

## Lessons Learned from SSA Demonstrations: A State of the Science Meeting

June 15, 2021

Transcript of 5:50 – 6:00 p.m. EDT: Closing Remarks  
Jeffrey Hemmeter, U.S. Social Security Administration  
Austin Nichols, Abt Associates

Thanks Sarah. I want to emphasize we didn't get to some of my favorite questions. So we'll definitely be reviewing those as we revise these papers. I wanted to thank the audience for sticking around with us for 8 hours today. And thank all of the presenters. It's been a great line up today, as I said, yesterday an all start all star line up. I also want to thank a score of people that have been working behind the scenes at Abt and at Hatcher, to make things go smoothly today. I particularly want to thank SSA, Jeff, Debbie, Bob and Kilolo for making this possible, and as I said, at the very outset, this is a project that's been four decades in the making, but really, it's just been a breakneck pace in a few months here. That this has all come together and then last but certainly not least. I want to thank the ASL interpreters, Audrey on screen right now. Mary Beth just added here. And earlier today we had Kelly and Andrew. What you guys are doing is it looks like a superpower to me, I'm very impressed. So, I just want to turn it over to Jeff Hemmeter to make some concluding remarks. You may have heard earlier a reference of chapter 1 in the resulting volume that will capture some of these introductory remarks, but just to summarize some of our summary remarks today.

Thanks Austin and I want to thank you everybody again. Just as awesome that it's been an amazing day. And thank everybody who's sticking around until almost 6 o'clock on the East Coast. I want to. Thank everybody who. Who got up at about 7 am on the West Coast, everybody who's been here for all the time in between. The experts did a great job presenting and discussing many important lessons and I just want to provide some overarching thoughts on some things throughout today's discussion.

1st, it might be necessary to reset expectations about how many beneficiaries are going to return to work absent a very large program, change the interventions test. So far, have not resulted in large numbers of people exiting the programs. Even when they increase employment. Work can be a good outcome in and of itself, though, even if it doesn't constitute sustained SGA competitive labor market. Other quality of life outcomes are also important, broad tests of underlying assumptions of many of these policies may also be useful things such as the so called ultimate demonstration that would test the underlying residual work capacity, assumptions of beneficiaries by eliminating all consequences of work on the benefits.

A 2nd, lesson that we heard today is that many demonstrations test packages of policies or services. And many of these evaluations have been unable to disentangle the effects of each piece future demonstrations should, when feasible include additional meaningful treatment arms to allow us to determine the impact of specific intervention components, or alternative policies. Only knowing if a package works or not, does not always let policy makers know if it's over provided, in which case similar effects could be had with fewer resources or whether the theory is sound, but the amount of resources necessary might make it cost prohibitive. However, planning such studies takes time and sufficient resources and prior research. Sometimes that always doesn't fit into the timeline SSA is given for a demonstration.

A 3rd lesson dealt with new data matches, qualitative data, fidelity, metrics and, and other information about intervention implementation. Those are often necessary to go beyond the impact analysis presented at the end of the demonstration. How services are delivered is important to understanding why there was not. Or was an effect, I think what the case is.

A 4th lesson that we heard today, was that different populations have different needs targeting can be challenging, but also more effective. When sorry. While DI and SSI are national programs, some policies or services may be more of an incentive, or otherwise effective for certain groups. They already acknowledges this, for example, in the disability determination process, those older than 50 are subject to additional considerations, based on their education and in the work incentives, where the blind and youth have certain dedicated policies, interventions that focus on specific groups might be more productive than policy changes or services that apply to everyone.

A final lesson, and as Dr Kijakazi mentioned in the keynote is important, to ensure a diverse set of researchers and participants in the demonstrations, we need to ensure people with disabilities people of color and people have lived experiences in the programs are included in the design implementation and evaluation of interventions. Different perspectives, bring new ideas to all areas and disability policy is no different. Overall, though, I think the discussion today has shown that essay can conduct operational policy demonstrations, service based demonstrations, nudge style demonstrations and a variety of other ones. It's partnered with federal state and local agencies, community health centers, schools, nonprofits and others. As SSA moves forward developing new policies. Demonstrations can clearly have a role used appropriately and judiciously demonstrations, provide rigorous evidence testing, whether the most well, meaning policies have the intended effects and helping to ensure that ineffective or harmful interventions do not become permanent pieces of disability policy.

Just 1 more thing just because SSA's DI demonstration authority is expiring soon as we mentioned at the beginning of the day. It doesn't mean that demonstrations are actually going away as I mentioned at the beginning of the day as a still has a 1110 authority general research. And programs, and also SSI waivers. using that authority has a new interventional, cooperative agreement program to the external groups, propose ideas and partner with us and say on tests of new, mainly external programs and policies. Many of these are many of the sorry many of the services discussed today are primarily provided outside of essay and this program will allow experts and providers of those services rather than SSA to help identify what might be the best interventions to test. The competition for that closes soon so stay tuned website to find out more about what becomes of that if you're interested in that, or any information about demonstrations, including when we release findings and reports, we do have a what's new page and I believe the next slide will tell you how to sign up for that.

But again, finally, I just want to thank Austin, Jennifer, Laura, Sarah, Daniel, Cara, Lauren, Jenny, and everybody at Abt and Hatcher, interpreting team and everybody else for coordinating this and making this happen. Thank you again for participating and once more, I'll turn it over to Austin. Thank you the overarching findings there.

So, as Jeff alluded to, there's a lot more information on the website where you signed up for this meeting 1 of the things there is how to sign up for the SSA demonstrations list. There there's also contact information where you can get in touch with us and give us any feedback that you'd like us to

consider as we revise these. Papers for the book, the cover of the book there is shown there so that book is coming in the fall and you can also sign up for more information on that same website. So that's SSA demonstration lessons Abt Associates com, right there. And we hope to connect with you and discuss these issues with you in the future as well.