



YOUTH
POLICY LAB

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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DATA.
POLICY.
PROGRESS.

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

At the University of Michigan, we are surrounded by some of the nation’s leading experts on nearly every social challenge and, as a public institution, we are committed to applying that knowledge to the public good.

Thank you to the dear friends and partners who have collaborated and followed Youth Policy Lab on our journey from our launch back in 2016. Throughout our existence, we have dedicated ourselves to understanding the needs and challenges of our youth-focused partners in the public sector. We continue to offer our evaluation and research expertise to help our partners understand what is effective and impactful and to use this knowledge to make informed policy and program decisions. In short, we help community and government agencies make better decisions by measuring what really works.

Over this past year and a half, we have expanded our hardworking and dedicated staff (from 19 to 24 people) and gone through a leadership transition at YPL. With Andrea Plevak’s departure as Executive Director, Megan Foster Friedman has stepped into a new role as Managing Director, and Carrie Hammerman has joined the team as Director of Strategic Partnerships. During this period, we have also developed a new strategic plan with an updated mission, vision, values, and strategic goals; launched a new summer internship program (ASPIRE); and engaged in over 20 partnerships in Lansing, Detroit, and Ann Arbor, making great strides in research and evaluation efforts focused in the areas of Early Starts, Thriving Adolescents, and Transitions to Adulthood.

We are eager to continue the great work of the Lab and will do so with our partners at the heart of our work. YPL is committed to Data. Policy. Progress.

Best,



Brian Jacob
Co-director

Robin Jacob
Co-director



Megan Foster Friedman
Managing Director



Carrie Hammerman
Director of Strategic Partnerships



Data. Policy. Progress.



OUR RESEARCH AT A GLANCE

FUNDING FOR YPL

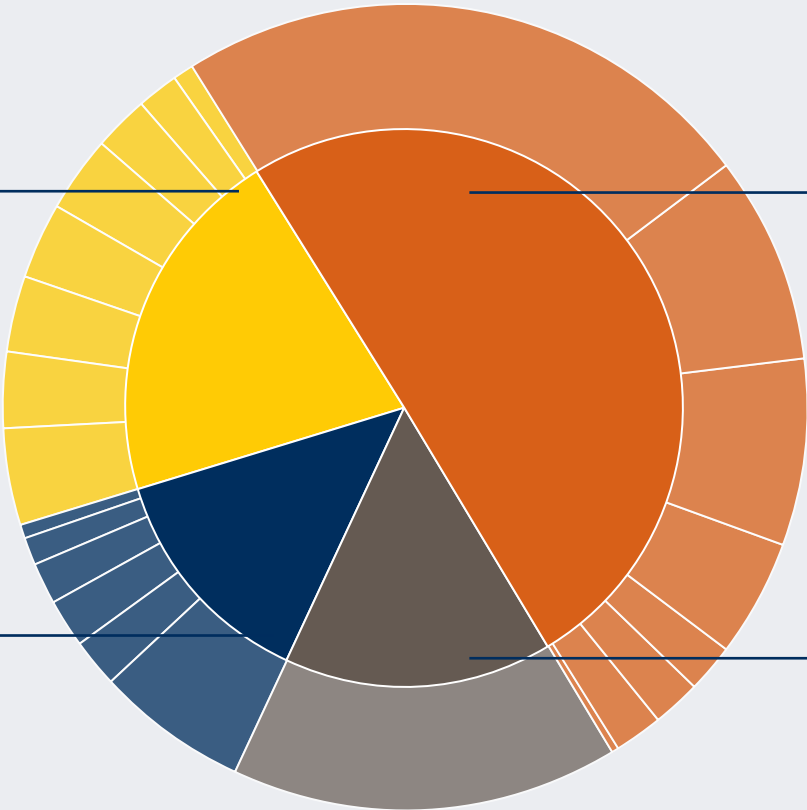
YPL received \$3.25 million in new grant funding in FY 2023

TRANSITIONS TO ADULthood \$677K

Michigan Justice Fund & Public Welfare Foundation	Michigan Data & Policy Fellow: MDLEO Justice Fellow
Kresge Foundation Ballmer Group LLC Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation	Michigan Data & Policy Fellow: MiLEAP Sixty by 30 Office
Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce	Strategic Data Partnership Continuation - YPL & Detroit Chamber
Washtenaw Intermediate School District	Washtenaw County CTE Partnership

THRIVING ADOLESCENTS \$432K

TRAILS at Tides Center	Evaluation of TRAILS Tier 1 Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Programming TRAILS Supplemental Analysis
Michigan Department of Education	MDE OCTE Opportunity Gap, MDE OCTE Program Data Needs Assessment, and MDE OCTE CTE Access
Council of Michigan Foundations	Michigan Poverty Task Force Action Roadmap



\$1.64M EARLY STARTS

Arnold Foundation	Reading Partners Expanded Evaluation
Michigan Health Endowment Fund	EMR-Integrated Early On E-Fax Referral Project
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services	Healthy Moms Healthy Babies Pilot Project Evaluation Strong Beginnings
W.K. Kellogg Foundation	Michigan Data & Policy Fellow: Maternal Infant Health Program
Fund For Public Schools	Next Generation Community Schools: Y1-3

\$500K SPECIAL PROJECT

Michigan Department of Education	Examination of Education Governance in Michigan
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Within each category of work, projects are listed in descending order based on the size of the grant.

As always, YPL is thankful for the ongoing support from the following contributors:

- U.S. Department of Education - Institute of Education Sciences (IES)
- Arnold Ventures
- U.S. Department of Education - Education Innovation and Research (EIR)
- National Science Foundation
- Max M. & Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation, Inc.
- Health and Human Services (HHS) - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- Smith Richardson Foundation, Inc.

RESEARCH & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

HIGH 5S

YPL's High 5s Program Sparks Joy and Enthusiasm for Math in Young Children

High 5s is a game-based, supplemental, small-group, kindergarten math program developed in 2013 as a collaboration between YPL and MDRC. A study of High 5s in New York City in 2014-15 showed that the program led to two and a half months of additional math learning for kindergarten students.

Following the success of the original program, in November 2023 Chancellor David C. Banks announced that 20 Community Schools in New York had been selected to participate in the Next Generation Community Schools (NGCS) pilot program, in which the High 5s program would be a key component. The High 5s program provides extended math learning at these 20 pilot NGCS community schools.

YPL continues to play a critical role in the program, supporting implementation and co-leading professional development for the High 5s Community School Directors and facilitators who conduct the small-group math clubs.

We also measure fidelity to the High 5s model and the quality of implementation.



RESEARCH & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

ASPIRE SUMMER PROGRAM

ASPIRE Program Enhances Research and Policy Skills for Spelman and Morehouse Students

In 2023, YPL developed and launched ASPIRE (Applied Social Policy Internship and Research Experience), a summer pipeline program for rising college juniors and seniors from Spelman College (a renowned historically Black women's college in Atlanta) to advance their quantitative social science research skills. With support and engagement from the Ford School of Public Policy, the Institute for Social Research, and Rackham Graduate School, the great success of the program in its first year led to an expansion of ASPIRE in 2024 to also include students from Morehouse College (the brother institution to Spelman).

Through ASPIRE, program participants gain an understanding of the types of applied questions social scientists pursue, the methods researchers use to answer these questions, and the ways in which research can influence policy, improve the delivery of services and, ultimately, improve the lives of people. Students in the program:

- Develop and present a research project in one of YPL's core policy areas (early childhood education, maternal and infant health, adolescent mental health, career technical education, or workforce development)
- Attend weekly professional workshops intended to deepen their research and data skills and support their project development
- Engage in weekly check-ins with faculty mentors who provide ongoing feedback on their individual projects
- Attend meetings with University of Michigan faculty as well as policy professionals in government, nonprofit, philanthropy, and private sectors to discuss policy and research career paths
- Shadow a YPL project team, including attending meetings with external partners and stakeholders.

In addition to the research and learning components of ASPIRE, participating students also enjoy excursions to Detroit as well as get to know students involved in other summer programs at the University of Michigan.



Improving Michigan’s Maternal and Infant Health

Youth Policy Lab’s commitment to youth and families begins with our focus on maternal and infant health. We partner with state agencies and the medical community to support the well-being of mothers and infants and set the stage for positive long-term health outcomes for all. Our evaluation and research have been vital in increasing understanding in the field as well as informing effective public policies.



YPL’s Research Informs the Expansion of Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies across Michigan

Principal Investigator: Robin Jacob

The Youth Policy Lab has concluded its evaluation of the **MIHP Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies pilot**, an enhancement of the Maternal Infant Health Program (MIHP) designed to address social determinants of health for the families enrolled in the program. Through this initiative, nearly 60 MIHP agencies

received additional reimbursement for care coordination and enhanced home visiting services. The evaluation found positive impacts on families’ self-reported social determinants of health, particularly among Black families and those experiencing their first pregnancy. These results helped inform a successful effort to include funding in the 2024-2025 state budget to expand these enhanced services to more than 60 MIHP agencies.



Additional Outreach Increases Home Visiting Enrollment for Maternal Infant Health Program

Principal Investigator: Robin Jacob

A 2021 YPL pilot found that people who received additional outreach from community health workers were significantly more likely to enroll in Michigan’s Maternal Infant Health Program (MIHP), a statewide home visiting program for pregnant people and infants. In 2023, YPL launched a new version of this

project focused on providing additional MIHP outreach in hospital settings immediately after birth. We have begun to study enrollment at three hospitals in the state using this approach. A paper on the pilot findings was published in *Social Services Review* in June 2024.



YPL Pilots Intervention to Improve Access to Early Intervention Services Across Michigan

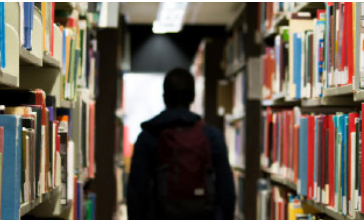
Principal Investigator: Catherine Asher

YPL has partnered with the Michigan Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics to streamline referrals for young children at risk of developmental delay to Early On Michigan, a free statewide early intervention program. Since its launch in January 2023, a cohort of 6 pediatric clinics across Michigan have

trained physicians on the Early On program and implemented a new eFax template for referrals into their electronic medical record system. A second cohort of clinics will implement the same approach this summer. YPL will assess the impact of these changes on the referral process, with the aim to eventually improve access and service provision for Michigan’s children through a state-wide rollout.

Supporting Youth Mental Health

Mental health concerns are a significant struggle for many youth these days. Along with families, schools play a special and significant role in identifying and aiding students in need of support. YPL has been engaging in research and analysis of various tools and trainings to help education decision makers understand what is effective and how to best use mental health resources to support students.



YPL Finds Variation In Teen Depression Rates

Principal Investigator: Robin Jacob

YPL’s analysis of Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ) data revealed that there are great variations in depression rates in the youth population nationwide when disaggregated by gender, LGBTQ+ status, and race. The research also highlighted inconsistencies in the identification of students with symptoms of depression when using PHQ-2 vs PHQ-9 screening tools. These findings have

implications for district policymakers and school mental health professionals determining their approach to supporting student populations.



New Phase in Year 4 of Evaluating Project AWARE

Principal Investigator: Robin Jacob

Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) is a Michigan Department of Education (MDE) & Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) partnership initiative funded by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). As evaluation partners for Project AWARE, YPL continues to examine efforts by state and local partners

to better support students’ mental health. Now in the fourth year of the grant, YPL expanded its scope of work by launching a parent survey in participating schools to gauge parental attitudes toward youth mental health. Additionally, YPL facilitated focus groups with parents and students to provide insight into the perceptions and experiences of mental health services among students and families within Project AWARE communities, and capture sentiments on progress made throughout the initiative.



YPL Continues Evaluations of School-Based Mental Health Services

Principal Investigator: Robin Jacob

YPL continues to partner with the TRAILS program (Transforming Research into Action to Improve the Lives of Students) on several youth mental health projects. In the 2022-23 school year, we conducted a randomized control trial to explore the impact of TRAILS’ Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum on students’ self-reported social-emotional learning and mental health in two

intermediate school districts in Michigan. Data analysis was finalized in March 2024 and a comprehensive summary report will be shared with TRAILS in summer 2024. While the overall impact of the curriculum was small, YPL has noted important positive impacts for Black students and Black girls, in particular.

Additionally, YPL has focused on evaluating the impact of TRAILS’ Early Intervention (TRAILS-EI) program, which provides training and support for cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) groups in schools. Since January 2023, the project has implemented TRAILS-EI in 47 schools in Detroit Public Schools Community District. Results from this study will inform and shape best practices for improving student mental health in academic settings.

Strengthening Michigan's Talent Pipeline

Youth Policy Lab is invested in Michigan's emerging workforce by researching and evaluating programs and policies focused on supporting young people and those in early adulthood. Our areas of interest include workforce development, career and technical education (CTE), post-secondary education, and improving economic opportunities and outcomes for justice-involved individuals.



YPL Examines Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Washtenaw County
Principal Investigator: Brian Jacob

In 2022, YPL published a policy brief examining access to career and technical education (CTE) for public high school students in Michigan. The brief identified disparities in CTE access and participation based on race and socioeconomic factors. The participation gaps appear to be largely driven by differences in CTE supply – especially the number of programs available in a student's home school – rather than varying demand across demographic groups. Following the publication of this brief, the Washtenaw Intermediate School District (WISD) asked YPL to replicate the statewide analyses to examine inequities in access to CTE in Washtenaw County. The Washtenaw analyses revealed similar findings. At a county level, White students and Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) ineligible students have access to more CTE programs on average than Black, Hispanic, and FRL-eligible students. In the South and West Washtenaw Consortium, most students have access to over 14 CTE programs, though many require travel to another building and district. This is in contrast to two districts that serve lower income students where access is only available to two or three CTE programs. The report is being reviewed by WISD administrators and may have implications for future local CTE policy development.



YPL's Research and Facilitation Helps Michigan's State and Local Career and Technical Education (CTE) Administrators Analyze and Address Equity Gaps
Principal Investigator: Brian Jacob

YPL has facilitated Michigan's participation in a national workshop series developed by Advance CTE designed to identify gaps in CTE participation by gender, race/ethnicity, and other federally-identified special populations. The 6-hour, in-person workshop helps local CTE administrators examine which groups are overrepresented or underrepresented in each of their CTE programs and work collaboratively to discuss the root causes of these gaps and develop evidence-based plans for addressing them.

In another project, YPL used data about students, schools, and districts to create a predicted CTE participation rate for every district in the state and then compared these predicted rates to actual CTE participation rates to identify districts with especially above- or below-predicted engagement. The Lab then convened over 80 CTE administrators from across the state to discuss the strategies used by districts with high engagement, the challenges faced by districts with low engagement, and ways that the state could target resources to best support districts with low participation. The state Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE) has incorporated the feedback from these discussions into their annual budget proposal for the Michigan Legislature.

PUBLICATIONS, ARTICLES, & PODCASTS

Youth Policy Lab continues to influence the sector by getting the word out about our research and evaluation efforts. In addition to sharing our findings with our partners, we extend our reach through important articles and reports in both academic and mainstream publications. It is our hope that through these publications and speaking opportunities, policy makers in communities across Michigan and beyond may learn about the results of our research and this will influence their decision making regarding policies and programs that impact children and families.



[The Impact of Modest Cash Incentives on Home Visiting Enrollment and Participation](#), American Journal of Health Economics, June 2024
Authors: Robin Jacob, and Megan Foster Friedman

[Increasing Home Visiting Enrollment through Enhanced Outreach](#), Social Science Review, June 2024
Authors: Robin Jacob, Megan Foster Friedman, and Olivia Meeks

[Transitional kindergarten offers lessons for Michigan early learning investments](#), Bridge Michigan, June 2024
Authors: Brian Jacob, and Christina Weiland

[Understanding Heterogeneous Patterns of Family Engagement with Educational Technology to Inform School-Family Communication in Linguistically Diverse Communities](#), Educational Researcher, April 2024
Authors: Catherine Armstrong Asher, Ethan Scherer, James S. Kim, Johanna Norshus Tvedt

[The Effects of the Flint Water Crisis on the Educational Outcomes of School-age Children](#), Science Advances, March 2024
Authors: Sam Trejo, Gloria Yeomans-Maldonado, and Brian Jacob

[Forging a Path to College Persistence: An Experimental Evaluation of the Detroit Promise Path Program](#), Educational Researcher, April 2024
Authors: Stacey L. Brockman, Jasmina Camo-Biogradlija, Alyssa Ratledge, Rebekah O'Donoghue, Micah Y. Baum, and Brian Jacob

[Getting free college right](#), Bridge Michigan, February 2024
Authors: Brian Jacob, and Kevin Stange

[Variation in Mathematics Content Coverage, Instructional Grouping, and Representational Strategies: An Analysis of Three US Kindergarten Mathematics Textbooks](#), Elementary School Journal December, 2023
Authors: Katja Robinson, Deb Hubbard, Robin Jacob, Anna Erickson, Mimi Engel

[Lessons about Tutoring and Addressing Learning Loss from Reading Partners](#), Evidence First Podcast, December 8, 2023
Guests: Dean Elson, and Robin Jacob

[The Design of Making Pre-K count and High Fives: Two-Stage, Multiyear Random Assignment at Different Levels](#), Evaluation Review, March 2023
Authors: Shira Mattera, Marie-Andree Somers, Robin Jacob, and Pamela Morris-Perez

The Youth Policy Lab Welcomed a New Cohort of
Data and Policy Fellows in FY 2023-24

- YPL works with partners to place early-career policy professionals in full time roles with state and local agencies in Michigan. Through this program, the Fellows:
- Offer technical assistance and strategic support to achieve specific and measurable improvements in social policies and state programs that impact Michigan’s youth, their families, and their communities.
 - Provide context around service delivery that informs YPL’s research and analysis work.
 - Gain valuable and practical experience to advance their skills and knowledge to support them in their career paths.

YPL is thankful for the partnership and support of the following foundations and agencies who have engaged in the Michigan Data and Policy Fellowship program:











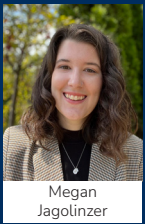
Kaj Althaus

Advancing Juvenile Justice Data Quality and Systems Statewide
Kaj worked with the Statistical Research Division of The State Court Administrative Office (SCAO), and advanced strategic priorities guided by the recommendations of the 2021 Juvenile Justice Task Force. His work included analyzing the fees justice-involved juveniles and their families pay throughout the juvenile court process to determine if they were consistent and equitable, as well as a landscape analysis of SCAO’s juvenile justice data systems. He also researched risk screening assessment tools, which is important information for counties to have as they are all mandated to use these tools by October 2024.



Dipita Das

Supporting Maternal Infant Health Program Advancements
In partnership with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), Pita has been analyzing Maternal Infant Health Program (MIHP) provider survey data to help agencies understand how to assist families transitioning out of the program. In addition, she has developed educational materials to increase culturally appropriate outreach and intervention measures.



Megan Jagolinzer

Expanding School-Based Mental Health Supports to Detroit Students
Megan is embedded within the Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD), working directly with school mental health professionals and engaging in survey implementation and data analysis, to support a YPL-led evaluation of the TRAILS (Transforming Research into Action to Improve the Lives of Students) curriculum that is being implemented in over 80 school buildings. The TRAILS curriculum trains school mental health professionals on principles of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and mindfulness, so school staff can equip students with skills to manage their mental health.



Sophie Ordway

Improving Employment Outcomes for Justice Involved Residents in Michigan
Sophie is working with the Office of Prosperity within the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity (MDLEO) to address key priorities for the agency including: expanding apprenticeship opportunities for Justice Involved Individuals (JII), facilitating clean state or expungement process improvements, expanding housing access, and, working with advocacy organizations to identify and break down economic barriers for JII.

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Youth Policy Lab

The Youth Policy Lab, a research center of the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy and the Institute for Social Research, envisions a world where partner-driven research drives positive social change. Our mission is to inform public policy decisions by analyzing data and evaluating programs to help our partners answer their most pressing questions.

- We use data to develop solutions to social problems and inequities.
- We center partners in our work to generate actionable insights.
- We take a practical approach, adapting our methods to meet real-world conditions.
- We hold our work to the highest standards of quality.
- We communicate our findings widely to shape policy and practice.

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