

CCRE: Addressing Disparity Through Assessment and Collaboration

The Center for Community Research and Evaluation (CCRE) is a research center within the College of Arts & Sciences at the University of Memphis. The Center's mission is to partner with community organizations and stakeholders to provide social science research and evaluation support that helps address systemic challenges in the Delta region. The Center combines expertise from multiple fields of study to assess outcomes across a broad spectrum of issues related to society and community to help local organizations and on-campus units leverage the full power of data to collect information, develop programming, and determine impact.

CCRE Partnerships Bringing Transformational Change to the Delta

The Center works primarily in two core areas of focus: education and healthcare. Providing evaluation and contextualized research collaboration to stakeholders in the region helps ensure programs are resonant with community members, funding agencies, and state governments. Our work has helped to guide projects towards intended outcomes and built a collaborative partnership that highlights the diversity of how a university can support a region in need of transformational change.

Facilitating Healthcare Outcomes:

Through partnership with Delta Health Alliance (DHA) of Stoneville, MS, CCRE has collaborated to advance the health education and evaluation landscape of Mississippi. DHA facilitates a nonprofit network of partners across Mississippi that enables better access to healthcare, education, and family services. CCRE primarily works in the 18 counties of northwest Mississippi Delta in alignment with the Universities wider Delta engagement strategy. CCRE has supported DHA in executing large and small grants, community-engaged research, and state, federal, and foundation grants aimed at improving the lives of people of all ages.

CCRE works with practitioners in the DHA Network (including physicians, community organizations, and volunteers) to facilitate chronic disease treatment, prenatal home visitation, nutrition education, and reduction in teenage pregnancy. Our role is to providers in the network and the funders who support DHA with continuous quality control and evaluation of programs rooted in research best practices. The partnership with community organizations has led to impactful services including:

- Establishing a telehealth program to bring specialist care to rural, poor, underserved residents of the region seeking to address the high rates of diabetes through tele-visits of an endocrinologist from Memphis.
- Enabling a regional clinic that is addressing all forms of chronic health conditions for Delta residents while also offering a prescription produce program and other exercise and health related interventions.
- Partnering to assess a state-funded Medicaid demonstration project to reduce the incidence of diabetes and pre-term birth.

One outcome we are excited to promote from this collaboration is a sharp decrease in the teenage pregnancy rate observed in the greater Deer Creek, MS service area. The teen pregnancy rate was reduced by 4.9 per 1,000. Each prevented teenage pregnancy not only changes the trajectory of the young woman's life, education, and career, but also has a positive fiscal impact on the local and state economy. Perhaps most importantly, it provides more young women the opportunity to plan their own future without dramatic disruption.

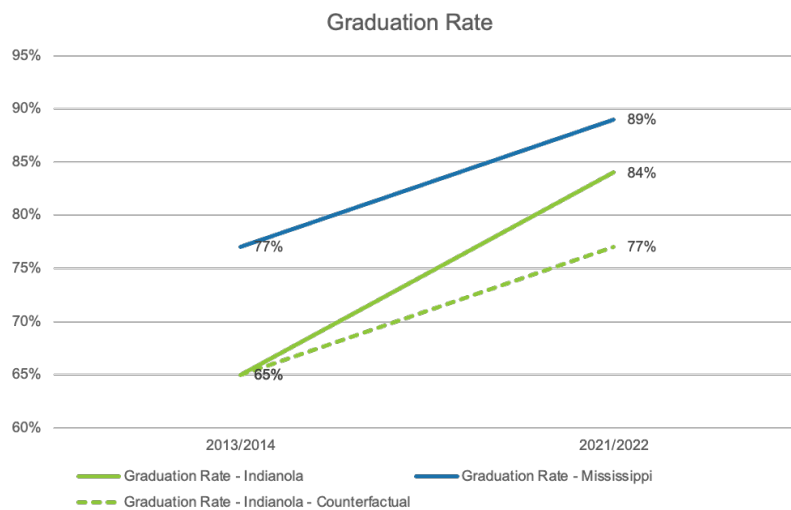
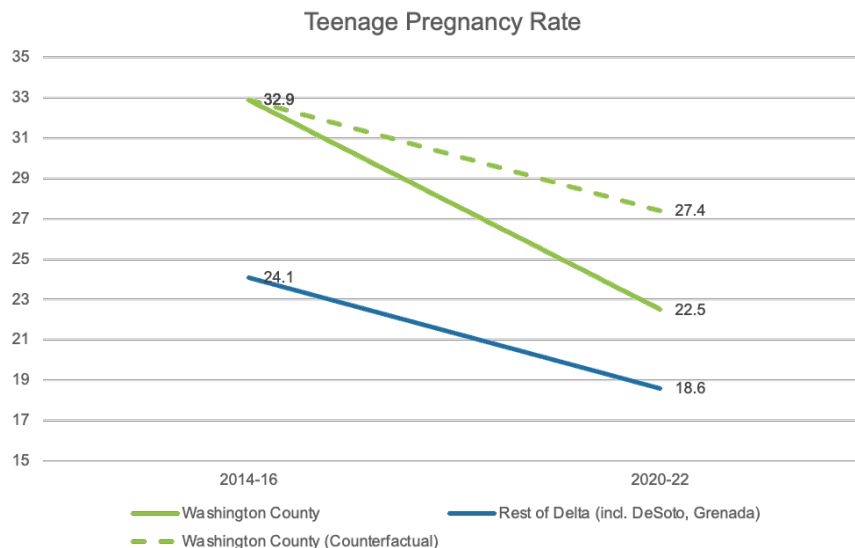
Promotion of Educational and Workforce Opportunities

The University has promoted a strategy that embraces partnership to support one of the largest contiguous regions of EDA-defined persistent poverty counties in the country - East Arkansas, and North Mississippi. A flagship execution of this strategy is Upskill Mid-South, an EDA Good Jobs Grant led by CCRE and a coalition of partners, is bringing transformational workforce development and education opportunities to our region through partnerships with Chambers of Commerce, employers, training organizations, and workforce agencies.

Through the backbone agencies across the tri-state area we are collaborating to provide skills training in advanced manufacturing, construction, logistics, and technology to provide sustainable, well-paying jobs to people across the region. **The project targets adults** ages 18+ who come from underserved communities, including those who are underemployed, unemployed, or eligible adults under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The objectives are to bridge employer-identified skill gaps, address the needs of workers, and eliminate barriers to employment. The goal is for than 1,000 Mid-Southerners to be trained and placed in a sustainable job in the 42-county tri-state footprint by 2025.

While the EDA grant is our most recent work to advance education, our partners have had a great track record with other projects that we have participated in. Three U.S. Department of Education Promise Neighborhood Communities are supported by CCRE: Indianola Promise Community, Deer Creek Promise Community, and Leflore Promise Community. The Promise Neighborhoods Program is a federal place-based initiative striving to turn neighborhoods of concentrated poverty into neighborhoods of opportunity by providing children-oriented community support. CCRE staff evaluate interventions ranging from cradle to career, including preparing 3-4-year-old children for kindergarten, reading and math interventions, preparing students to be at grade level for third grade reading, nutrition through school gardens and cafeteria food offerings, peer mentoring programs, ACT preparation, college readiness, financial literacy, and many more.

Led by the communities, our collaboration is showing returns. For example, Indianola Promise Community has worked for years to coordinate programs that provide services to children throughout their education life. This intervention



strategy has extended from early childhood into adolescence across all areas of academic life. Through the partnership, Indianola saw graduation rates increased significantly, standardized test scores improved significantly, there was an increase in college interest among students, and a total net economic gain for the community was observed.

The CCRE is proud to partner with community leaders and organizations throughout the Delta through research, partnership, and collaboration to make a positive impact on lives in our region.

Links:

Center for Community Research and Evaluation