



Youth Transition

David Wittenburg and Gina Livermore



Overview

SSI operates in a fragmented system of supports.....A theme associated with long-term impacts in SSA and other demonstrations is they offered opportunities not available in a youth's environment.



Context



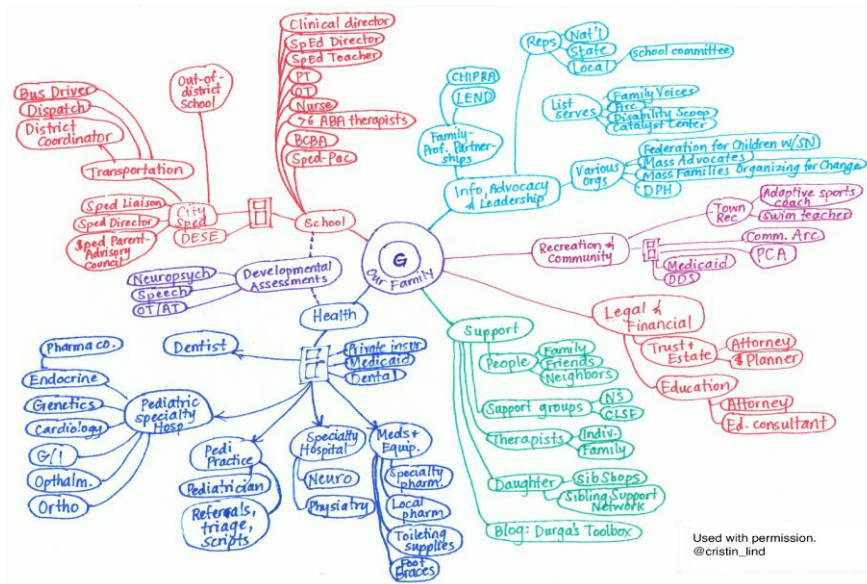
Lessons



Learning

Youth receiving SSI face complicated transition

Family view of other supports



SSI rules

- Eligibility for reporting earnings/assets
- Age 18 redetermination

SSI payment

- Represents half of family income

SOURCE: <https://cristinlind.com/care-mapping/>; Reprinted with permission

Youth Demonstrations grew over time

STETS and TETD (1980s)

- Target population: Youth with intellectual disabilities
- Size: TETD larger version of STETS (n=745 vs. 467)
- Intervention: Transition employment supports

YTD (2006-2012)

- Target population: 5,103 Youth receiving SSI (age 14 to 25)
- Intervention: Work experiences, waivers, and other services
- Service providers: Mix of private and public providers

PROMISE (2013-2022)

- Target population: 13,444 youth receiving SSI (age 14 to 16) and their families
- Intervention: Family services and youth supports
- Service providers: State agencies led the six programs

PROMISE=Promoting Readiness of Minors in SSI; STETS=Structured Training and Employment Transitional Services Program; TETD=Transitional Employment Training Demonstration; YTD=Youth Transition Demonstration

SSA demonstrations findings: consistent short-term impacts

STETs and TETD

- Supports improve employment
- Promising alternative (competitive employment) to sheltered options

YTD

- Short-term employment impacts
- Service intensity/focus enhance impacts
- Limited long-term effects

PROMISE

- Interagency collaboration can take many forms
- Short-term employment impacts; long-term impacts forthcoming
- Family service provision has potential to improve youth outcomes

PROMISE=Promoting Readiness of Minors in SSI; STETS=Structured Training and Employment Transitional Services Program; TETD=Transitional Employment Training Demonstration; YTD=Youth Transition Demonstration

Other service models hold promise for youth with disabilities

Service models for other populations

- **Residential and sectoral training models for other youth populations**
- **Employer models for youth with disabilities**
- **Population-specific approaches for adults**
- **International evidence**

Key Findings

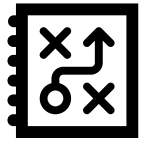
- Long-term impacts: Residential and job sectoral models (Job Corps and Year Up)
- Intensive supports: stronger outcomes

Policy Lessons





Demonstration lessons



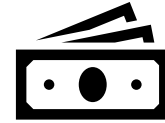
Design: Youth service needs differ from those of adults



Recruitment: Local staff and program incentives enhance enrollment



Short-term outcomes: Intensive service models generate larger impacts



Long-term outcomes: Long-term impacts through expansion in training and employment opportunities that address systemic gaps



Interagency collaboration: Formal agreements backed by funding enhance collaboration



Translating research to policy



SSA Programs: Benefits counseling focus on youth *and* families



Other agencies: Informed Work Innovation Opportunity Act implementation and policy proposals

WIPA= Work Incentive
Planning and Assistance

Suggestions for Future Learning



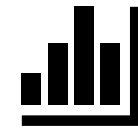


Future demonstration considerations



Build from existing resources

- Referrals to models with strong evidence (e.g., Year-up)
- Expand SSA data usage with other public and private agencies



Intervention and outcome focus

- Improve family outcomes
- Enhance understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion



Program and service considerations



Waiver-only demonstrations of SSI program rules that affect youth outcomes: *earnings, continuing disability reviews, and expanded age 18 redetermination (age 22)*



Benefits counseling: *Test proactive services*



Outreach notices: *Testing shortening/alternatives to current 20 page annual notices*

Summary of findings



Lessons

Short-term impacts: Common

Long-term impacts: Less frequent

Promising models: Year Up and Job Corps



Learning

Data: Leverage SSA data to support innovation

Interventions: Referrals to promising programs

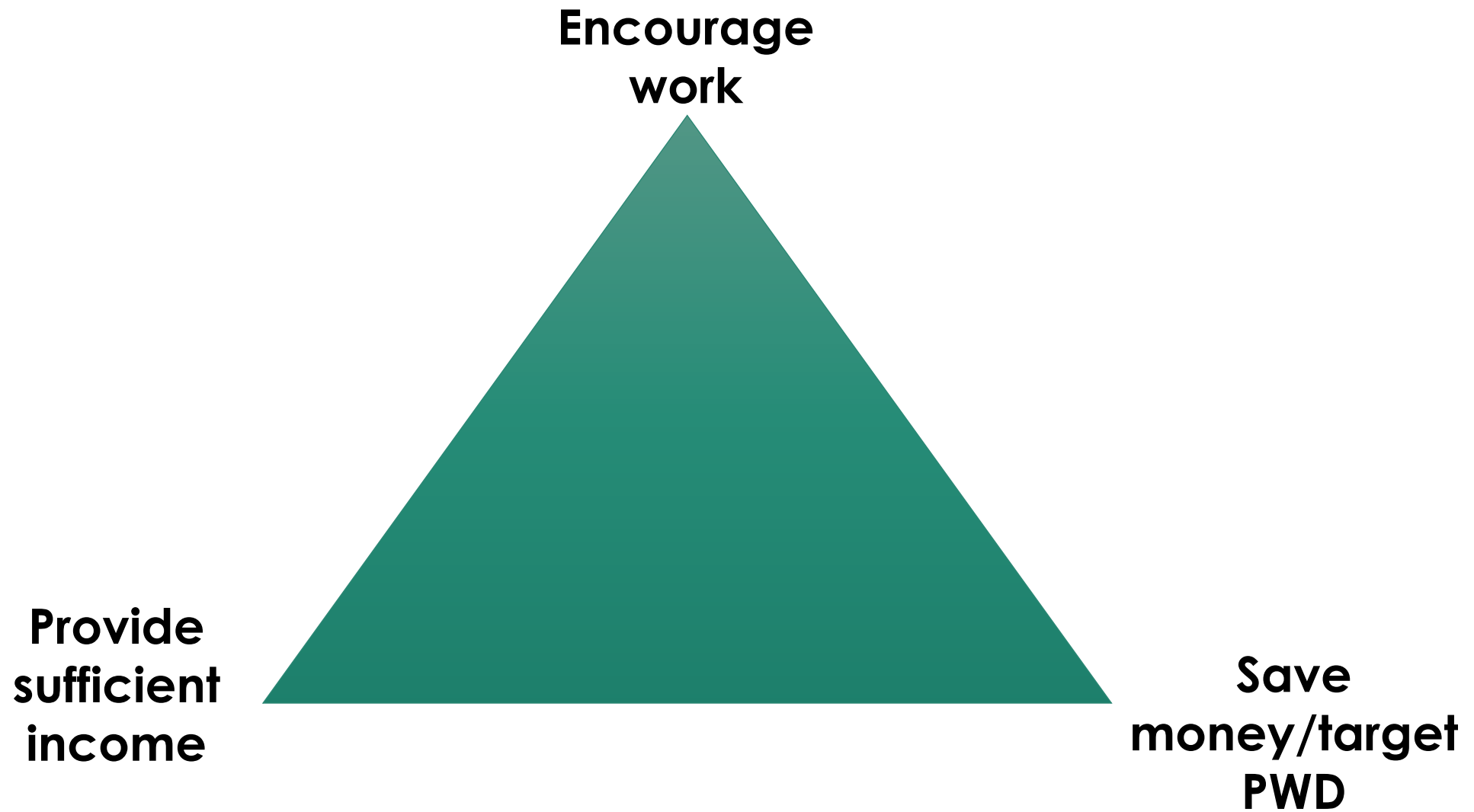
Program rules: Waiver-only demonstrations tests

Discussion of Wittenburg and Livermore

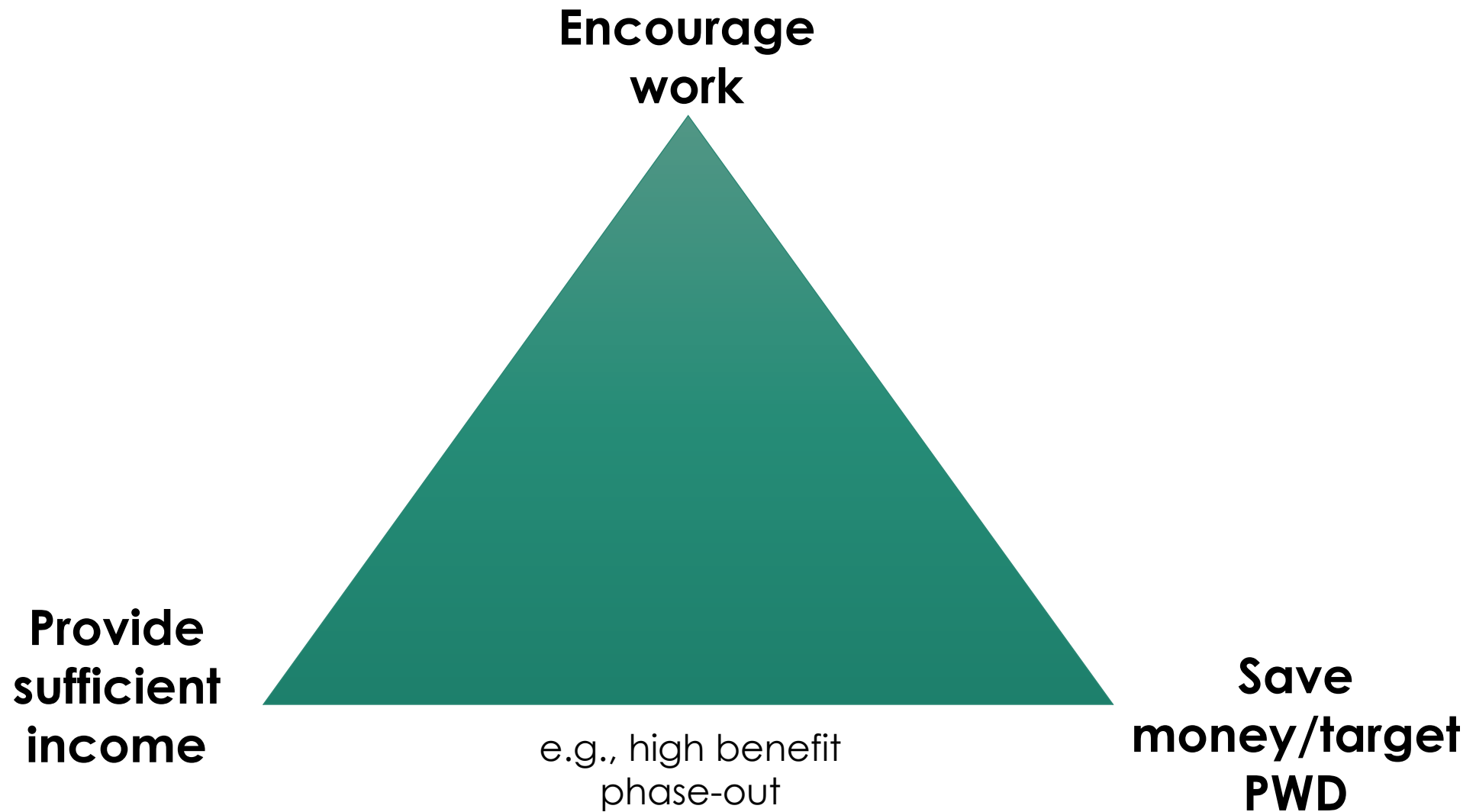
Discussant: Manasi Deshpande, University of Chicago



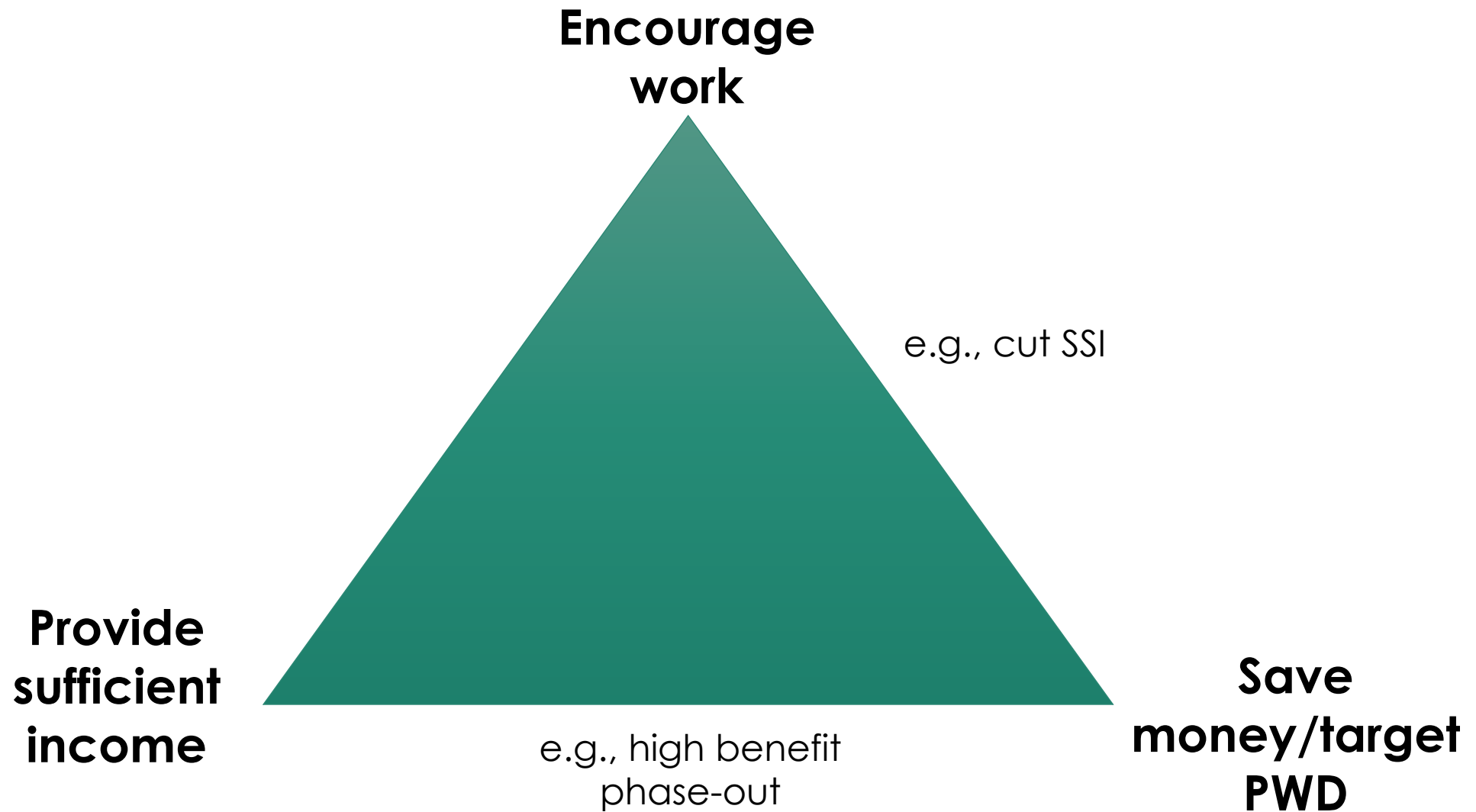
“Iron triangle” of safety net



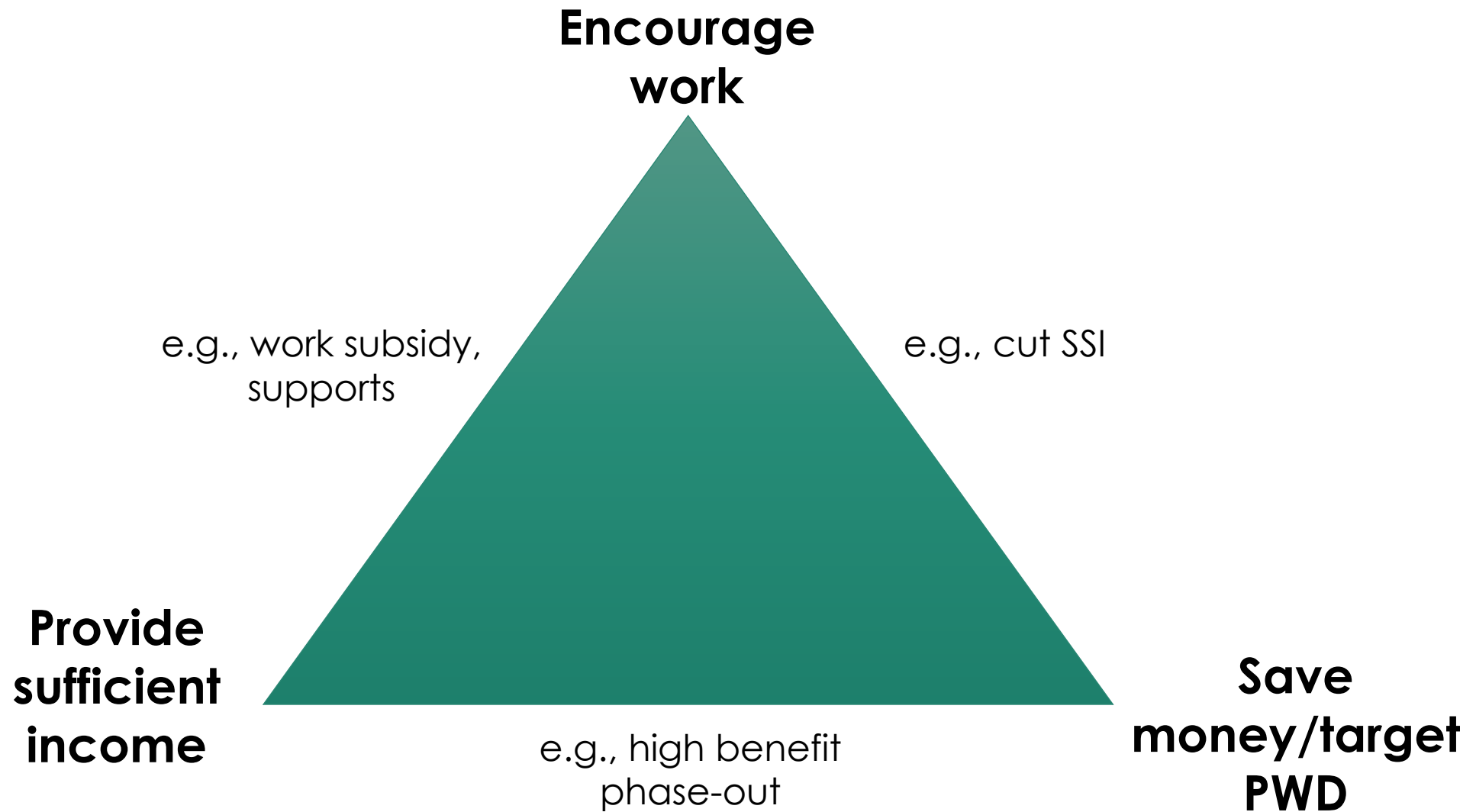
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Potential models of youth transition

1. SSI well-targeted on front end, so youth have no or little work capacity at 18
 - Focus on providing sufficient income
2. Youth have work capacity but must demonstrate disability to stay on SSI
 - Focus on encouraging work
3. Youth physically capable of work but lack skills
 - Focus on building skills

1) Youth have little/no work capacity

- Focus on providing sufficient income
- Suggests keeping more youth on SSI (disability or poverty?), strict income phase-outs
- Demo ideas
 - Change age 18 redetermination criteria to emphasize vocational factors (i.e., higher bar for SGA)

2) Youth can work but try to stay on

- Focus on encouraging work
- Suggests reducing explicit and implicit work penalties or subsidizing work; stronger safety net outside of SSI
- Demo ideas
 - Raise SGA or include skills in assessment of SGA capacity
 - Cut SSI benefits or turn some of it into work supports
 - Natural experiments: expanded CTC/Medicaid expansions

3) Youth phys capable but lack skills

- Focus on building skills early to encourage work later
- Suggests much earlier intervention than previous demos
- Demo ideas
 - Eliminate child CDRs to encourage skills
 - Sponsor skill-building programs (literacy, intensive tutoring)
 - Provide info to families for realistic expectations of SSI receipt

Which model is correct?

- Heterogeneity in outcomes (Deshpande 2016)
 - Vast majority of youth who are removed because deemed capable of SGA don't come close to SGA
 - Suggests Model (1) or (3)
 - About 10% do earn at SGA
 - Suggests Model (2)
 - But hard to predict who they will be based on SSA characteristics

Comments on Youth Transition

Discussant: Lucie Schmidt, Williams College And Nber



Summary

- Transition to adulthood is a difficult time for children on SSI and their families
 - For youth => employment and educational outcomes
 - For families => potential loss of a large share of income
- SSA demonstrations aimed at this group
- Wittenburg & Livermore provide a great overview of the issues and the lessons learned from the demonstrations

Primary Lessons Learned

- Easier to increase employment than to generate sustained increases in income or reductions in benefit receipt
- Services and supports are important
 - More intensive services of longer duration have larger effects
- Children on SSI have different service/support needs than adults

Low-Income Families in the US

- Significant challenges/hardships faced by these families in daily life
 - Scarcity affects cognitive function (Mani et al. 2013)
 - More waiting/longer waiting times (Holt & Vinopal 2020)
 - Administrative burden (Herd & Moynihan 2018)
 - Employment not necessarily a cure
- Issues compounded for low-income families with children with significant physical or mental disabilities

Low-Income Families in the US

- To what extent should SSA be trying to reduce these burdens for families of child recipients?
- To what extent is the success of SSI youth demonstrations dependent on the ability to do so?

Goals for Children on SSI?

- What would a successful transition to adulthood look like in terms of education, employment, and/or earnings?
- Are there other outcomes that we should be targeting? (Cognitive/noncognitive skill development? Parental investments?)
 - What is the optimal timing of interventions?
 - Focus on recipient vs focus on family?



Thank you

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Youth Transition: SSI Youth

Discussant: Jennifer Sheehy, U.S. Department of Labor



Key Takeaways from Research

Research presented suggests the following strategies:

- Place a strong emphasis on employment services.
Ex: Skill assessments, career aspirations, educational goals, on-the-job training, post-employment services and follow-ups.
- Provide customized supports for youths.
Ex: Health care needs, reasonable accommodations, employment supports, and community and governmental transition supports.
- Focus on providing services to the entire family unit.
Ex: Case management to youth and their family members; benefits counseling; financial education; career training for youth; parental training on available supports for their youth; career resources for parents.

Key Challenges and Opportunities

- Systems are fragmented, making it difficult to ensure youth have access to everything they need to be successful.
- Some families had difficulty accessing all the services offered under past demonstrations.
- How do we structure programs and systems to ensure all families and youth have access to promising practices?

America's Recovery: Powered by Inclusion

- Increasing employment is critical as we recover from the pandemic to avoid simply returning to the status quo, which failed many young people with disabilities.
- Have a unique opportunity to build upon what works to ensure systems are more inclusive and support all youth with disabilities.

ODEP's SSI Youth Solution Projects

ODEP's **SSI Youth Solution** effort is developing knowledge by:

- Engaging SMEs to develop 12 novel policy, program, or service solutions to improve employment outcomes for YWDs who apply for or receive SSI
- Assessing proposals regarding likely effectiveness and estimated cost for demonstration projects.

Implications and Opportunities for Future SSI Youth Efforts

- Opportunity to develop solutions that can have a meaningful impact on youth and families on SSI through research, demonstrations, and new federal efforts.
- DOL can contribute to this interagency effort.
- Is part of Administration's commitment to making our country more equitable and inclusive.



Thank you!

Jennifer Sheehy

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Lessons Learned from SSA Demonstrations: A State of the Science Meeting



We are on a break.
Content will resume shortly.