

Mother Up

The Mother Up pre-pilot program is an evaluation of a guaranteed income project targeting Black mothers in Washington, D.C., who are in danger of child welfare system involvement.

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 MotherUp program has completed two phases of its pre-pilot program (the first run solely by Mothers 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 programs, 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

Mother Up

Phase II Takeaways

The goal of the Phase II pre-pilot was to determine whether a full-scale randomized controlled trial would be feasible and what results could be expected based on these initial results. Given the small pool of participants and the short follow-up period, results from Phase II are not conclusive but did indicate a successful operational path forward for a larger study.

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 Mothers 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
Kresge Foundation

Resources

Report

[Final Report: Mother Up Phase Two Pre-pilot Randomized Control Trial](#)

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](#)

Podcast

[Proof Over Precedent, Episodes 41-42](#)

