



An Employee-Owned
Research Corporation



PAST ITS EXPIRATION DATE: When A Longitudinal Design Loses Relevance

Jennifer Hamilton, Ph.D., Senior Study Director

**Presented April, 2017
Eastern Evaluation Research Society**

The Study



- 5 year evaluation of a national health program for schools
- Outcome is the CDC's School Health Index
- **Randomized design** comparing two different types of support.

Online

T1

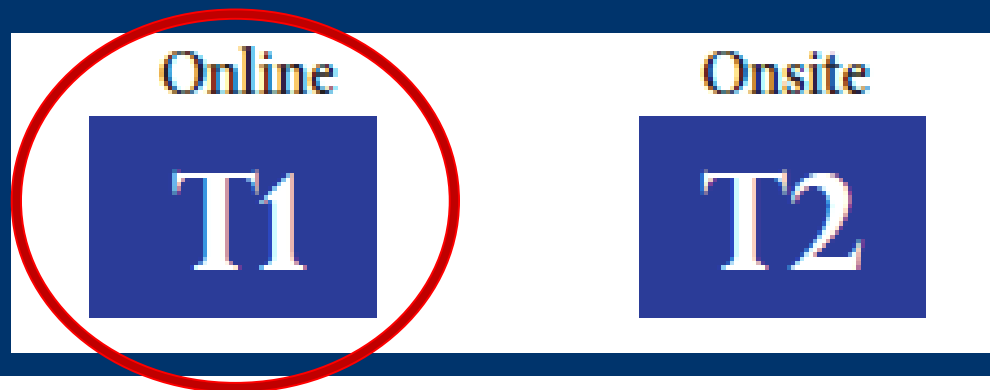
Onsite

T2

The Problem



- Two years in, the program starts using the on-line support program
- They could not wait for the results of the evaluation to make their decision.
- In short, *they did not need us anymore*

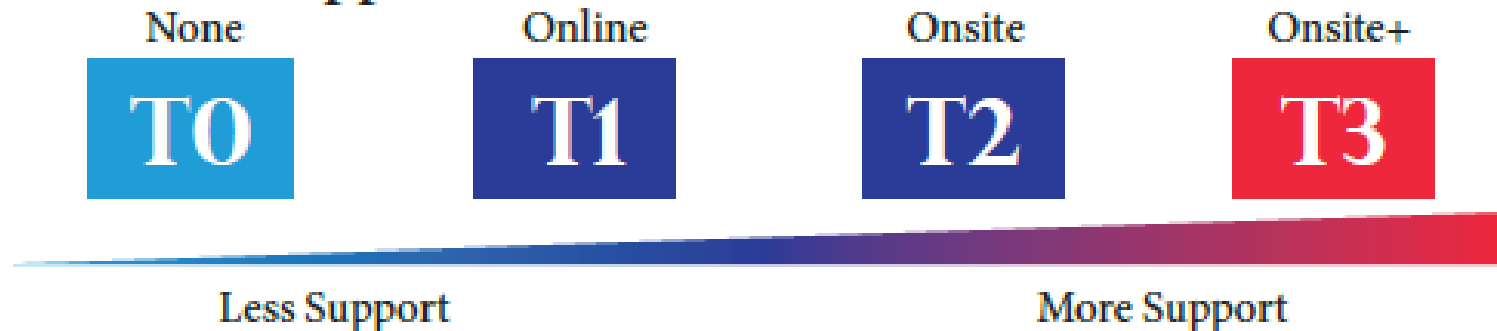


A Solution

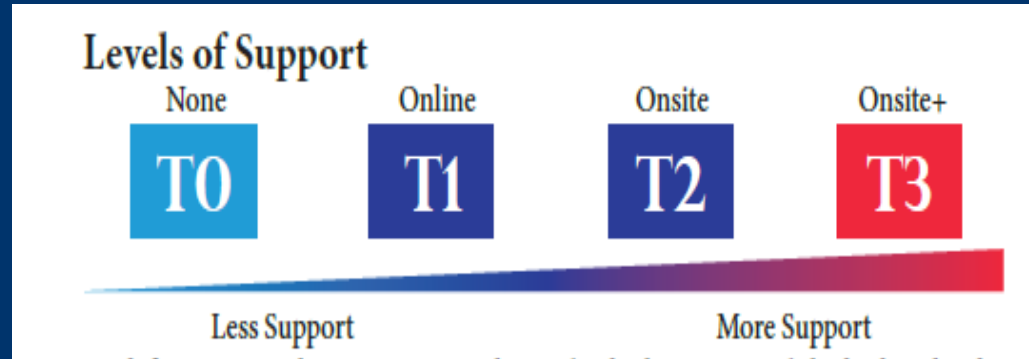


- Expand relevance to a broader audience.
- Add a no-support arm (T0),
- Add an even more intensive arm (T3)
- Continuum of support intensity, from zero (T0), low support (T1), moderate support (T2) and high support (T3)

Levels of Support



New Groups?



The CDC could provide outcome data for matched schools not participating in the program.

Another study was using the same outcome as us. The support being evaluated was also more intensive than ours. The other researchers could provide outcome data for matched schools

Methodology



What does adding new groups do to the original randomized design? We are mixing a quasi-experimental design (QED) into a randomized design (RCT).

Contrast			Internal validity	
T0 (matched)	vs	T1 (random)	=	Great (QED)
T0 (matched)	vs	T2 (random)	=	Great (QED)
T0 (matched)	vs	T3 (matched)	=	Great (QED)
T1 (random)	vs	T2 (random)	=	Best (RCT)
T1 (random)	vs	T3 (matched)	=	Great (QED)
T2 (random)	vs	T3 (matched)	=	Great (QED)

Implications



This study illustrates a common danger of longitudinal designs - they just takes too long in the policy world and programs are typically in flux. But the funder supported efforts to expand the focus beyond the specific program. This resulted in a hybrid design that still maintained sufficient rigor to respond to broad policy questions.

Flexibility is key.

**EXPIRATION
DATE: / /**

**EXPIRATION
DATE: / /**

**EXPIRATION
DATE: / /**

**EXPIRATION
DATE: / /**

Contact Information

Jennifer Hamilton, Ph.D.,
Senior Study Director, Westat

jenniferhamilton@westat.com

[@limeygrl](#) on Twitter

