



# Behavioral Interventions Scholars (BIS) Research Grants

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## Introduction

The Behavioral Interventions Scholars (BIS) grant program supports dissertation research by advanced graduate students who are applying a behavioral science lens to specific research questions relevant to social services programs and policies and other issues facing low-income and vulnerable families in the United States. As part of the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation's [Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency research portfolio](#), these grants are intended to facilitate the completion of high-quality research projects that will add to the growing body of knowledge on effective behavioral interventions for Administration for Children and Families programs and populations. BIS also aims to build capacity in the research field to use behavioral science approaches in this area and to foster mentoring relationships between high-quality doctoral students and faculty members.

The first round of BIS grants were awarded in 2017 to four grantees. Their projects are summarized in the below chart.

## BIS Grants Summary Chart

BIS GRANTEE			PROJECT INFORMATION		
University	Project Title	Key Staff	Key Research Questions or Project Goals	Primary Methods	Partners
<b>Carnegie Mellon University</b> <i>Department of Social and Decision Sciences</i>	The Psychological Costs of Seeking Help for Financial Hardships	Scholar: Ania Jaroszewicz  Advisor: Alex Imas	<i>Study 1</i> 1. Identify the extent to which current Community Human Services (CHS) clients had delayed seeking initial help for their financial hardships.  <i>Study 2</i> 1. Establish causal evidence for the importance of psychological factors using a randomized controlled trial (RCT).	Conduct interviews (n=200)  Conduct a RCT (n=500)	Community Human Services (CHS), a Pennsylvania social services agency specializing in housing assistance



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New York University <i>Department of Psychology</i>	Promoting Constructive Conflict in Low Socioeconomic Status (SES) Couples: An Abstraction-Based Intervention Approach	Scholar: Marika Yip-Bannicq  Advisor: Patrick Shrout	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Does being trained to habitually adopt a high-level construal when encountering relationship conflict promote the use of constructive conflict strategies and reduce the use of destructive conflict strategies in low SES couples?</li><li>2. Does habitually adopting a high-level construal when experiencing relationship conflict yield better conflict outcomes (i.e., resolution)?</li><li>3. Does self-inducing a high-level construal lead to better long-term relationship outcomes (i.e., relationship quality)?</li></ol>	Utilize a longitudinal approach with a survey-experimental design, including background questionnaire and two-week daily diary (n=128 couples)	
Harvard University <i>School of Public Health</i>	Supporting Families of Infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit to Access Supplemental Security Income	Scholar: Kathryn Andrews  Advisor: Margaret McConnell	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Collect data on rates of application and missed opportunities for families of infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) to apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI).</li><li>2. Map the resource landscape for infants in the NICU.</li><li>3. Document the barriers and facilitators to application for SSI.</li><li>4. Using information from the first three steps, conduct a power calculation and refine the design of a full-scale RCT to test the impact of a behavioral intervention aimed at reducing these missed opportunities.</li></ol>	Analyze government administrative data on applicants for SSI for infants in the NICU.  Create a comprehensive list of resources for infants in the NICU in Massachusetts by web searches and spiderweb networking.  Conduct a web survey and semi-structured phone interviews with social workers around the state.  Synthesize the findings from the first three parts of the study to refine an intervention and address logistical considerations in planning for a full-scale trial.	Massachusetts Department of Public Health  NeoQIC  Social Security Administration



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<b>University of Michigan School of Education</b>	Virtual mentorship to support maternal and infant health and wellbeing: Understanding the participant experience and evaluating the impact of NurturePA	Scholar: Eleanor Martin  Advisor: Christina Weiland	<p><i>Paper 1</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>What are the characteristics of mothers' engagement with NurturePA?</li><li>Does engagement and responsiveness vary across mentors?</li><li>Does engagement and responsiveness vary across subgroups?</li><li>How do NurturePA participants perceive the text-based mentorship to have influenced their experience as a new parent and their experience with maternal stress? How do these perceptions align, or fail to align, with mentors' perspectives on the effects of the program?</li></ol> <p><i>Paper 2</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>What is the impact of the NurturePA intervention on maternal health and well-being, maternal engagement in language and literacy activities, and maternal knowledge after four months of participation?</li></ol> <p><i>Paper 3</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>How are the impacts of the NurturePA intervention discussed in Paper 2 related to or mediated by characteristics of mothers' engagement with the program described in Paper 1?</li><li>How do the relationships between program impacts and characteristics of mothers' engagement reflect participants' and mentors' perceptions of and perspectives on program effects and influences?</li></ol>	Conduct a RCT (n=200)  Supplement with qualitative interviews  Conduct in-person child assessments with the Mullen Scales of Early Learning (n=100)	NurturePA



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