

Request for Non Substantive Change to Evaluation of Youth CareerConnect (OMB 1291-0003)

This memo provides a justification for requesting a non-substantive change to OMB Control Number 1291-0003. We request that a \$5 incentive be provided to parents or guardians who return the consent form for their student to participate in the Youth CareerConnect (YCC) Evaluation. The incentive does not affect the study design and will be offered to parents regardless of whether or not they consent to participate in the study. This incentive does not change burden estimates, but acts as a token of appreciation to parents for reviewing and completing the consent form and provides an incentive for parents to return the form.

Section A describes the concerns we have about parents not returning consent forms. Section B discusses our recommendation to provide a \$5 incentive to increase the rate at which consent form are returned. Section C discusses the use of such incentives in other research. We provide full references for citations following Section C.

A. Concerns about low rates of returning the consent form

As we work the grantee sites to finalize the process for collecting consent forms, sites are raising concerns about low rates of returning consent forms because they experience difficulty in getting parents to return school and district paperwork. Having a low rate of parents returning the form would introduce non-response bias into the research by having study participants that represent only a small share of the population and one that is biased toward those with parents motivated to return a consent form.

We also worry that treatment and control groups might differ in the rate of returning the consent form. We plan to collect consent forms prior to random assignment but some sites have indicated that obtaining consent prior to random assignment is not possible. If we cannot ask for consent until after random assignment, parents of students in the treatment group (which will be enrolled in a YCC program) may be more likely to return the consent form than those with students that did not get selected to enroll in the program. Sites anticipate that the \$5 incentive could help provide an incentive for parents of students that do not enroll in YCC programs to return the consent form.

B. Recommendation

The concern about not returning the consent form is most pronounced in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). This site includes six schools that offer YCC programs and represents about one half of our survey sample. LAUSD believes that fewer than 20 percent of parents will return the consent form. Its research review board recommended that a \$5 incentive for returning the consent form will increase the chance that parents will notice the form and take the time to complete and return it. This recommendation is based on their

experience with other researchers, who have used incentives to increase the rate of returning the consent form.

C. Incentives and consent rates

Using incentives to increase response has been widely documented (Holbrook et al. 2007, Singer et al. 1999, Singer & Ye 2013) and our experience is that small cash incentives can improve response. For example, the DOL Trade Adjustment Assistance study showed that a \$5 cash pre-payment increased survey response rate by more than 10 percent. Mathematica has also successfully used small incentives to encourage parents to return consent forms. In a study of a Kentucky Personal Responsibility Education Program conducted for the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), it gave students a \$5 gift card for returning the parent consent forms, regardless of whether they consented to participate in the study. It achieved a consent form return rate of 94 percent across 13 schools, with consent return rates same for the treatment and control groups. We used the same incentive in a separate study of a teen pregnancy prevention program for DHHS and achieved a consent form return rate of 67 percent across multiple sites in two states and similar overall consent rates for treatment and control groups.

References

Holbrook, A. L., Krosnick, J. A. and Pfent, A. "The Causes and Consequences of Response Rates in Surveys by the News Media and Government Contractor Survey Research Firms," in *Advances in Telephone Survey Methodology* (eds J. M. Lepkowski, C. Tucker, J. M. Brick, E. D. d. Leeuw, L. Japiec, P. J. Lavrakas, M. W. Link and R. L. Sangster), John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2007.

Singer, E., Gebler, N., Raghunathan, T., Van Hoewyk, J., & McGonagle, K. "The effect of incentives on interviewer-mediated surveys." *Journal of Official Statistics* vol. 15, no. 2, 1999, pp. 217-230.

Singer, E., & Ye, C. "The use and effects of incentives in surveys." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 645, no. 1, 2