



EMPath
Economic Mobility Pathways

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For Immediate Release

July 13, 2022

Methodist Healthcare Ministries Commissions Unprecedented Study on Economic Mobility Strategies for San Antonio Communities

Project Will Research How Cash Assistance and Economic Coaching Can Help Families Experiencing Poverty

San Antonio, Texas (July 13, 2022) – Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc. announced the commissioning of a groundbreaking study conducted by the University of Texas at San Antonio College of Health, Community and Policy to research two economic mobility interventions previously only evaluated as separate strategies: cash assistance and Economic Mobility Pathway’s (EMPath) Mobility Mentoring®, an economic mobility coaching approach. The two-year study will involve two local nonprofit organizations, Family Service and Empower House. This is the first randomized control trial in the country that will look at how the two interventions, cash assistance and Mobility Mentoring, can work together to support individuals and families on their journey out of poverty.

“As part of Methodist Healthcare Ministries’ new strategic plan and focus on health equity, we are committed to bringing about systemic change in the communities we serve and economic mobility is one of our focus areas,” said Jaime Wesolowski, President & CEO of Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc. “The results of this study will inform the strategies and funding decisions we make around economic mobility as we seek to advance health equity strategies that allow all to thrive.”

This two-year study will be called the San Antonio GOALS Initiative – GOALS stands for Generating Opportunities for Achieving Lasting Success.

Empower House will host the cash assistance program that is a part of the study. The cash assistance program will provide monthly cash payments of \$500 to participants via pre-paid debit cards. Participants will be able to use these funds in the ways that make

the most sense to them for their own lives. Empower House SA will also meet with participants to assess the potential impact of cash assistance on their eligibility for other programs.

“At Empower House, our work centers the needs and priorities of Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) community members and their families as we walk alongside them in support,” said Andrea Figueroa, Executive Director of Empower House. “We are honored to be a part of this economic mobility research project and look forward to successfully serving participants and making a lasting impact in their lives and in our greater community.

Family Service will both recruit 575 households to take part in the study and deliver the Mobility Mentoring® program to the cohorts receiving the economic coaching intervention.

The Economic Mobility Study will utilize a Mobility Mentoring informed approach. Mobility Mentoring, developed by Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath) in Boston, MA, is a research-backed coaching method for helping people in poverty climb the economic ladder. This robust model allows participants to set their own goals across five key areas of their lives including: health, family life, career, finances, and education. Participants partner with a mentor, who provides guidance and coaching along the way. The Mobility Mentoring informed coaching program will be hosted by Family Service. The EMPath team will provide consultation and guidance to Family Service throughout the study.

“Family Service is excited to be a partner with MHM along with EMPath, UTSA, and Empower House to assess ways to work with individuals and families in San Antonio who have barriers in their lives caused by social determinants of health factors that affect household income, education, employment, etc. and can cause adverse impacts on their health, family, and community,” said Mary Garr, President & CEO of Family Service. “As a deep-rooted organization within San Antonio for almost 120 years, we see firsthand the impacts of intergenerational poverty and the challenges in trying to break the cycle. This model offers a broad approach to understanding the multifaceted challenges that exist for many individuals and families and help them find ways to overcome them sustainably.”

“EMPath is thrilled to partner with Methodist Health Ministries in this first-of-its-kind study that is truly dedicated to learning how to best support families living in poverty as they navigate their journey towards economic independence,” said Kim Janey,

president & CEO of Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath). “The study has the potential to not only inform how we work with families in the future, but also influence the human services field more broadly.”

A team from UTSA’s College of Health, Community & Policy will be serving as independent third-party evaluators for the study. The research study is being conducted as a randomized control trial over 24 months. This means that participants will be randomly assigned to one of four groups for two years. The four groups are: 1) people selected to participate in a monthly cash assistance program; 2) people selected to participate in Mobility Mentoring, 3) people selected to participate in both Mobility Mentoring and a monthly cash assistance program; 4) people participating in a control group. The research team will administer these surveys to all participants 5 times over the course of the study and will also conduct individualized interviews with participants.

Lynne Cossman, Ph.D., Dean of UTSA’s College for Health, Community and Policy added, “HCAP is proud to be involved in this groundbreaking randomized control trial assessing the viability of cash assistance and mentoring. It is beyond atypical for social scientists to be able to work within an RCT framework. Providing the independent third-party evaluation of this program dovetails perfectly with our mission to improve the health and well-being of San Antonians, South Texans and beyond.”

The economic mobility study is open to residents of Bexar County who are between the ages of 18 – 60, have a household income less than or equal to 150% of the federal poverty level (FPL) and live in one of following targeted Bexar County zip codes: 78201, 78228, 78237, 78207, 78204, 78225, 78214, 78221, 78224, 78226, 78211, 78222, or 78217.

Family Service is currently conducting recruitment and outreach for the San Antonio GOALS Program. Interested individuals may contact Family Service at (210) 431-7550 or visit www.family-service.org/goals.

“We at MHM believe that caring for health means caring for the needs of the whole person—body, mind, and spirit, and, we know that financial stability is a critical determinant in one’s ability to enjoy whole health—from one’s ability to afford health insurance, access preventive care, purchase medications or receive treatment for chronic disease,” said Lavonne Garrison, Chair of the Board of Directors for Methodist

Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc. "This project is a great example of how we are broadening the definition of health care to include championing healthier neighborhoods, supportive relationships, broadband access, food security, and financial stability to strengthen families and communities."

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About Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc.: Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc. is a private, faith-based not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating access to health care for the uninsured through direct services, community partnerships and strategic grant-making in 74 counties across South Texas. Guided by its mission of "Serving Humanity to Honor God," Methodist Healthcare Ministries' vision is to be the leader for improving wellness of the least served. The mission also includes Methodist Healthcare Ministries' one-half ownership of the Methodist Healthcare System, the largest healthcare system in South Texas, which creates a unique avenue to ensure that it continues to be a benefit to the community by providing quality care to all and charitable care when needed. For more information, visit www.mhm.org.

About UTSA's College for Health, Community and Policy: UTSA's College for Health, Community and Policy (HCAP) is dedicated to developing solutions to effect change for complex social issues to improve the well-being of communities and the world. The college is comprised of eight academic departments and one program —criminology and criminal justice, demography, nutrition and dietetics, kinesiology, psychology, public administration, public health, social work and sociology —as well as the Institute for Demographic and Socioeconomic Research, the Policy Studies Center, the Institute for Health Disparities Research, and the Center for Community Based and Applied Health Research. HCaP includes more than 175 faculty and more than 6,800 students pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees. Visit the [College for Health, Community and Policy](#) website to learn more.

About Empower House SA: Empower House SA (formerly The Martinez Street Women's Center) has a 22-year history of providing transformative community health services, youth development programs, and advocacy opportunities that empower

women and girls of color. We envision a world where all women and girls are empowered to transform themselves, their families, and their communities. Our values of solidarity, creativity, empathy, and collaboration guide our major programmatic decisions and daily interactions with community members and partners. We address historical and systematic inequities by advocating with and for San Antonio's BIPOC, low-income residents, that have been systematically disadvantaged, though historically resilient. For more information, visit Empowerhousesa.org

About Family Service: "Empowering individuals and families to transform their lives and strengthen our communities" Family Service has been building strong families since 1903. As the oldest human service nonprofit in San Antonio, Family Service addresses the social determinants of health, those barriers and opportunities created by where people live, learn, work, play, and age. Helping individuals and families from birth to older adults, Family Service is dedicated to helping those in need in San Antonio and over 14 rural counties of Texas. Visit www.family-service.org to learn more about the organization and the 119 years of service to local and area families.

About Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath): EMPath is a nearly 200-year-old organization that dramatically improves the lives of people living in poverty. Because creating economic opportunity is multifaceted, EMPath's approach is too. EMPath offers a unique combination of direct services; a learning network of human services organizations; and research and advocacy for what works. This "virtuous circle" allows each part of the organization's work to inform what it knows, does, and shares with others to seed systemic change. To learn more, visit empathways.org.