



THE **LAB** @ DC

The Lab @ DC: Stronger Evidence for a Stronger DC

Moving Evidence-Based Policy: From Rhetoric to Reality

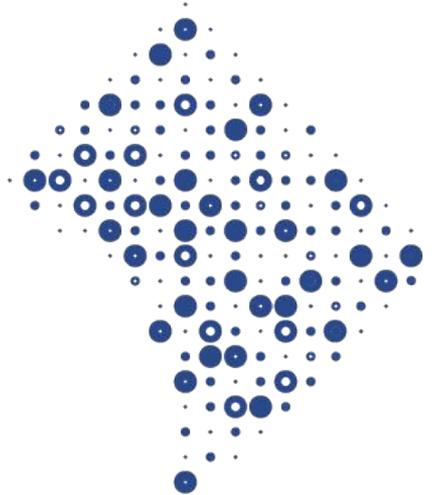
Sam Quinney, Director **The Lab @ DC**

November 4, 2019

SAFER,
STRONGER
DC



d.



Listen

Design

Do Something

Test

Decide

Repeat



THE **LAB** @ DC

What We Do:

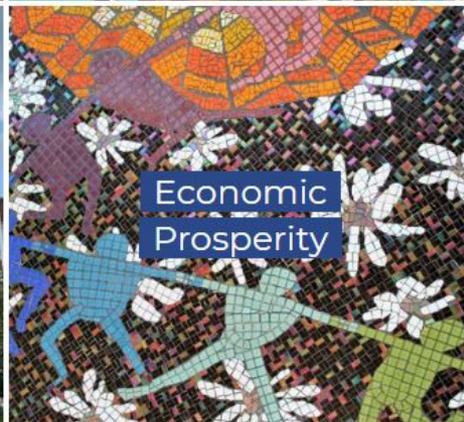
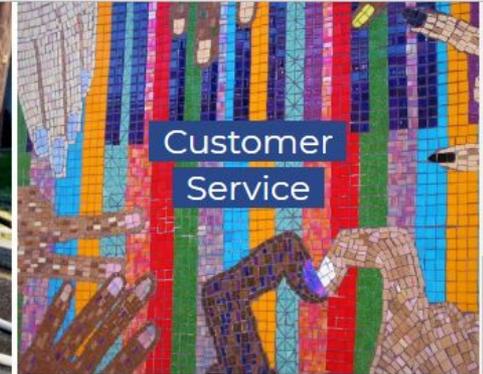
Randomized
Evaluation

Predictive
Modeling

Resident-
Centered
Design

Administrative
Data
Analysis

What We Do:



Who We Are



Julia Greenberg
Research Assistant



Chrysanthi Hatzimasoura
Senior Social Scientist



Rebecca Johnson
Data Scientist



Tim Madden
Podcast Intern



Nat Mammo
Data Scientist



Vicky Mei
Data Scientist



Karissa Minnich
Senior Operations Analyst



Namita Mody
Operations Analyst

Here's An Example:

Anchor Management: A Field Experiment Encouraging TANF Participants to Meet Program Deadlines

Katherine N. Gan, Karissa Minnich, Ryan T. Moore, & David Yokum

Pre-Analysis Plan: <https://osf.io/dsh3q/>

Paper: <https://osf.io/5fjvx/>

Project Page: <http://thelabprojects.dc.gov/benefits-reminder-letter>

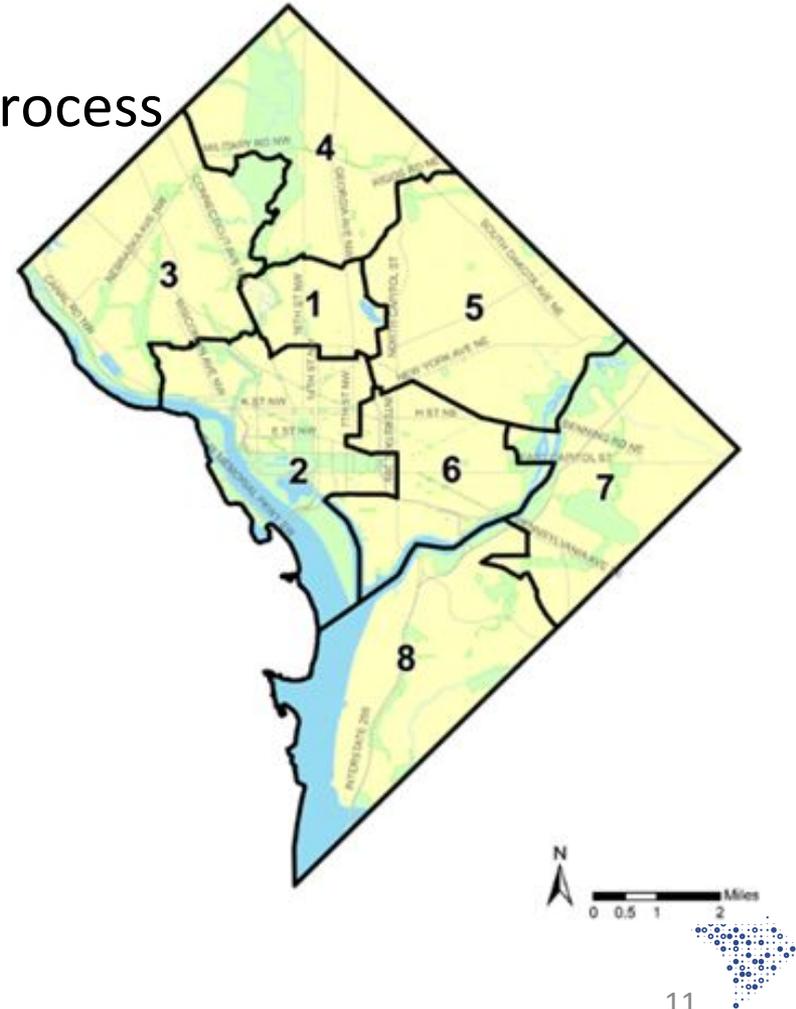
Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) in DC

- Federal block grant:
 - Income, job training, ...
- 12,000 low-income families
 - 4% of DC's population
- 53% live in Wards 7 & 8
- Emphasis on family stability
 - continuity → inc stability
 - avoid reapplication (longest)



DC TANF Experience

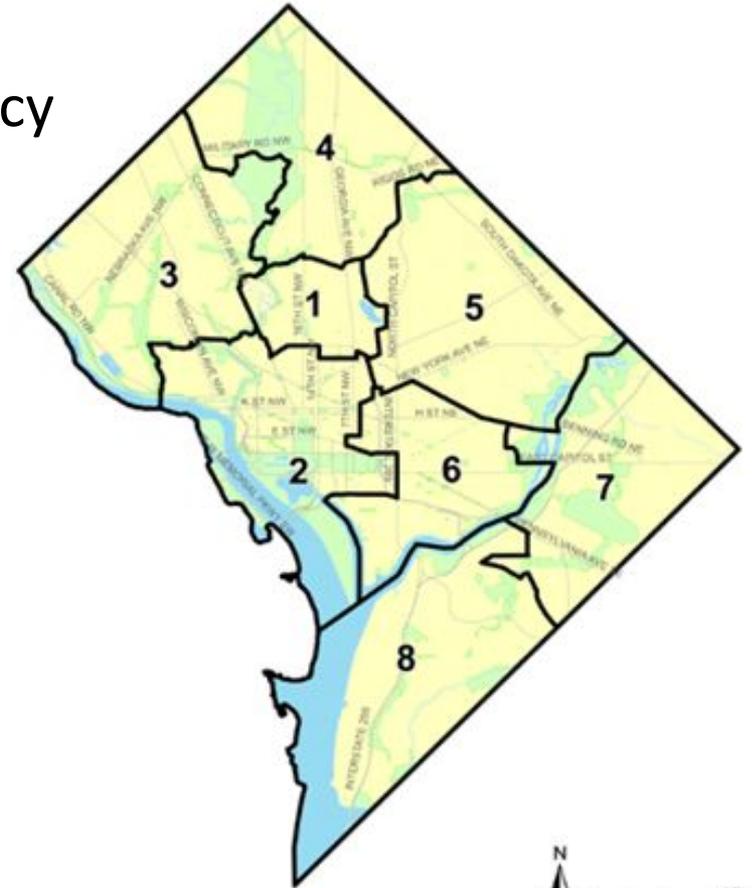
- Very generous
- Change in annual recertification process
- First **recertification** (2017)
- Successful recert: families
 - Continuous benefits
 - Quick process
 - More favorable eligibility rules
- Successful recert: DHS
 - Relatively easy to process
 - Fewer notices
 - Fewer system actions
 - Less foot traffic at Service Centers



DC TANF Experience

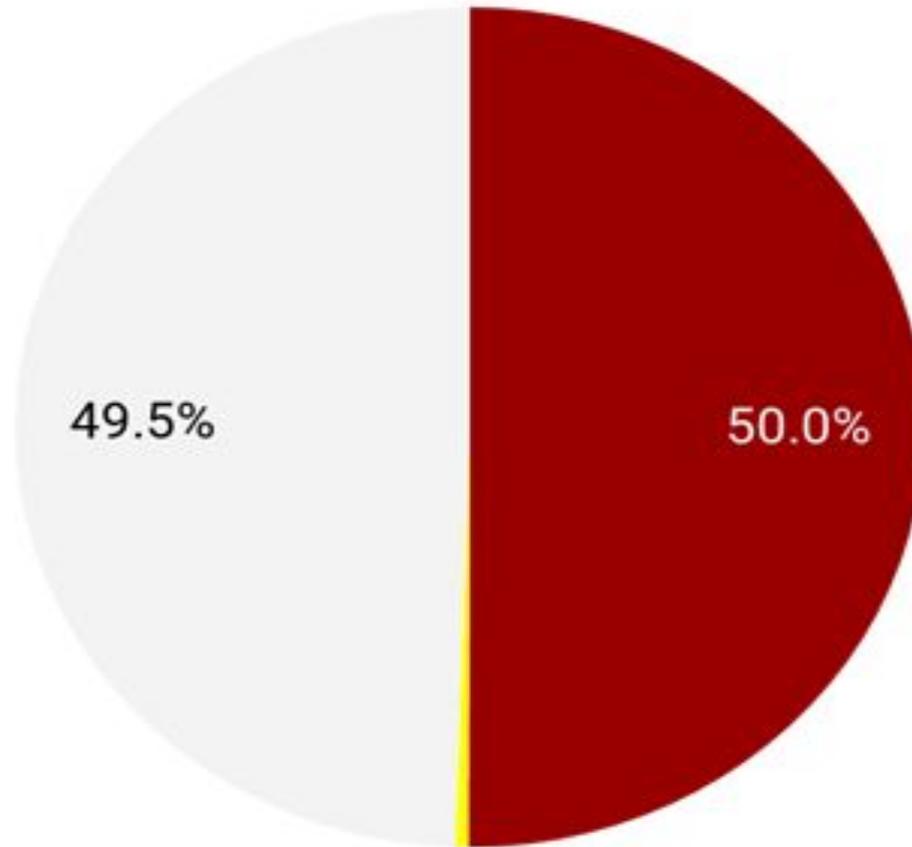
So, encourage recert!

- Very generous
- Change annual recertification policy
- First **recertification** (2017)
- Successful recert: families
 - Continuous benefits
 - Quick process
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Recertification & Reapplication Rates

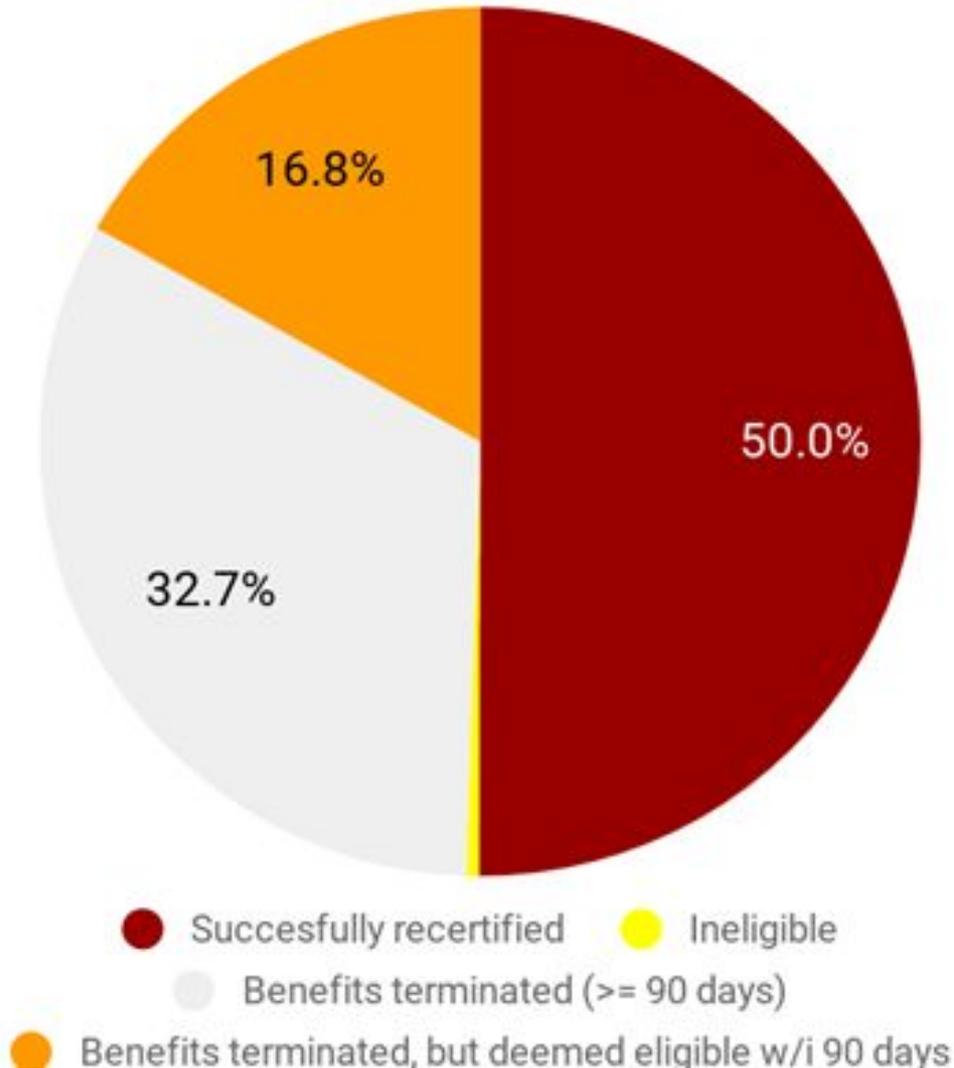
2017 Q1



- Successfully recertified
- Ineligible
- Did not complete recertification

Recertification & Reapplication Rates

2017 Q1



Let's Test!

Can a reminder letter

(designed with insights from behavioral science)

**increase timely TANF
recertifications?**



Standard Communications

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



Notice Date: 10/29/2016
Account ID: [REDACTED]
Person ID: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
WASHINGTON, DC [REDACTED]

FORT DAVIS SERVICE CENTER(671)
3851, Alabama Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20020
Phone number: (202) 645-4500
Fax Number: (202) 645-6205

Subject: **Cash Assistance Renewal**

Dear [REDACTED],

Your eligibility for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families needs to be reviewed. Without this review your benefits will be terminated. We need the information listed below so that we can determine whether you are still eligible to get benefits:

- We need proof that you are still a District resident
- We need to verify school attendance for 18 and 19 year old household members.
- We need to verify if anyone moved-in to your household.

Please bring the information to FORT DAVIS SERVICE CENTER(671) on [REDACTED]/2016. If you cannot go to this Service Center you may go to any of the Service Centers on the attached Service Center Address sheet.

If You Cannot Keep the Appointment

If you cannot keep the appointment, please contact (202) 727-5355 or before 12/2016 or you may go to any of the Service Centers listed on the attached form. If you fail to keep your scheduled appointment, we cannot determine if you are eligible for benefits. Without this review your benefits may be terminated.

ESA Manual Citation: Part II, Chapter 2, Section 2.3

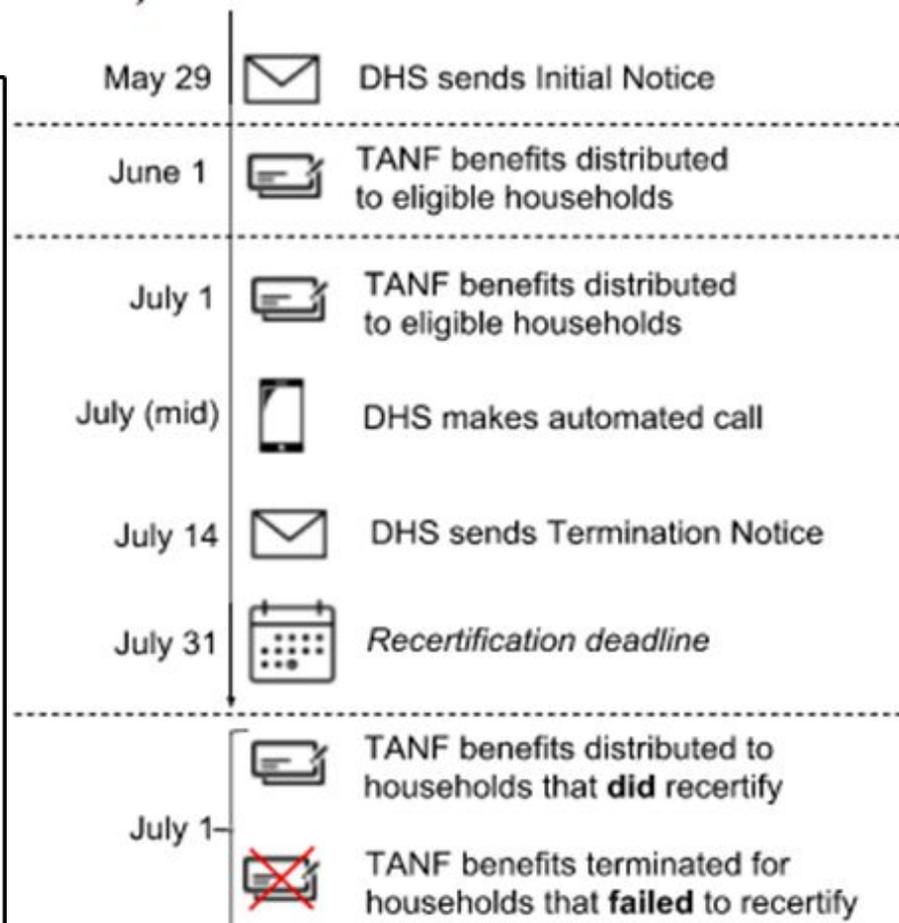
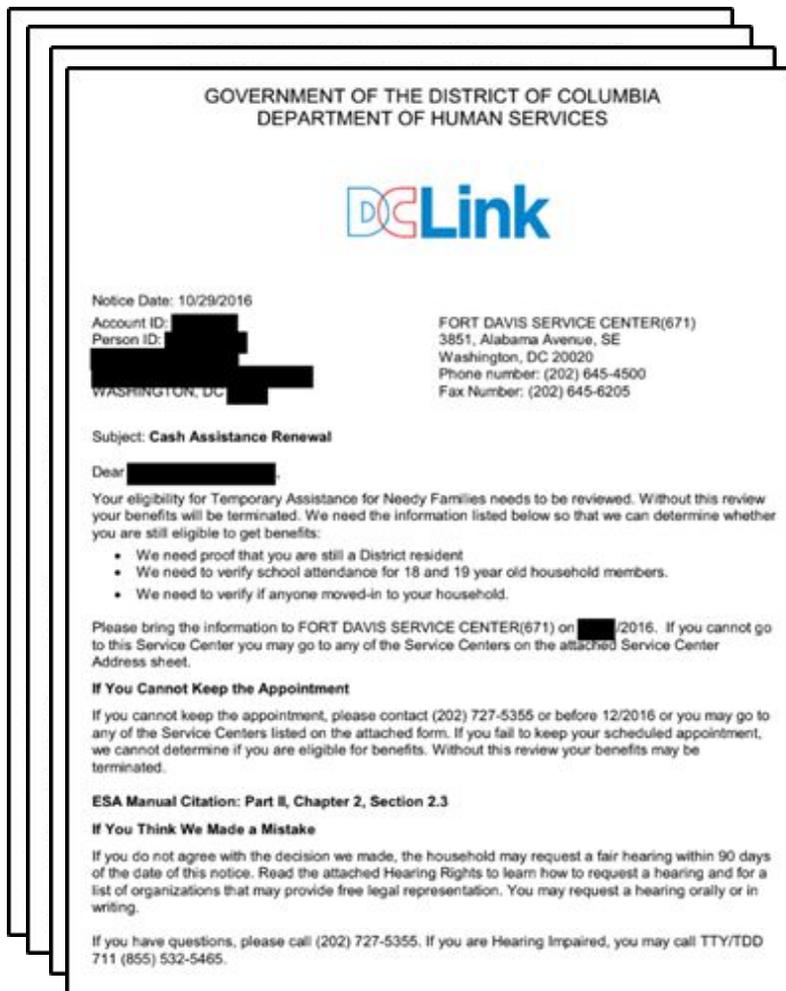
If You Think We Made a Mistake

If you do not agree with the decision we made, the household may request a fair hearing within 90 days of the date of this notice. Read the attached Hearing Rights to learn how to request a hearing and for a list of organizations that may provide free legal representation. You may request a hearing orally or in writing.

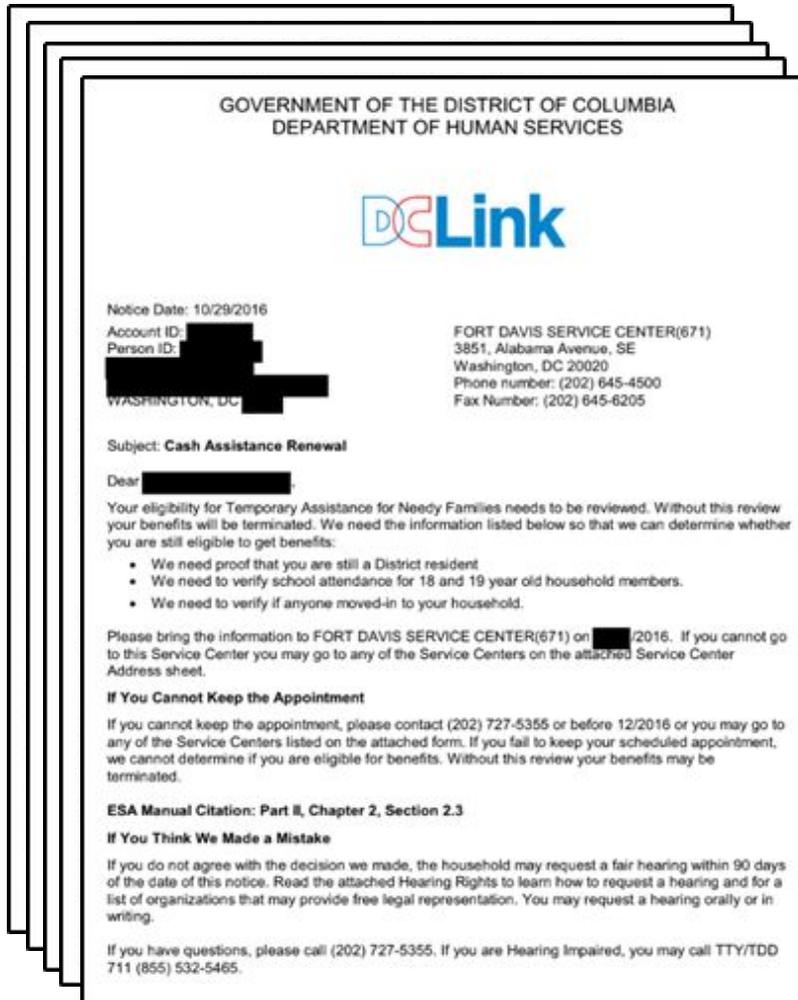
If you have questions, please call (202) 727-5355. If you are Hearing Impaired, you may call TTY/TDD 711 (855) 532-5465.



Standard Communications



Standard Communications



+ Behaviorally-Informed Reminder Letter

Your family's cash benefits will expire this July unless you renew your TANF eligibility

Research shows that people are more likely to complete a task once they've planned each step. We've designed this reminder to help you plan your TANF renewal visit. Just 3 easy steps:

- 1. Set a Date**
Come meet with our team
You can renew your benefits any day before they expire in
July 2017
Helpful Hint: You can renew your benefits any day before they expire. We are here to serve you Mon - Fri (8:15am - 4:45pm) with extra hours on Wed (8:15am - 8:00pm).
- 2. Get Your Documents Together**
 - Proof of DC Residency
For example: DC License, Lease, Rent Receipt, or Bills

You may also want to bring

<p>Do you have children at home who are ages 16 -18?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Signed form from their school proving they are enrolled</p> <p>Did you have any income last month?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> All pay stubs from the last month</p> <p>Do you have any bank accounts?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> All statements from the last month</p>	<p>Do you have other children that you need to add to your TANF household?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Proof the children live with you For example: a school form or 2 statements saying the children live with you, written by people not related to you</p>
--	--
- 3. Plan Your Travel**
How will you get here?
 Metro
 Bus
 Walk
 Drive
 Other _____

Helpful Hint: You can renew benefits at any of our locations. <http://dtha.dc.gov/service/find-service-center-near-you>

A clear statement of consequences at the top gives people a reason to keep reading

Completing checkboxes leads to feelings of accomplishment as people go through the process

Asking people to plan ahead makes it more likely that they'll follow through. The question becomes "How will I recertify?" rather than "Will I recertify?"

Your family's cash benefits will expire this September unless you renew your TANF eligibility

Research shows that people are more likely to complete a task once they've planned each step. We've designed this reminder to help you plan your TANF renewal visit. Just 3 easy steps:

- 1. Set a Date**
Come meet with our team
You can renew your benefits any day before they expire in
September 2017
Helpful Hint: You can renew your benefits any day before they expire. We are here to serve you Mon - Fri (8:15am - 4:45pm) with extra hours on Wed (8:15am - 8:00pm).
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 - You may also want to bring
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- 3. Plan Your Travel**
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Breaking the task into discrete action steps makes the desired response clear and less overwhelming

Information is prioritized through sequencing and font choice

A map makes it easier for people to visualize how they'll complete their goal

	Recertified	Difference
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Standard Communications	39.6%	
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+ Behaviorally-Informed Reminder Letter	45.4%	5.8pp*
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*p<0.05



Recertified

Difference

Standard Communications

39.6%

5.8pp*

**+ Behaviorally-Informed
Reminder Letter**

45.4%

*p<0.05

Specific Date

44.8%

1.6pp

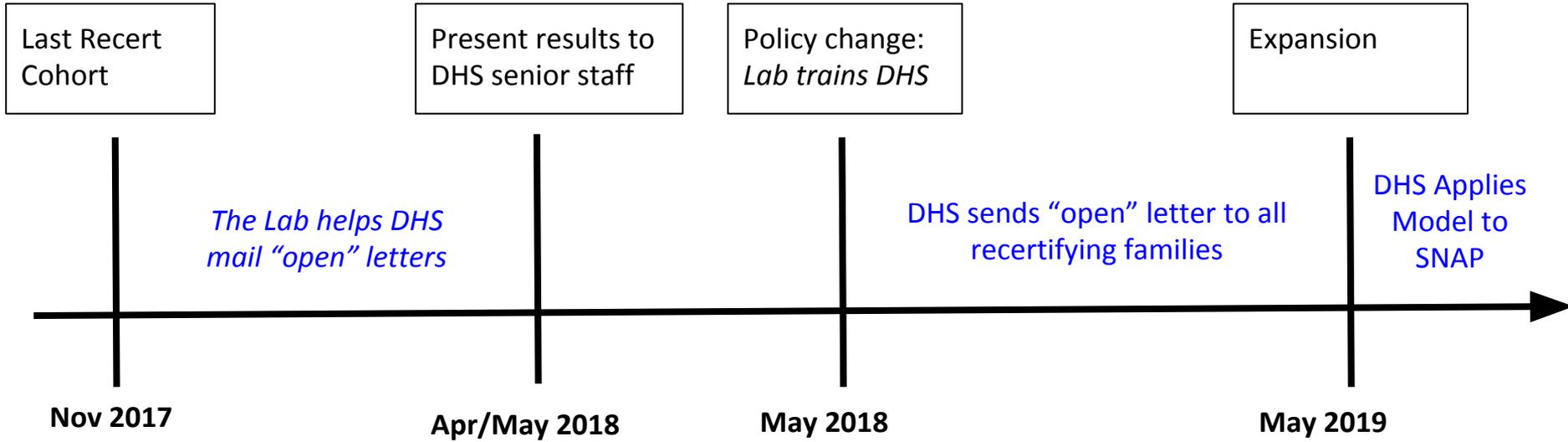
Open Date

46.4%

If all households in 2017 were sent the best performing reminder letter, an additional

766 families

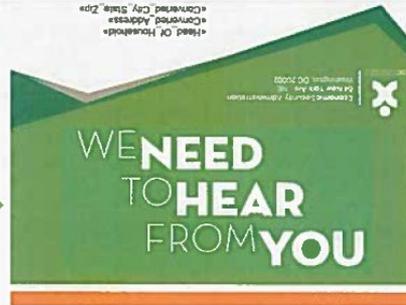
would have recertified & continued their
TANF participation uninterrupted



Example of Mailer – Outside



Tri-fold design is simple and easy to mail.



Logos prompt brand recognition.

Color helps the mailer stick out in a stack of mail. It is green to distinguish it from the TANF mailer.

Envelope message includes a key ask.

Example of Mailer – Inside

A clear statement of consequences at the top gives people a reason to keep reading.

Your family's District of Columbia (District) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits will expire this **«Recert_Day»** unless recertify.

Research shows that more people are more likely to complete a task once they've planned each step. We've designed this mailer to help you plan your SNAP recertification visit. Just 3 easy steps.

1. SET A DATE

Your recertification due date is
«Recert_Month», «Recert_Day minus 15 days»

IMPORTANT: You can renew your benefits any day before they expire by visiting a service center or making your documents. We are here to serve you Monday - Friday (7:00 am - 4:00 pm).

2. GET YOUR DOCUMENTS TOGETHER

The SNAP recertification process asks you to submit your recertification application form and supporting documentation. If you mail in your recertification application, you should include photocopies of the following documents. If you recertify in person, bring these documents with you.

YOU MAY ALSO WANT TO BRING:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>Proof of Identity</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> License or Photo ID, birth certificate, and/or SSN</p> <p>Proof of Residency</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Current lease, renter's card, utility bill, rent receipt (less than the last 30 days)</p> | <p>Did you recently leave a job?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Include proof of employment termination, final gross wages</p> <p>Have your expenses increased by more than \$25?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Include renter's bill, children's tuition or books</p> |
|---|---|

3. TURN IN YOUR SNAP RECERTIFICATION DOCUMENTS AND COMPLETE THE REQUIRED INTERVIEW

If you had or did not receive it, you can get a new one by visiting any DHS service center.

- Please mail in your SNAP recertification application form before the due date to be sure to include your phone number and any personal/financial information.
- After DHS receives your recertification application form, expect a phone call from a DHS representative to complete a required interview over the phone.

Important Note: You can also receive benefits in person at any of our locations and always have the option to complete your interview in person. <http://dhs.dc.gov/locations> to view near you.



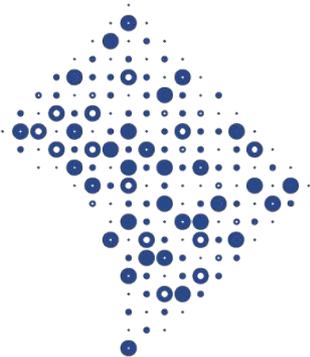
Breaking the task into discrete action steps makes the desired response clear and less overwhelming.

Information is prioritized through sequencing and font choice.

Completing check boxes leads to feelings of accomplishment as people go through the process.

Asking people to plan ahead makes it more likely that they'll follow through. The question becomes "How will I recertify" vs. "Will I".

A map makes it easier for people to visualize how they will complete their goal.



THE LAB @ DC

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TheLab.DC.Gov

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Office of the City Administrator

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