and recommendations shared during the forum, including a "Roadmap" of recommended actions to be undertaken at the Federal, State, and local levels to further the knowledge of and access to corporate and organizational promising practices in workplace flexibility, was also completed.

Operational and Procedural Road Map for the Interagency Committee on Disability Research, Subcommittee on Employment (2011)

Social Dynamics was engaged by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research's Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR) to prepare an Operational and Procedural Roadmap (OPR) as part of a two-year strategic planning process. Through our work with 13 Federal ICDR member agencies, a framework was created to support the development and improvement of both demand-side and supply-side disability employment research for use by Federal agencies whose work is related to disability employment, rehabilitation, and/or vocational training.

Independent Evaluation of the START-UP/USA Self-Employment Program for People with Disabilities (2010)

Social Dynamics investigated and documented the results and impact of the Self-Employment Technical Assistance, Resources, and Training (START-UP) Initiative. This national initiative is intended to further the development of self-employment strategies among people with disabilities. The Initiative involves the development of START-UP Technical Assistance Centers, which provided targeted technical assistance to START-UP grantees: START-UP /Alaska, START-UP /Florida, and START-UP /New York. The evaluation included assessments of program components, participant outcomes, lessons learned, goal accomplishments, and best practices. This effort also included assessments of the activities underway at ODEP's Technical Assistance Centers, including: the Job Accommodation Network, the Employer Assistance and Research Network, the National Center on Workforce and Disability/Adults, and the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability/Youth.

Agency-Wide Look-Back Study (2010)

The ODEP Agency-Wide Look-Back Study was a performance-based management initiative that supported the government's performance measurement requirements with a design that was structured around assessing the impact of the agency on disability employment and related areas. The study provided a systematic-retrospective analysis of ODEP's work using the agency's performance measurement tracking system as a foundation for mapping the outcomes of ODEP's programs, publications, and initiatives (PPI) to its logic model framework. The process for completing the study involved starting with current ODEP outputs and outcomes and looking back through PPI documentation to identify which ODEP activities resulted in the production of relevant ODEP outputs and the achievement of outcomes that are included in the agency's logic model. The research team began with the agency's GPRA reports and interviews with ODEP staff to identify intermediate, long-term, and strategic outcomes. The research team created PPI-specific logic models based on annual and final reports and evaluation documentation.

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The Evaluation of the Wolf Trap National Endowment for the Arts Pilot Project Residency Program (2010)

Under contract with the Wolf Trap Center for Education, Institute for Early Learning through the Arts, Social Dynamics conducted the Evaluation of the Wolf Trap National Endowment for the Arts Pilot Project Residency Program. The purpose of the independent formative and summative evaluation and assessment was to measure children's learning in alignment with local/State and national arts education standards as a result of participation in the Wolf Trap classroom residencies by collecting both quantitative and qualitative information from teachers, Master Teaching Artists, Wolf Trap administrators, and children. The final report included classroom observations, a survey of participating teachers, and reviews of program documentation and curricula.

The Impact of Aging into Disability on Labor Force Participation and Earnings (2010)

This study examined the impact of aging into disability on labor force participation and earnings. It also addressed how aging into disability is affected by obesity and selected chronic health conditions. It extended previous research by (1) quantifying the extent to which decreases in labor force participation and earnings with age are due to an increase in disabilities; (2) estimating the differential effects of specific disabilities on labor force participation and earnings; and (3) addressing, within the limitations of the data, the effects of access to care and labor market characteristics on these outcomes. This work included econometric modeling, a review of literature on aging and disability policies, and the preparation of three Issue Briefs.

Analysis of Access to Health Care for People with Disabilities (2009)

This project was designed to formulate recommendations to assist ODEP in developing guidelines for future disability employment and health care research. Using state-of-the-art literature review techniques, Social Dynamics researchers prepared a detailed review of theoretical, policy, and practical issues that affect access to health care for people with disabilities. The review included a discussion of system- and treatment-level factors that appear to have the most significant impact on access to affordable health care, as well as labor market issues, including labor market segmentation and the influence of socioeconomic status and labor market position on health insurance coverage availability. In addition, Social Dynamics provided information on collaborative initiatives among employers, home- and community-based social service providers, and primary care organizations that improve access to health insurance coverage for marginalized groups and recommendations for future research on employment and access to health care for people with disabilities. This contract also included Issue Briefs on Community-Based Health Care Financing for People with Disabilities, Reinsurance and Health Care for People with Disabilities, and Workplace Wellness, as well as toolkits to assist stakeholders in accessing information on these topics.

Design of a Survey of Public Attitudes Toward People with Disabilities (2009)

In support of ODEP, Social Dynamics developed a survey, design document, literature review, and OMB clearance document for a Survey of Public Attitudes Toward People with Disabilities. The goal of the survey was to better understand attitudes toward people with disabilities in order to inform policy and practice and improve disability employment systems. Social Dynamics prepared a sampling and analysis plan that operationalized a multi-dimensional definition of attitude formation. The survey methodology was designed to stratify the sample of respondents by college attainment, with one stratum comprised up of college-educated sampling units and the other of non-college-educated sampling units. Within each stratum, a simple random sample of telephone numbers was to be selected. Each selected telephone number (for the telephone survey) would lead to a household from which one member aged 18–64 would be randomly selected for an interview. The sample selection was to be carried out independently within strata.

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Financial Literacy for Youth with Disabilities (2009)

Social Dynamics used a multi-method qualitative approach to complete a policy analysis on Financial Literacy for Youth with Disabilities. The project explored the overall adequacy of existing financial literacy curricula and programs for youth with disabilities by highlighting emerging or promising policies and practices that can improve youths' knowledge of money management and asset development strategies. The project consisted of a literature review of peer-reviewed journal articles and technical documents to gather information about financial literacy curricula and programs, as well as a review of currently existing school- and community-based curricula and programs in the country. The review ranged from gathering information on the existing curricula and programs, to obtaining data on their effects on program implementation, delivery, and results. A spreadsheet of curricula and programs was assembled that charted course content, delivery approaches, and program results. A gap analysis was then completed to gather in-depth information on the components within the existing curricula and programs that have been most or least covered. This analysis helped to provide a better understanding of the areas and components that should be covered in a toolkit prototype—the culminating product of the project—in order to address the needs of the target population. Finally, phone interviews were conducted with key informants in the field including experts in financial literacy curriculum development, program development, implementation, delivery of financial literacy information, benefits planning, and asset development.

Flexible Spending Account Options for Personal Assistance Services (2009)

Individuals with some of the most significant disabilities spend considerable resources on personal assistance services. The high costs for these services may mean that working individuals are hindered in their ability to rise above poverty and build assets for the future. Many others decide to stay on public assistance because of their inability to pay for these services with low-wage salaries. ODEP commissioned this research study to examine the feasibility of creating a flexible spending account for personal assistance services, which would allow workers to pay with pre-tax dollars. Social Dynamics' research included an extensive review of the literature on flexible spending accounts and the tax treatment of work-related expenses. The research team produced a final policy report and two Policy Briefs.

Impact of Social Studies Supplemental Programs in Kansas (2009)

This survey employed a random sample of $n = 1,200$ Kansas high school students. Its purpose was to evaluate students' reactions to a statewide civics program designed and implemented by the Bill of Rights Institute with funding from the Filene Foundation.

Performance Measurement Design and Implementation (2009)

Social Dynamics collaborated with ODEP in the development of a comprehensive performance measurement system for ODEP, which included plans for data collection and analytic approaches, anticipated challenges, proposed solutions, and a timeline for completion of performance measurement reports. This effort led to the implementation of a revised performance measurement system and strategic plan. Activities under this contract included the design of short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes and indicators; the design of logic models for individual programs and products; the design/implementation of a prototype Web-based customer satisfaction survey; the identification of revised efficiency measures for inclusion in the new reporting system; and the design and outline of functional requirements for a new automated program performance management reporting system. Social Dynamics also conducted a customer satisfaction survey, which necessitated the preparation of an OMB clearance package.

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Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Survey Design Project (2008)

As subcontractor to the CDM Group, Social Dynamics served as the sampling task lead for the Migrant Survey Design Project for the U.S. DHHS, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation. In this capacity, Social Dynamics prepared four optional sampling methodologies that balanced sample accuracy with cost considerations and the need for reliable estimates of the population of children of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) centers. Social Dynamics gathered information from previous studies of migrant populations, explored various stratified allocation methodologies, conducted preliminary statistical power analyses using FACES Head Start data, and engaged expert programmatic and sampling consultants in order to identify the most cost-effective approaches to sampling children and centers. The four sampling methodologies balanced methodological rigor with the cost of implementing the MSHS Survey, while meeting the client's goal of institutionalizing a *replicable* methodology for determining the status of MSHS children and families using a cross-sectional methodology.

Evaluation of the Center for Adoption Support and Education Therapeutic Adoption Program (2006–2007)

Social Dynamics designed and implemented a quasi-experimental comparison group study of a therapeutic adoption program for the Center for Adoption, Support and Education (CASE), funded by the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services and the Jockey Being Family Foundation. The study included both outcome and implementation components to identify the factors that influenced how children and families benefited from the therapeutic adoption program, and collected data from a variety of stakeholders including children, parents, therapists, and program managers.

Evaluation of the National Infant and Toddler Child Care Initiative (2002–2007)

The National Infant and Toddler Child Care Initiative (NITCCI) was funded by the U.S. DHHS/Office of Child Care. It was designed and implemented by Zero to Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families. NITCCI worked with states, territories, and tribes to develop a deeper knowledge about specific elements of the early care and education system that supports quality infant/toddler child care. NITCCI collected and disseminated information on infant/toddler child care issues and resources and responded to requests for information and technical assistance related to infant/toddler child care. Phase One (2002–2005) of the evaluation included 20 states and territories that created State teams to address the needs of infants and toddlers and their families using a unique ecological model and strategic planning process that mapped current early care and education efforts, prioritized areas of need, and created a plan for action. Phase Two (2005–2007) of the evaluation was designed to help states and territories develop deeper knowledge about specific elements of the early care and education system that support quality infant and toddler child care. The evaluation included focus groups, interviews, reviews of program documentation, and social network analysis designed to measure the extent to which State child care systems improved their level of collaboration and access to subsidized child care services. This evaluation was based on general systems theory and used a social network analysis approach to data collection and analysis.

National Survey of High School Graduates (2007)

Social Dynamics conducted a nationally representative survey of parents of recent high school graduates. Using a random sample of $n = 800$ students nationwide, this survey collected information on the attitudes of students during the second half of their senior year of high school. This survey covered issues related to transition after school, college preparation, career preparation, college financing, and academic performance.

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National Survey of Parents of Middle School Students (2006)

Social Dynamics conducted a nationally representative survey of parents of middle school students. Using a random sample of $n = 800$ students nationwide, this survey collected information on parents' attitudes toward the quality of their children's education. It also covered issues related to post-school transition, career preparation, college financing, peer relationships, and academic performance.

Evaluation of the Maryland Judy Center Partnerships Family Literacy Program (2005)

Social Dynamics completed an evaluation of an innovative family literacy program funded by the U.S. Department of Education. A regression discontinuity design assigned parents below the 60th percentile on a literacy assessment instrument to the treatment group, while those above the 60th percentile were assigned to a comparison group. The two groups were compared at follow-up on the same assessment instrument to determine if the treatment group met or exceeded the scores of the comparison group. This study used logistic regression analyses and interviews with key stakeholders.

Evaluation of the Maryland 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program (2004)

Social Dynamics conducted an evaluation of Montgomery County Maryland's, 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Program, which was designed to provide students with academic enrichment opportunities. In addition, the 21st CCLC also provides families of participating students with literacy and other educational development programs. This quasi-experimental study included a comparison group comprised of students at schools that did not implement the CCLC intervention. Social Dynamics collected academic data on reading, mathematics, school attendance, and disciplinary events. In addition, site visits were conducted at both treatment and comparison sites. This evaluation included qualitative and quantitative data collection, coding, and analysis; project management; and site visits with interviews of program staff and observations of program components.