



Submitted by Katherine Magnuson, PhD in support of HF 3678

## Background

The Baby's First Years (BFY) study is a multiyear, randomized control trial to test the correlation between poverty reduction and children's brain development during a baby's earliest years of life. It is the first study of its kind in the United States, and the Twin Cities was one of four metropolitan areas selected to participate when the study began in 2018. Participants receive a monthly cash gift. It is being conducted by independent researchers, and local scholars including Michael Georgieff, the Martin Lenz Harrison Land Grant Chair in Pediatrics at the University of Minnesota Medical School. It is funded by a research grant from the National Institutes of Health, as well as other grants.

**In 2016, Minnesota passed legislation that directed the Department of Human Services to disregard the monthly cash gifts when determining the eligibility of participating families for means-tested programs. This legislation expires on January 1, 2022. However, the study is taking longer than anticipated and this exclusionary language needs to be extended.**

## Study Design

Recruitment for the BFY study began in 2018, and 124 mother-baby pairs from across the Twin Cities metropolitan area were recruited to participate. Mothers who had just given birth at designated hospitals and had a family income level below the federal poverty line were eligible for participation. The study involves annual data collection including surveys with the participating mothers and child assessments planned for age 3.

As part of the study, participants were randomly assigned to receive either a high monthly cash gift or a low monthly cash gift. Twin Cities participants either receive a monthly cash gift of \$333 or \$20. Monthly cash transfers are made to participants on a debit card. Mothers are allowed to spend their cash gift however they choose.

## Results

Recruitment for the study is complete, and the first follow-up wave of data collection is currently in process. As we are still in the process of collecting data from our first follow-up visit since recruitment/baseline, and our cash treatment is not fully distributed, results are not yet available. Our long-term goal to be able to measure the impact of the cash gift in the treatment group compared to the control group when the children are 36 months of age.

## Funding

Baby's First Years is funded through grants from the National Institutes of Health, as well as the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Chan-Zuckerberg Initiative, Child Welfare Fund, Ford Foundation, Greater New Orleans Foundation, Heising Simons Foundation, NYC Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity, Perigee Fund, Jacobs Foundation, the JBP Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Weitz Family Foundation, Sherwood Foundation, Smith-Richardson Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and an anonymous donor.

## Research Team

Responsibilities for project direction are shared across six principal investigators, listed here in alphabetical order: Greg Duncan (University of California, Irvine); Nathan Fox (University of Maryland); Lisa Gennetian (New York University); Katherine Magnuson (University of Wisconsin, Madison); Kimberly Noble (Teachers College, Columbia University) and Hirokazu Yoshikawa (New York University).

[www.babysfirstyears.com](http://www.babysfirstyears.com)