

Evaluation Report Brief **Edna McConnell Clark Foundation: PACE**



What are the goals of the program?

Research has shown that adverse childhood experiences have a different impact on girls than boys. Girls have a greater incidence of depression and more often enter the juvenile justice system with a history of physical or sexual abuse, or extreme family conflict. The PACE program model is a gender-responsive approach that began more than 30 years ago to meet the needs of girls at risk of entering, or already involved with, the juvenile justice system. PACE Center for Girls provides the full academic school day and gender-responsive “wrap-around” support services, for girls ages 11-17, with multiple risk factors, in 19 counties across Florida. Girls attend the program for approximately 9-12 months, year-round and during traditional school hours, where they receive academic and extensive social services. Services include: assessment to understand a girl’s risk factors, academic instruction in core subjects and academic advising, life-skills curriculum, counseling, parental engagement, volunteer service, career exploration, and follow-up services for one year.

Program At-a-Glance

CNCS Program: Social Innovation Fund
Intervention: PACE Center for Girls Program
Subgrantee: PACE Center for Girls
Intermediary: Edna McConnell Clark Foundation
Focus Area(s): Youth Development
Focus Population(s): At-risk Youth
Communities Served: 19 counties in Florida

What was the purpose of evaluation?

As a large and well-established program, PACE provides an opportunity to answer questions about the implementation and effectiveness of a gender-responsive approach, and to help practitioners and policymakers understand and replicate services. The evaluation addresses three issues: implementation, impact and cost-effectiveness. The evaluation of PACE Center for Girls Program by MDRC enrolled participants from August 2013 to October 2015, as part of a multi-site Random Control Trial (RCT) that will conclude in 2018. In all, 14 of 19 sites participated in the study; all had been in operation for at least 15 years and each has the capacity to serve about 50 girls. The study’s sample size is 1,134 girls, who were randomly assigned to receive PACE services (679) or directed to other services in the community (455). On average, girls were enrolled in the program for eight months. Implementation evaluation questions included: How is PACE implemented at each center? Who does PACE serve? How does PACE differ from other services in the community? The study collected both quantitative and qualitative data from PACE staff, management and stakeholders, participants, and parents through observations, interviews, and focus groups.

Evaluation At-a-Glance

Evaluation Design(s): Implementation
Study Population: Girls ages 11-17
Independent Evaluator: MDRC
This Evaluation’s Level of Evidence*: Preliminary

*SIF and AmeriCorps currently use different definitions of levels of evidence.

What did we learn from the evaluation?

This 2016 report focuses on how PACE implements its services at each of the 14 centers in the study. Findings from the implementation study include:

- PACE is serving its target beneficiaries: at-risk girls who tend to be low-income, struggling with school, and have other risk factors like prior abuse.
- The PACE program model has been implemented with fidelity and consistently across the 14 centers, with some differences in services due to staffing, access to resources, and program model guidance.
- PACE incorporates the key tenets of gender-responsive programming through a distinct program culture (e.g., focus on safety and relationships) and specific program components (e.g., life skills).
- Girls who attend PACE are more likely to have been enrolled in school, received academic advising, participated in counseling, and received other services in the 12-month period since study enrollment than girls in the study who were directed to other services.



Notes on the evaluation

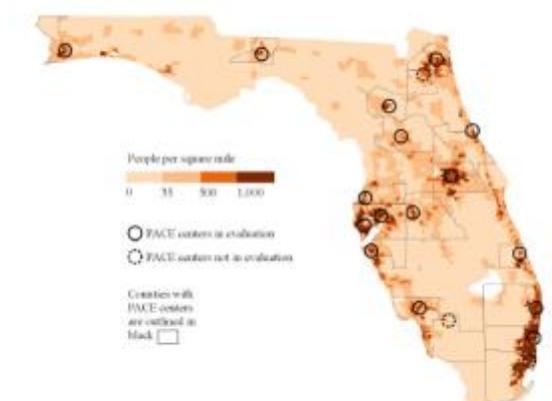
A final report will present results of the impact and cost-effectiveness analysis in 2018. The impact study will address the program's effectiveness, including outcomes such as school success, delinquency, relationships and mental health.

How is PACE using the evaluation experience and findings to improve?

PACE is committed to continuous quality improvement and is using findings from the evaluation to learn and improve upon its program model. The early implementation findings have already been valuable to PACE in changing systems, policies and practices to refine the model and increase impact among girls at risk for systems involvement. Based on early evaluation findings, PACE has refined eligibility criteria and modified the review process for admission to decrease variation across centers; established guidelines for implementing counseling, therapy and case management services to increase consistency in the delivery of the social services approach; is developing a gender responsive and trauma informed academic framework to increase the quality of classroom instruction; implemented a teacher retention program to decrease teacher turnover; and added feedback loops to increase girls' sense of safety, respect and belonging. PACE is also working to strengthen internal performance management capacity and practices to drive continuous program quality improvement.

Study Locations

Figure 1.2
Population Map of Florida with PACE Centers



SOURCES: Population density data are from the U.S. Census Bureau, and the PACE locations are from PACE (N.d).

The content of this brief was drawn from the full evaluation report submitted to CNCS by the grantee/subgrantee. The section of the brief that discusses evaluation use includes contribution of the grantee/subgrantee. All original content from the report is attributable to its authors.

To access the full evaluation report and learn more about CNCS, please visit nationalservice.gov/research.

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF), a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), combines public and private resources to grow the impact of innovative, community-based solutions that have compelling evidence of improving the lives of people in low-income communities throughout the U.S. The SIF invests in three priority areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development.