

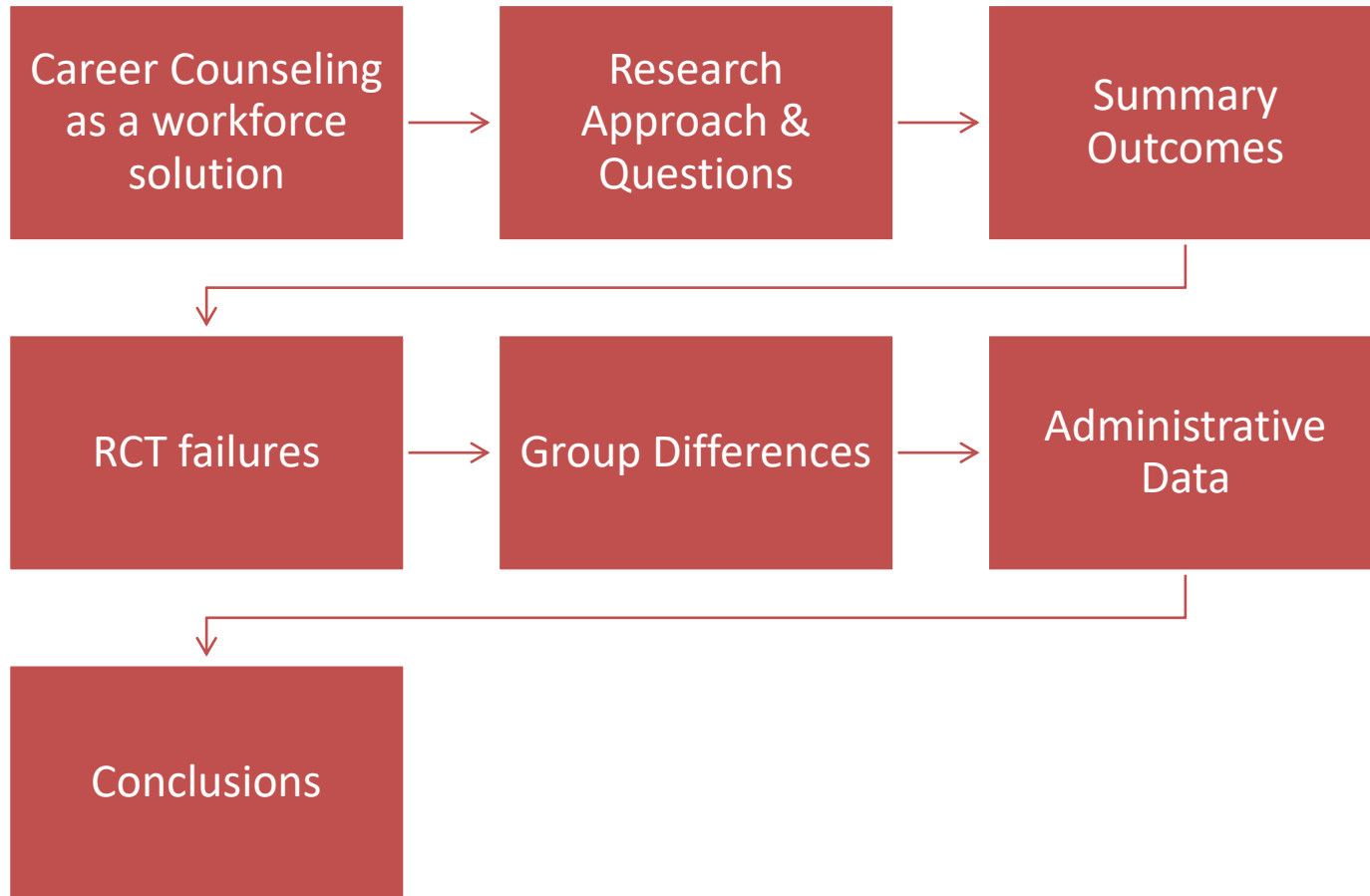
Labor force impacts of enhanced employment counseling in the United States: The limits of an encouragement RCT design

Joshua D. Hawley, EDD,
Tian Lou, PHD, Sunny Munn, PHD
The Ohio State University



Overview

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1) Career counseling as a workforce solution

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- Workforce development (e.g., job training, career counseling, employment supports) is a major tool for local government to help individuals
- In the U.S., most individuals receive an array of workforce services.
 - In school youth might get after school tutoring, a subsidized job in the summer, and access to online career counseling
 - Out of school youth might get a GED class, some job training, and active work with a counselor year round



Public Policies

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- The United States has several national policies that govern workforce development for youth
 - WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act) includes “[Young Adult Programs](#)” for individuals with key barriers to employment (e.g, without a high school degree or homeless)
 - TANF ([Temporary Assistance to Needy Families](#)) is primary cash assistance program for individuals over the age of 18, and under CCMEP for people 14+



CCMEP as a Policy Model

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- In 2016 Ohio enacted new law governing Workforce Development for youth (ages 14-24) called “Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program”
- [Legislation](#) (“The comprehensive case management and employment program (CCMEP) is a Title IV-A program, a family services duty, and workforce development activity that provides employment, training services and other supportive services to mandatory and voluntary program participants based upon a comprehensive assessment of an individual participant's employment and training needs.”)



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Services

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- CCMEP is fundamentally different. It represents a comprehensive approach to workforce development...(examples)
 - Training in order to receive a GED or a post secondary certificate
 - Alternative “basic skills” adult education
 - Subsidized employment (summer work)
 - Occupational training

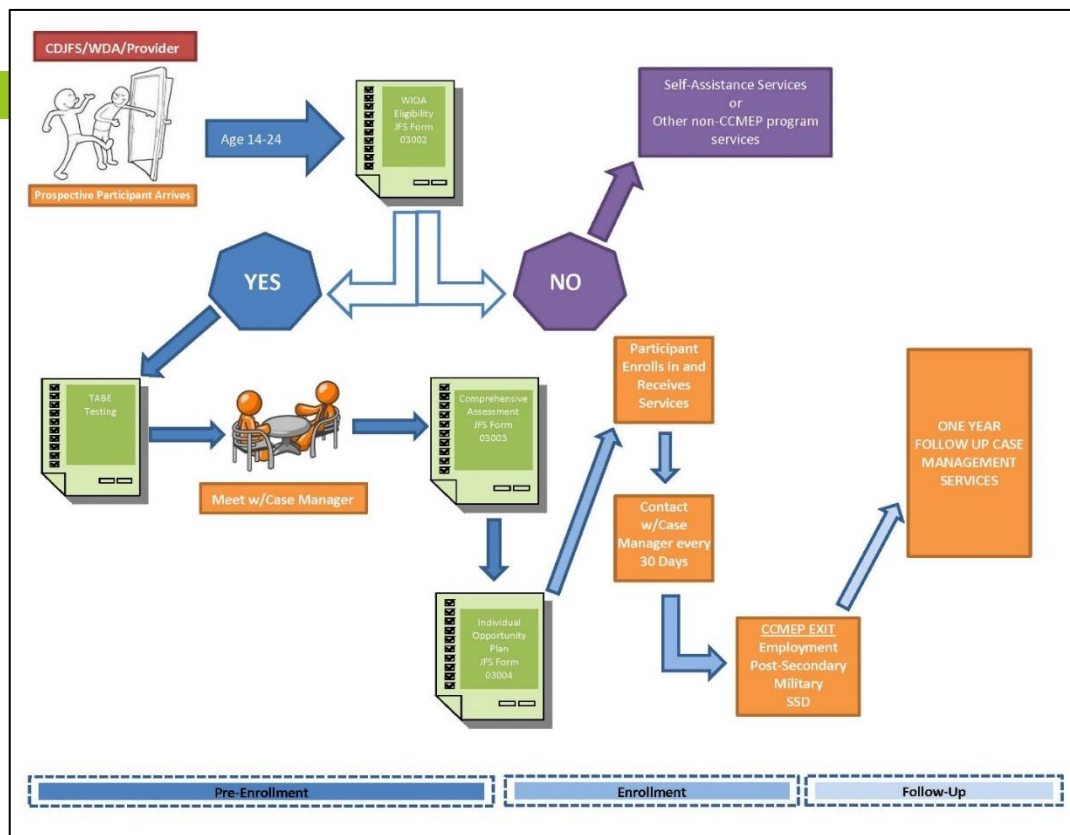


CCMEP Process

Step 1) pre-enrollment, including screening; comprehensive assessment, and identification of employment and education goals.

Step 2) enrollment, including signing an IOP (individual opportunity plan) contract, access to any of 14 services (training, education, mental health, cash assistance)

Step 3: follow up. 12 months of regular contact with a case manager



2) Research Approach and Questions

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- Statutory changes in 2016/7 meant that youth aged 14-24 had fundamentally different options by Summer of 2017.

	Eligibility	Programs	Supports
2015	Select youth aged 16-24	GED, Training, limited career supports	NONE
2016	All youth 14-24	1) pre-enroll; 2) enrollment 2) 3) follow up	Pre-enroll testing; basic skills testing; Counseling testing



Eligibility issues and research

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CCMEP eligibility mandates participation for groups, so traditional randomization was not possible

- State government was unable to waive the law...
- Volunteer clients are possible but in the initial year or two paying for these clients was at the county level. State would not pick up cost.

Who participates in CCMEP?

- (1)The following individuals who are at least fourteen but not more than twenty-four years of age **are required** to participate in CCMEP:
 - (a)Participants in the Ohio works first (OWF) program who have been determined to be work-eligible in accordance with rule rules [5101:1-2-01](#) and [5101:1-3-12](#) of the Administrative Code.
 - (b)Each individual who is an in-school youth or out-of-school youth as a condition of enrollment in workforce development activities funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (2014) (WIOA).
- (2)The following individuals who are at least fourteen but not more than twenty-four years of age **may volunteer** to participate in CCMEP:
 - (a)Any OWF participant who has not been determined to be a work-eligible individual in accordance with rule [5101:1-3-12](#) of the Administrative Code.
 - (b)Any individual eligible for TANF benefits and services-in accordance with rule [5101:14-1-04](#) of the Administrative Code who volunteers for CCMEP.



Randomization Options

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Traditional

Encouragement

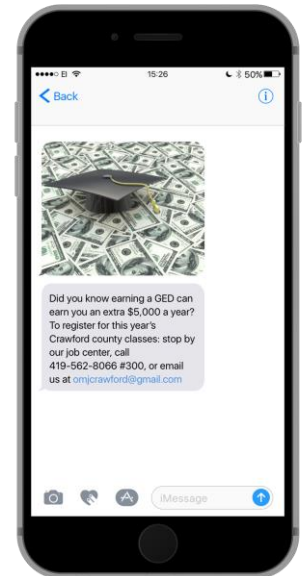
Sample of eligible and required at county level

Volunteers at county level "eligible" but not required

Randomization at county level to "treatment" and "control"

Randomization at county using "odd/even" digit of identification number

Treatment population receives "encouragement"



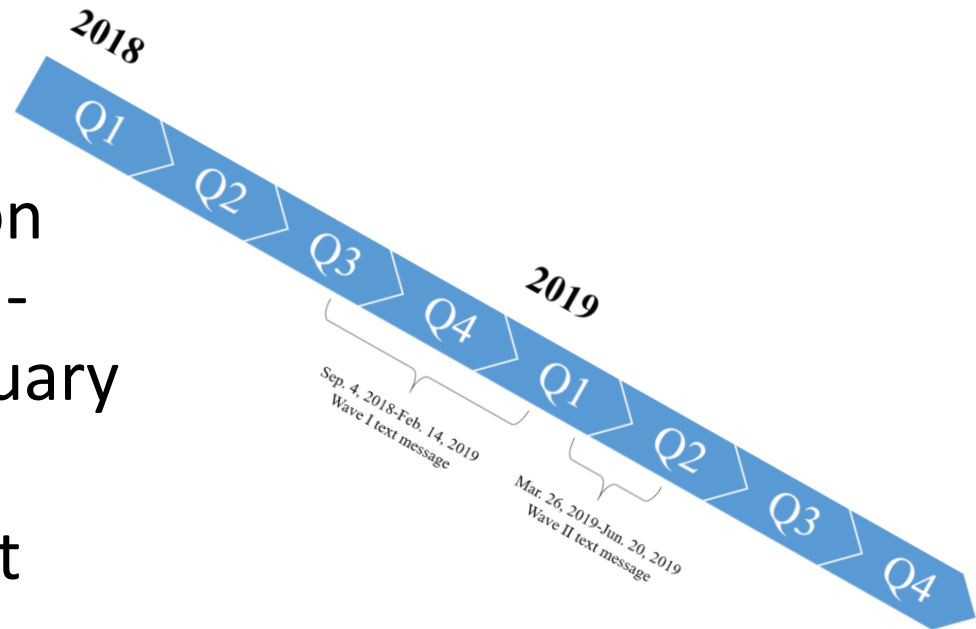
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Encouragement Evaluation

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Two waves of text messages to potential participants.

- First wave started on September 4, 2018 - and ended on February 14, 2019.
- Second wave of text messages between March 26 and June 20, 2019.



Counties Involved

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Cuyahoga

Lucas

Stark

Crawford

Franklin

Portage



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Key Outcome Measures

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For enrolled CCMEP participants, program performance is measured by the following seven indicators:

- Education, Training, or Employment at exit;
- Education, Training, or Employment 2nd quarter after exit;
- Education, Training, or Employment 4th quarter after exit;
- Credential attainment rate;
- Median earnings 2nd quarter after exit;
- Effectiveness in serving employers; and
- Measurable skill gains



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3) Summary Results

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13,000 Total

6,679 “treatments” and
6,578 “controls”

Very similar pre-
treatment characteristics

Largest number
were between 16-
22 (40% of both)

Majority were
women (60%) and
unmarried (98%)

Some 90% were
single parents or
pregnant

	Text Message Group	No Text Message Group
Age 14-15	1,398 (21.0%)	1,380 (21.0%)
Age 16-18	1,943 (29.1%)	1,832 (27.9%)
Age 19-22	1,972 (29.5%)	2,019 (30.7%)
Age 23-24	1,284 (19.2%)	1,274 (19.4%)
Age 25 or older	82 (1.2%)	73 (1.1%)
Male	2,608 (39.1%)	2,585 (39.3%)
Married	101 (1.5%)	112 (1.7%)
Pregnant (Females only)	144 (3.5%)	139 (3.5%)
Non-citizen	107 (1.6%)	127 (1.9%)
Single Parent	5,801 (86.9%)	5,700 (86.7%)
Number of months received SNAP	12.8	12.7
Number of months received TANF	0.2	0.2
Average quarterly earnings (one year before the randomization)	\$814.7	\$827.1
Average quarterly weeks worked (one year before the randomization)	2.9	2.9
N	6,679 (50.4%)	6,578 (6,578)



Enrollment based on encouragement

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- For the largest county in the state (Cuyahoga) we report the total enrollment as 11,545
- Of this, about 4.24% of text message cases enrolled, and 3.74% of the controls did
- Because of this, we decided that the evaluation design would not be successful

	Text message	No text message	Total
Encouragement Randomization	5,802	5,743	11,545
CCMEP enrollees (as of March 31 st , 2020)	246	215	461



4) RCT Failures

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- Failure is a positive in many ways, as it teaches researchers that helping individuals improve economic outcomes is hard.
 - Want to touch on failure in a few different ways
 - Technical “government” design problems
 - RCT issues
 - Data science realities
 - Suggestions for the “next time”



Technical Problems

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- The CCMEP legislation was forward facing public policy that challenges the way counties and providers did business. This created problems for evaluations.
 - The state gave counties a six-month grace period, so there was a bit of “foot dragging”
 - Implementation varied a lot across counties, depending on the agency in charge, the providers, the population
 - Combining services was a “massive shift” in social policy. Combining education with mental health and housing makes sense given systems of poverty



RCT Issues

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- A traditional RCT design would have been a better method
- We adopted an encouragement design because the state required eligibility to be kept open for all potential applicants
- The encouragement itself was not a powerful inducement to enroll
- A separate evaluation of a sub-sample using a pay for performance model had much better results



Data Science issues

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- Client software in Ohio was being upgraded in 2019/20, leading to confusion about data systems
- Counties had their own legacy data systems
- OSU maintains some but not all the data as part of the [OLDA](#), so putting together the background data on “non-participants” was a problem



Suggestions for next time

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- **Don't be impatient:** Understand the need to "wait for a mature program" delivery model
- **Hold Out for a regular RCT:** A smaller randomized trial with maybe one county could have worked better
- **Data:** build a better data system all the time (we do this, but always can be better).



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5) Group Differences

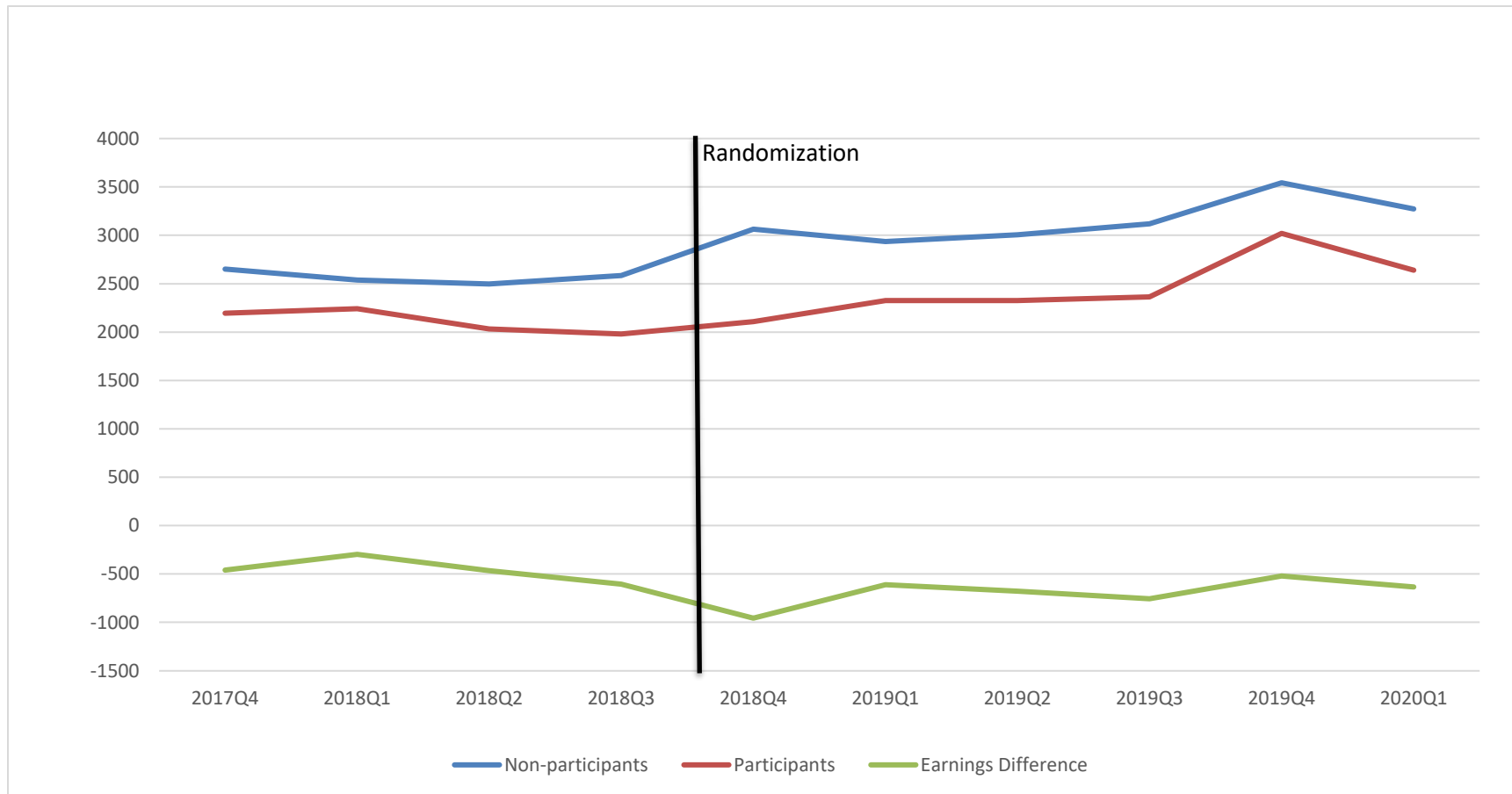
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- Lucky that our team had planned a “second study” of program effectiveness using a quasi-experimental model. In this we compare:
 - Treatment (all CCMEP enrollees)
 - Control (matched sub-sample of WIOA participants on age, gender, prior employment and earnings).



Average quarterly earnings

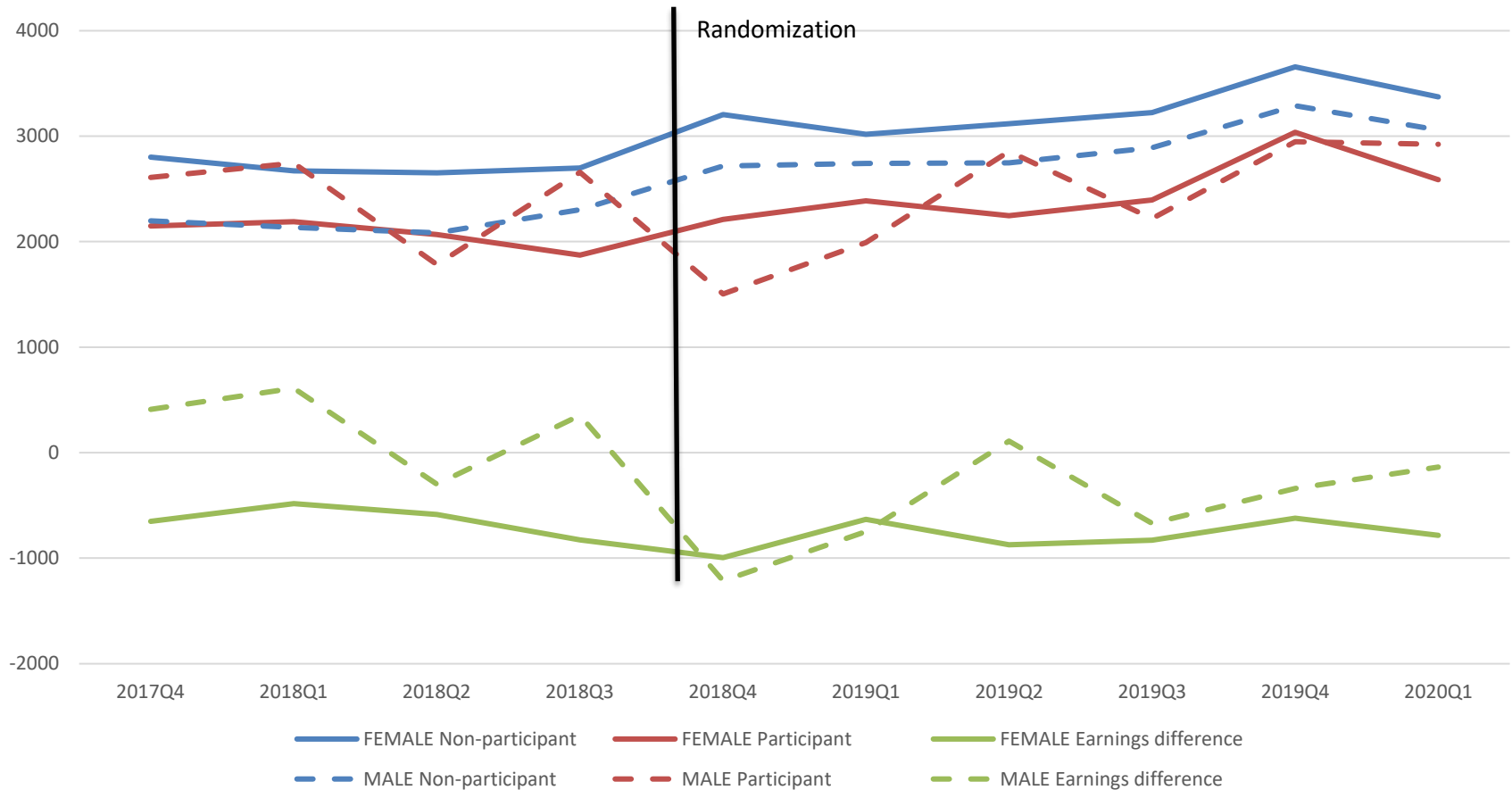
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Earnings by Gender

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Group Differences

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- People who have valid key identifiers and did not enter CCMEP before the start of the randomization.
- Age is defined as age on September 2018.
- One year before the randomization is defined as the third quarter of 2017 to the second quarter of 2018.
- All earnings are adjusted to 2019 price level.
- Quarterly weeks worked is accurate for persons with a single employer during a quarter.
- For people with more than one employer during a quarter, we calculate the sum of weeks worked for the two employers that paid the person the most in that quarter
- Percentages or means that are based on less than 10 people are suppressed.



6) Administrative Data

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- The Ohio Longitudinal Data Archive (OLDA) is a collaborative project between the State of Ohio and the University.
- The OLDA stores data from select state agencies in Ohio.
- The data are available to **external and internal** researchers that apply.
- The long term goal is to generate evidence based research used by both researchers and government to improve public policy.



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Timeline

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Pre 2007

1. Technical developments
2. Legacy Systems
3. Building local capacity to manage data systems
4. Researchers increasingly requesting unit record data
5. Exemplar state systems (e.g., Florida)

2007-2012

1. Federal investments such as WDQI and ARRA
2. Rapid expansion of integrated data use across the states
3. Advocacy from places like Data Quality Campaign

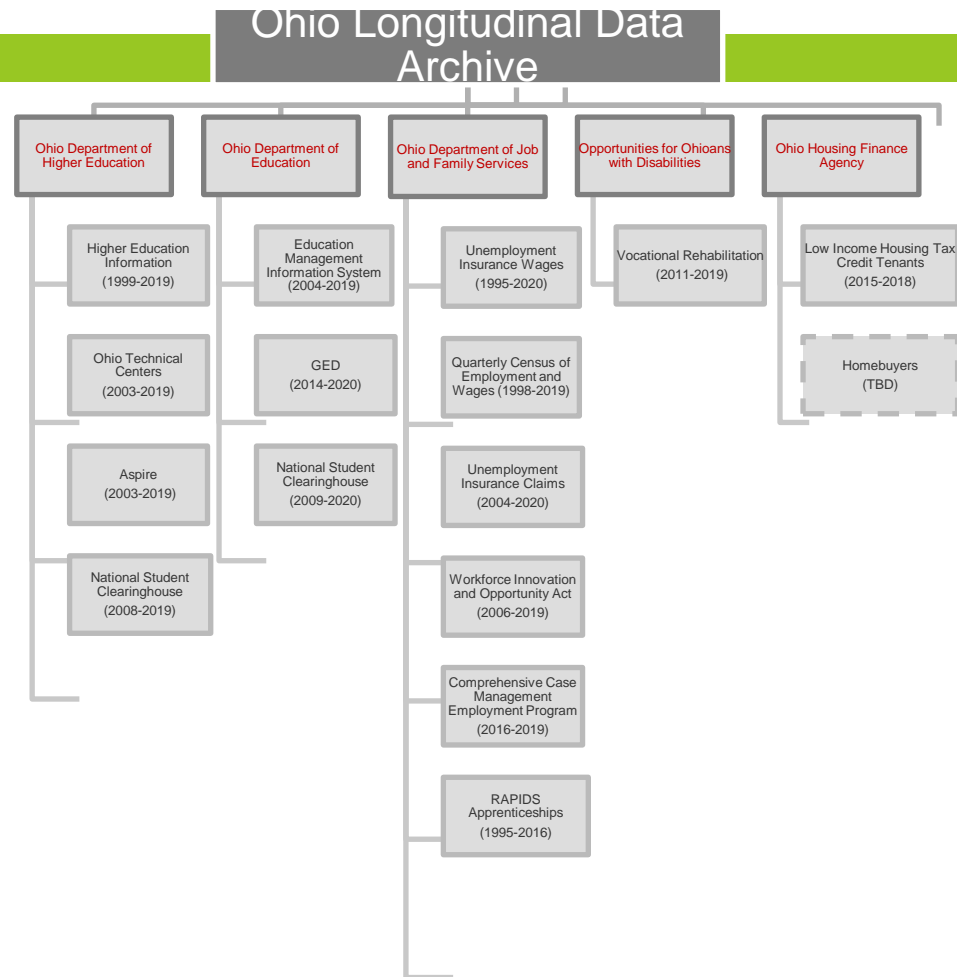
2012-Present

1. Emergence of cross state programs that integrate data
2. New federal rule changes in FERPA that make research more likely
3. Better technology



Data Holdings

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7) Conclusions

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- Employment Counseling as a model for workforce development
- Limitations of RCT
- Evidence based policy
- Increasing utilization of administrative data

