



## What are the Effects of Pairing Head Start Services for Children with Career Pathway Training for Parents?

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## INTRODUCTION

- CareerAdvance®, developed and run by the Community Action Project of Tulsa County (CAP Tulsa), is **a model two-generation intervention** that pairs early childhood education for children with career pathway training in the health care sector for parents.
- CareerAdvance® recruits parents from high quality Head Start centers and offers **career ladders through certification programs in the healthcare field at no cost** to families. Additional elements include career coaching, small peer learning groups, financial incentives for parents' educational progress, and **wraparound early care and education for children**.
- This represents the first study of this type of two-generation program and is the beginning of a **series of evaluations of CareerAdvance®'s** effects on parents and children.
- We are **also studying a scaled-up, less expensive version of the CareerAdvance® model**. More time is needed to conduct cost-benefit analyses and measure longer-term gains.

## KEY FINDINGS

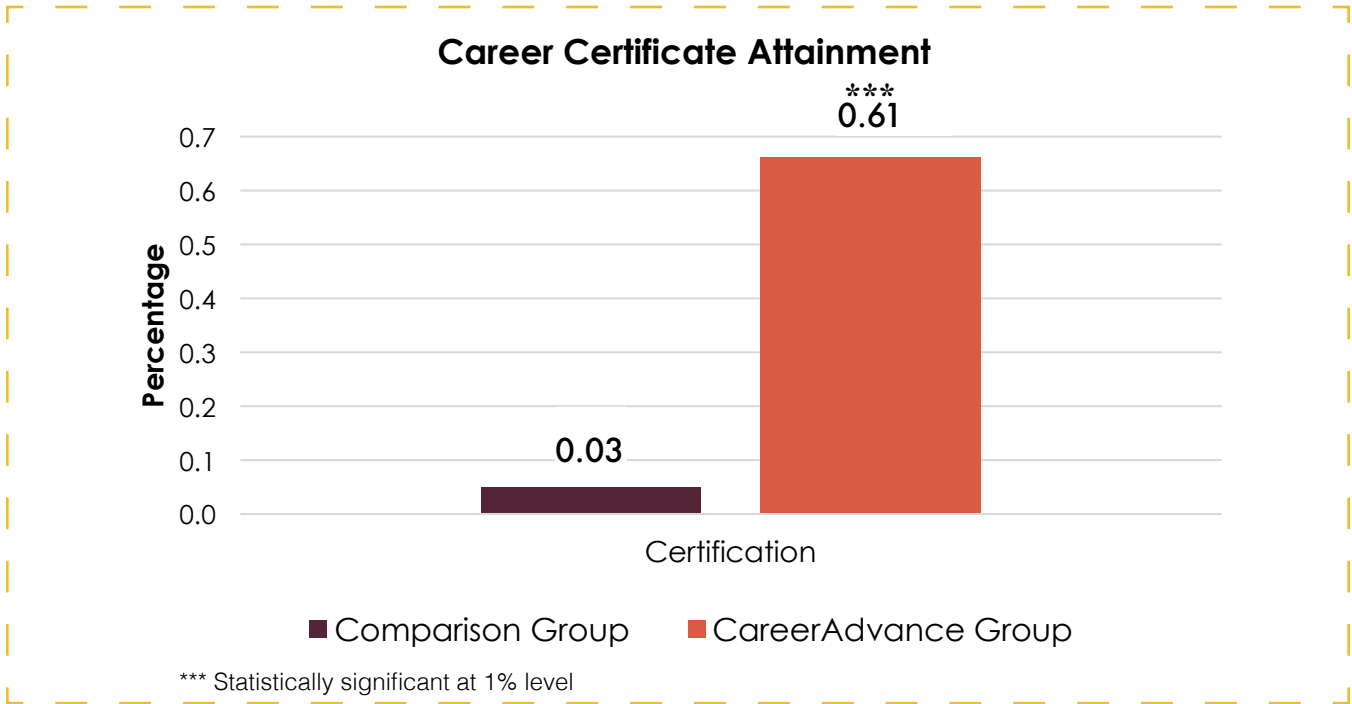
- CareerAdvance® promotes **parents' career certificate attainment, employment in the healthcare sector, and overall well-being**. CareerAdvance® also **improves children's Head Start attendance and reduces chronic absenteeism**.
- This study provides strong evidence that pairing high-quality Head Start services with job training for parents produces positive outcomes for parents and children beyond the benefits of Head Start alone.



# RESULTS

## Certification in the Healthcare Sector

**CareerAdvance® promotes parents' postsecondary educational attainment:** after one year, 61% of participants attained a career certificate compared to 3% of parents in the matched comparison group.



## Employment and Income

**CareerAdvance® achieved its goal of promoting healthcare employment in one year:** 49% of program parents were employed in the healthcare sector at year end compared to 31% of the matched comparison group.

■ **Parents in the CareerAdvance® program shifted from full-time to part-time employment.** Part-time work likely helped CareerAdvance® participants balance the competing demands of adding school to a job and family.

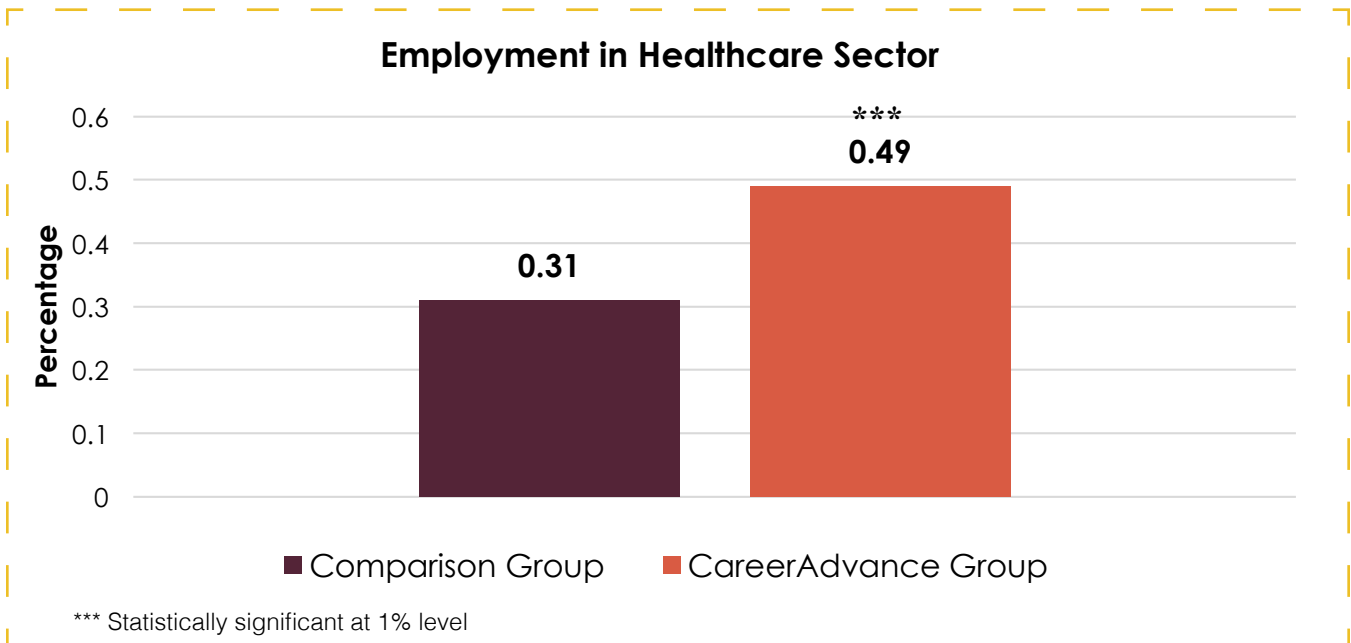
■ **CareerAdvance® parents did not report a change in material hardship or household income at the end of the first year of the program.** While participants experienced a \$2,000 decrease in average earnings by the end of the first year, these losses were offset by program incentive payments over the course of the year.

## Comparisons to Other Career Pathways Programs

Overall, the CareerAdvance® program resulted in **greater improvements in certification and employment than comparable career pathway training programs.**

■ Recent experimental evaluations of career pathway training programs include Per Scholas and Jewish Vocational Services-Boston.

■ The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP) program is the most comparable to CareerAdvance® (e.g., healthcare certification combined with supportive services) and reached certification rates of 26% to 34% (compared to 66% for CareerAdvance®).



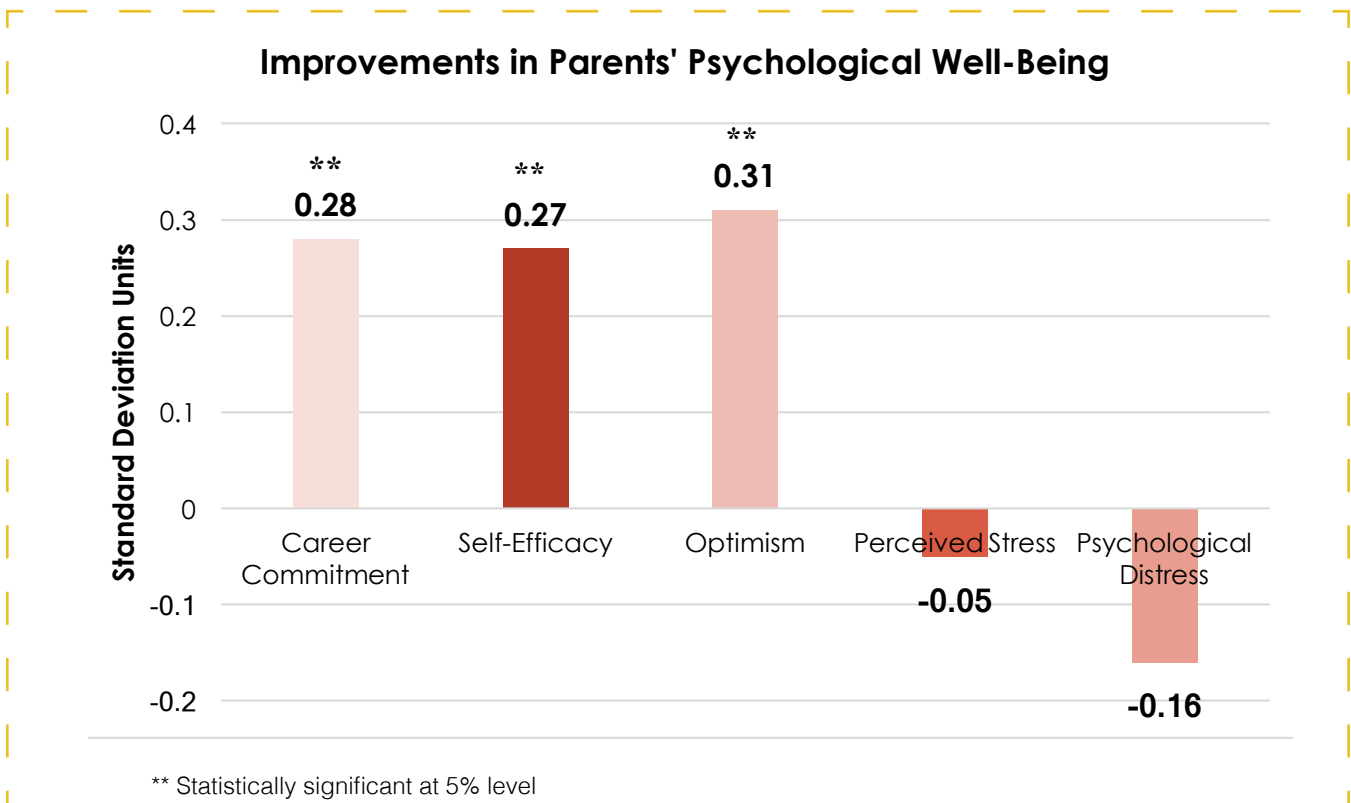


## Parents' Psychological Well-Being

At the end of year one, CareerAdvance® participants demonstrated higher levels of psychological well-being than their matched comparison group counterparts.

**CareerAdvance® participants had stronger commitment to careers and higher levels of self-efficacy and optimism** compared to the matched comparison group (effect sizes presented below).

■ Despite the challenge of balancing work, school, and parenting, **CareerAdvance® parents did not exhibit higher levels of stress and psychological distress** compared to the matched comparison group.

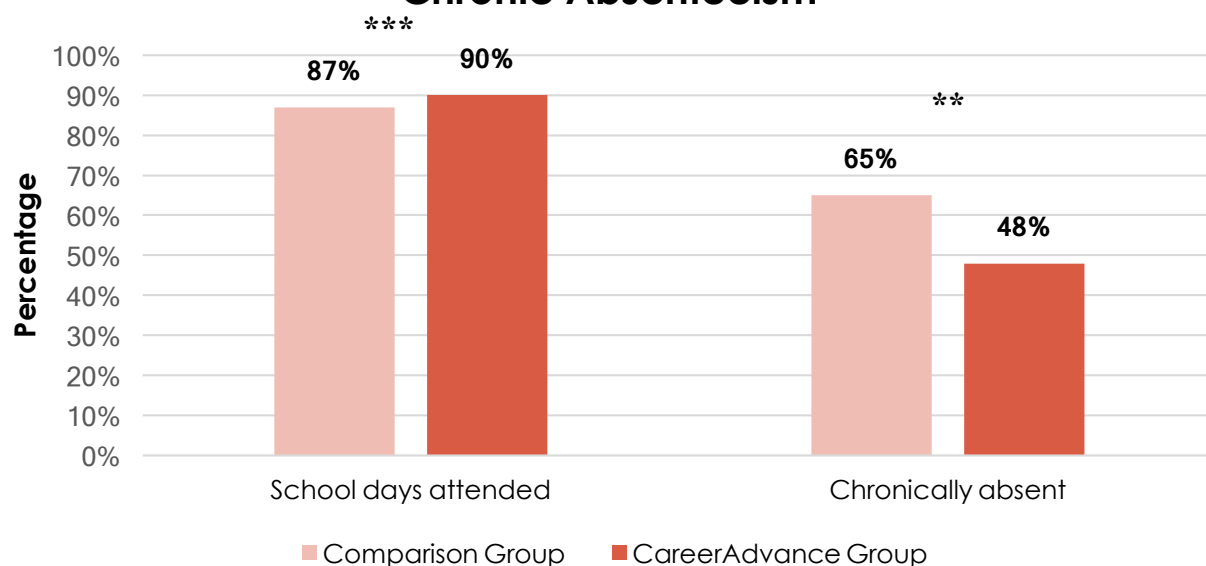


## Children's Head Start Attendance

**Children's average Head Start attendance over the year, a significant factor in their learning, was higher in the treatment group** (90% attendance out of the total number of days enrolled) than in the comparison group (87%).

■ **The average rate of chronic absence (more than 10% of school days) was higher among the comparison group** (65%) than in the treatment group (48%).

## Children's Average Head Start Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism



\*\* Statistically significant at 5% level; \*\*\* statistically significant at 1% level

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

### Key Elements of CareerAdvance®

- The program offered stackable training in three healthcare tracks —nursing, health information technology, and medical assisting— designed so that participants could make concrete progress, exit at various points with certificates, and return for further career advancement.
- CAP Tulsa developed close partnerships with community colleges and offered college coursework and trainings while children were in Head Start.
- Peer meetings with other participating parents were led by trained CAP Tulsa career coaches and took place at Head Start.
- Incentives to reduce the financial burden of entering school (up to \$3,000 each year) were offered to parents for meeting grade or credit requirements, attending peer partner meetings, or attaining a certificate.
- In-kind assistance was provided to further help parents make ends meet, including bus passes, gas cards, and child care outside of Head Start's normal hours.
- All families received full-day early care and education for children at Head Start programs.

## STUDY DESCRIPTION

- The study estimated the one-year effect of CareerAdvance® (job training for parents combined with Head Start for children) compared to Head Start alone.
- All study families were low-income (average income per year of \$15,372) with an average household size of four, including one preschooler (on average 4 years old) and another child. The sample was ethnically and racially diverse: 40% Black, 30% White, 9% Hispanic, and 21% other. Roughly one-third of the sample were single parents.
- Our sample included 253 CAP Tulsa Head Start parents and their young children, roughly half in CareerAdvance® and half in the matched comparison group.
- The study included multiple cohorts (cohorts 4-10 of the program) that started at staggered time points (fall and winter of each Head Start year, beginning in fall 2011 through fall 2014).
- To select the matched comparison group, we used a matching technique (two-stage propensity score matching), which adjusts for differences between groups in interest in pursuing educational and career activities and demographic factors to allow for a justifiable and meaningful estimate of the effect of CareerAdvance® relative to Head Start.
- The study drew on parent surveys and administrative data from CAP Tulsa and the State of Oklahoma from 2011 to 2015.



**March 2017**