

Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy

The Coalition is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, sponsored by the Council for Excellence in Government. Its mission is to increase government effectiveness through rigorous evidence about "what works." In the field of medicine, public policies based on scientifically-rigorous evidence have produced extraordinary advances in health over the past 50 years. By contrast, in most areas of social policy -- such as education, poverty reduction, crime and justice, and substance abuse prevention -- government programs often are implemented with little regard to evidence, costing billions of dollars yet failing to address critical needs of our society. However, rigorous studies have identified a few highly-effective social interventions, suggesting that a concerted government strategy to build the number of these proven interventions, and spur their widespread use, could bring rapid progress to social policy similar to that which transformed medicine.

Since the Coalition's founding in 2001, our work with top Congressional and Executive Branch policymakers has resulted in important evidence-based reforms. As illustrative examples, we have helped advance:

- Sizeable increases in Congressional funding/support for rigorous research and evaluation in education, crime prevention, and other areas of social policy;
- New Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidance to the federal agencies on [What Constitutes Strong Evidence of Program Effectiveness](#); and
- Creation of a federal evidence-based home visitation program for low-income families, which provides \$10 million in seed money to scale up program models proven to produce sizeable, sustained effects on important child outcomes (e.g., abuse, neglect).

An [independent evaluation of our work](#), conducted for the William T. Grant Foundation, found that the Coalition has been "instrumental in transforming a theoretical advocacy of evidence-based policy among certain [federal] agencies into an operational reality."

The Coalition's bipartisan [Board of Advisors](#) is comprised of distinguished former government officials, scholars, and other individuals from a broad range of policy areas. The Coalition's Executive Director is Jon Baron ([email](#), tel. 202-380-5870).

[Click here for a two-page overview of the Coalition's purpose and agenda.](#)

New and Noteworthy:

- **NEW 12/3/08 Coalition releases the first results of its Congressionally-reviewed initiative to identify social programs meeting "top tier" evidence of effectiveness.** These initial results focus on programs for children age 0-6 -- [click here to view](#).
- **NEW 10/29/08 Rigorous Evidence: Key To Progress Against World Poverty?** On October 29, 2008, the Coalition hosted a policy forum in collaboration with the Millennium Challenge Corporation, established by Congress in 2004 as a major new vehicle for international development assistance. Click to view the event's [background/agenda](#) and [transcript](#).
- **The Second Chance Act - which per our input contains a 2% set-aside for rigorous evaluations of strategies to facilitate prisoner re-entry into the community - was**

signed into law on April 9, 2008 (Public Law 110-199). Specifically, the Act contains a provision that we helped develop to set aside 2% of program funds for evaluations that *"include, to the maximum extent feasible, random assignment ... and generate evidence on which reentry approaches and strategies are most effective."*

- **Our work with Congress and OMB helped create a new \$10 million evidence-based home visitation program in the FY 08 Appropriations Act (Public Law 110-161).** This HHS program will provide seed money to scale up research-proven home visitation models. Based on our input, the final Congressional language directs HHS to *"ensure that States use the funds to support models that have been shown in well-designed randomized controlled trials, to produce sizeable, sustained effects on important child outcomes such as abuse and neglect."*
- **We've conducted a number of workshops on evidence-based reform for OMB, federal agencies, and other stakeholders, which have been very well received --** based on feedback forms, requests for return engagements, and other measures. The workshops provide participants with practical, cost-effective strategies to advance such reforms in their programs or policy areas. Our most recent workshop for OMB (April 2008) was attended by over 60 OMB officials and staff.
- **In May 2007, the Congressionally-established Academic Competitiveness Council, to which the Coalition has been a main advisor on evaluation, issued an important report calling for evidence-based reforms in federal math and science education programs.** The Council, led by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings and comprised of top officials from 13 federal agencies, issued a report that includes, as a main element, the Coalition's *Hierarchy of Study Designs* (see [full report](#), with the [Hierarchy on p. 14](#)).
- **The Coalition manages one of the leading websites on evidence-based programs -- *Social Programs that Work* (www.evidencebasedprograms.org)** which provides policymakers and practitioners with clear, actionable information on 'what works' in social policy, based on evaluations that meet the highest level of scientific rigor.
- **The Coalition operates an Evidence-Based Policy "Help Desk" for OMB and the federal agencies (www.evidencebasedpolicy.org)** providing clear, practical resources that OMB and the agencies can use to advance (i) rigorous evaluation and (ii) the effective use of rigorous evidence to improve program performance.