



## ▶ A Commitment to Health Equity

In accordance with our commitment to health equity and as a part of our strategic plan, Methodist Healthcare Ministries is committed to address systemic and root causes of inequity to disrupt the cycle of intergenerational poverty. We commit to identify, invest in, and support approaches that address root causes of poverty and financial outcomes for individuals and families living in poverty. Financial Independence focuses on strengthening low-income people's financial inclusion, knowledge, behaviors and opportunities through financial information, education and coaching opportunities, along with capital and asset building to develop financial capability and security.

## ▶ What is Economic Mobility?

At MHM our focus is on upward economic mobility. One way of thinking about this is improvement in economic well-being and differences in financial assets for individuals and families when compared:

- From one point in time to another, especially after major life changes
- From one generation to another
- To others across different places and demographics

Another way to consider economic mobility is in moving out of or further away from chronic and generational poverty through:

- Improved opportunities for health, well-being, and life
- Progress towards achieving the American Dream

Economic Mobility can also include an increased sense of power or autonomy over the trajectory of one's life and/or an increased sense of belonging and being valued in one's community.

## ▶ The Economic Mobility Study

An opportunity presented itself for MHM to invest in community members while working to increase our understanding of economic mobility in Bexar County through an innovative study. The study will examine two economic mobility programs: Mobility Mentoring® and Cash Assistance. The study will provide insight into the assets and needs of the community and will help to inform our economic mobility strategy moving forward.

## ▶ Economic Coaching Program

MHM's Economic Mobility Study will utilize a social determinants of health approach to economic mobility coaching. The approach called Mobility Mentoring® is based on brain-science and was developed by Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath) in Boston, MA. 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. 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.

## ▶ Cash Assistance Program

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 host the cash assistance program and also meet with participants to assess the potential impact of cash assistance on their eligibility for other programs.

## The Research Question

Does layering Mobility Mentoring® into a cash assistance initiative propel families further and/or faster toward economic self-sufficiency than cash assistance or economic coaching alone and what are the contributing factors?

## What We Hope to Learn

We hope to learn how monthly cash assistance and Mobility Mentoring® contribute to financial stability and economic mobility in Bexar County. We also hope to understand which types of programs work best for different types of families and individuals based on their unique characteristics and circumstances.

## Research Study Design

A team at the University of Texas at San Antonio are serving as independent third-party evaluators. 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:

- 125 people will participate in a monthly cash assistance program
- 125 people will participate in Mobility Mentoring
- 125 people will participate in both economic coaching and a monthly cash assistance program
- 200 people will participate in a control group

Participants in the control group will take surveys and receive gift cards for their time. 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.

## Timeline

- Summer of 2022: Recruitment and Application Period
- Fall of 2022: Research Study Begins
- Fall of 2024: Study Completion and Analysis

## Who is Eligible to Participate?

The economic mobility study is open to residents of Bexar County who fit the following criteria.

- Reside in one of the following zip codes:
  - 78201, 78228, 78237, 78207, 78204, 78225, 78214, 78221, 78224, 78226, 78211, 78222, 78217
- Ages: 18 – 60
- Household income: ≤ 150% of FPL
- Additionally, only one individual per household may participate in the study

## How to Apply

Family Service is conducting recruitment and outreach for the Economic Mobility Study. Interested individuals may contact Family Service at (210) 431-7550 or visit [www.family-service.org/goals](http://www.family-service.org/goals). Once a potential participant's application is received, UTSA will randomly assign them to one of the following cohorts: Coaching Only, Cash Only, Cash and Coaching, or the Control Group.