

"LEAP To Durham College"

Improving Access to College Programs for Participants of the Ontario Works Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program

MARCH 2014



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Patricia Mongeon, Durham College - Co-principal investigator
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Jane Hilton, Durham College
Leslie Linstrum, Durham College
Debbie McKee Demczyk, Durham College
Bev Neblett, Durham College
Megan Parker, Durham College
Nicky Patel, Durham College
Lucy Romao Vandepol, Durham College
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Executive Summary

Balancing preparations for a new child while attempting to complete high school can be extremely difficult for young adults. Pregnancy during the high school years can significantly impact one's educational and vocational attainment. Many young parents discontinue their schooling, placing themselves at risk for unemployment and economic, social, and health related difficulties. The completion of high school and post-secondary education however, can improve vocational outcomes for young parents.

The Learning, Earning, and Parenting Program (LEAP) administered by the Income and Employment Support Division of The Regional Municipality of Durham Social Services Department, is a targeted strategy of the Ontario Works Employment Assistance program. LEAP provides support to young parents between the ages of 16 and 25, helping them achieve sustainable employment, and become independent and self-reliant.

While approximately 90 to 100 young adults in the LEAP program graduate from high school annually, only approximately 40% of graduates indicate an intention to continue their education at a post-secondary institution. As a result, the purpose of this study was to gain insight into the perceptions surrounding post-secondary education held by LEAP participants, and to design and pilot test an intervention program to increase the rate of participation in post-secondary education.

Eighteen young parents currently registered in the LEAP program took part in this study. A short, electronic survey was used to gather participant perceptions surrounding post-secondary education before and after the intervention program, and responses were then socially validated through a short focus group.

Results suggest that the transition to post-secondary education program was associated with increased levels of "readiness" amongst participants to attend a post-secondary education program. Participants reported fewer concerns surrounding post-secondary programs, increased certainty about academic and employment outcomes, and greater confidence in their ability to enter and succeed in a post-secondary program. Further, participation in this program was associated with an increase in the number of young parents that indicated an intention to pursue post-secondary education.

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Introduction

The onset of pregnancy and impending parenthood during one's high school years brings with it a myriad of challenges, including changes in family and peer relationships, financial pressures, and uncertainties about one's readiness for the parental role. Balancing preparations for a new child while attempting to complete high school can be extremely difficult for young adults. Concerns surrounding insufficient support networks, child care, and financial resources (Surcouf, 2006), coupled with concerns about criticism and judgment (VanPelt, 2012), fear of speaking openly about their pregnancy with peers and teachers, and feeling abandoned and alone (Wimann, 2005) may all contribute to the difficulties experienced by young adults as they balance the demands of both parenthood and high school.

Pregnancy during the high school years can significantly impact one's educational and vocational attainment. As many as 30% of high school students that discontinue their schooling do so due to pregnancy (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2010). Further, when compared to women who become pregnant as adults, teenage mothers have been reported to be 17% less likely to complete high school, and 19% less likely to complete a post-secondary program (Luong, 2008). Teenage mothers are also reported to be less likely to be working full time, more likely to face unemployment (Luong, 2008), and at greater risk of poverty and poor health (LEAP Guidelines, 2002).

Children of teenage mothers are also reported to be at an increased risk for economic, social, and health related difficulties. For example, children of teenage mothers are more likely to experience academic difficulties, less likely to complete high school, and are more likely to experience unemployment and poverty, when compared to children born to older parents (Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, 2008). The completion of high school and college however, can improve vocational outcomes for young parents (Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, 2008). Teenage mothers who graduated from post-secondary education were more likely to attain full time employment, when compared to young parents who did not complete post-secondary education (Luong, 2008).

To support young parents, and increase the likelihood of completion of high school and post-secondary education, specialized programs have been developed that offer a range of supports and services. These programs tend to include a combination of; a) a school social worker, b) small group settings, c) collaboration with outside community agencies, d) childcare services, e) pediatric health-care, f) individual counseling and mentoring, g) group therapy sessions, h) academic support services and career preparation, and i) case management services (VanPelt, 2012).

One example of a support program for young parents is the Learning, Earning, and Parenting Program (LEAP) administered by the Income and Employment Support Division of The Regional Municipality of Durham, Social Services Department. Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) is a targeted strategy of the Ontario Works Employment Assistance program. This program helps social assistance recipients in Ontario become independent and self-reliant, and contribute to their communities. LEAP focuses on parents between the ages of 16 and 25, and identifies specific strategies and supports to help them achieve the overall objectives of Ontario Works including the attainment of sustainable employment (Guidelines for Implementing Learning, Earning and Parenting, 2002).

The LEAP program supports approximately 375 young parents annually, with approximately 90 to 100 achieving their high school diploma each year. Within this program, the completion of Grade 12 is seen as an essential first step towards self-sufficiency. Feedback from LEAP staff suggests however, that only approximately 40% of these graduates indicate an intention to continue their education at a post-secondary institution. Further, LEAP staff members suggest that this may be due to a variety of factors including a lack of confidence, misconceptions and a lack of information about post-secondary education, the absence of supports, and concerns that the intensive levels of support received from the LEAP program would be withdrawn.

An important component of the LEAP program is the wraparound approach that includes the provision of intensive individualized case management. This approach supports young parents in balancing the demands of completing high school, while working and raising their children. The wraparound approach was originally developed in the 1980s to serve children and youth with complex needs (VanDenBerg, Bruns, & Burchard, 2008). Important components of this approach include a collaborative team based model, and the development of individualized plans based on each young parent's unique strengths, needs, and circumstances. According to VanDenBerg, Bruns and Burchard (2008):

"The wraparound process can be described as one in which the team creates, implements, and monitors an individualized plan using a collaborative process driven by the perspective of the family; Develops a plan that includes a mix of professional supports, natural supports, and community members; Bases the plan on the strengths and culture of the youth and their family; and ensures that the process is driven by the needs of the family rather than by the services that are available (VanDenBerg, Bruns, & Burchard, 2008 p.1)."

The objectives of this research project are to gain insight into the barriers to post-secondary education faced by LEAP participants in Durham Region, and to design, pilot test, and evaluate an intervention to begin to address some of these barriers. Three research questions guided this investigation: a) What perceptions regarding post-secondary education are held by LEAP participants? b) To what extent will the post-secondary access intervention result in changes in LEAP participants' perceptions of post-secondary education? c) Will participation in this intervention program increase the number of LEAP participants that continue their education through post-secondary programs?

Methods

Participants and Setting

Participants included 18 young parents currently registered in the LEAP program offered by the Regional Municipality of Durham, Social Services Department. Participants were female, between the ages of 18 and 25, and all recently completed their grade 12 requirements. The study took place at the Oshawa and Whitby campuses of Durham College.

Recruitment

Information letters about this project were shared with 50 current recipients of the LEAP program that met the inclusionary criteria for this project (i.e., currently receiving services from the program and recently completed grade 12). The information letters were sent by LEAP program administrative staff in order to ensure a voluntary informed consent process, free from any potential influence by LEAP Counselors currently supporting those that received the project information letters. Those LEAP participants that returned signed consent forms entered the study. This process resulted in 18 LEAP program participants registering to take part in this research project. Please see appendix A for the Information letters and Consent forms.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable was LEAP program participants' perceptions of post-secondary education. This was defined as the views held by participants regarding the benefits associated with post-secondary education (e.g., career and life goals), obstacles impeding participation and concerns about attending post-secondary education, and their intent to submit an application to a post-secondary institution.

Independent Variable

The independent variable was a post-secondary access intervention program designed by the project team. This comprised 25 sessions over a four week period. The purpose of this intervention program was to familiarize participants with campus life and the range and types of supports available to students. Please see appendix B for a program logic model.

Research Design

Given the pilot and exploratory nature of this project, a one group pre-test / post-test design was utilized to examine any changes in participants' perceptions regarding post-secondary education following participation in the intervention program. Participant survey responses were socially validated through a short focus group following participation in the intervention program. The focus group further allowed for the gathering of participant feedback surrounding their experience in this intervention program. Ethical approval for this research project was received from the Durham College Research Ethics Board.

Procedures

Pre-Test

Following the recruitment of participants, but before the start of the intervention program, participants completed a brief on-line survey. This survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete and explored participants' perceptions of post-secondary education. Please see appendix C for a copy of the pre-program survey.

Intervention Program

Following completion of the pre-test, participants began attending intervention program sessions. The intervention program was held three days each week (i.e., Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday) beginning on January 14, 2014 and ending on February 6, 2014. Each day, participants took part in two to three sessions. Sessions were held in the mornings (i.e., 10:00-11:30) and afternoons (i.e., 12:15-2:00 or 12:15-1:00 and 1:00-2:00). Morning sessions were followed by a lunch break during which participants socialized with one another and, with the program support staff and mentors, reflected on the recent sessions they attended.

Post-Test

Following the completion of the intervention program, participants completed a brief on-line survey. This survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete and explored participants' perceptions of post-secondary education, as well as their experience within the intervention program, and their intent to apply to a post-secondary institution. Please see appendix C for a copy of the post-program survey.

Focus Group

Following the completion of the post-intervention program survey, participants were asked to consider taking part in a one hour focus group. Twelve participants took part in the focus group that explored the perceptions held by young parents about post-secondary education, as well as their experience in the intervention program, and their intent to apply to a post-secondary institution. This qualitative feedback was used to supplement the quantitative data gathered through the pre- and post-test surveys, and to obtain additional insight into the lived experience of participants. Please see appendix D for a listing of the questions asked during the focus group and participants' responses.

Results

At the start of the program, the majority of participants indicated that they have had a positive experience with school (69% of participants) and intended to pursue additional education (88% of participants). The pre-program survey further revealed that participants held positive outlooks regarding their academic futures. While half of the participants indicated that they were currently uncertain of their career goals, most (69% of participants) indicated that they felt ready to enrol in September 2014. The large majority (94% of participants) also believed that they would be able to finish a post-secondary program, and all participants indicated that they would take pride in being a post-secondary student. All participants also reported that their friends and family would support their decision to attend post-secondary education.

Concerns were raised however, regarding the practicality of completing a post-secondary program. While many (56% of participants) believed that they would meet the academic requirements to attend a post-secondary program, the majority of participants (81%) felt that financial difficulties would present a barrier to their participation. Additional concerns included childcare, transportation, managing time, and feeling overwhelmed balancing the demands of being a single parent and a post-secondary student.

After completing the transition to post-secondary education program, there was an increase in the the number of participants that indicated an intention to pursue additional education, increasing from 88% of participants at the start of the program to 100% of participants at the end. Increases were also noted in the number of participants that intended to pursue a college program (increasing from 57% of participants to 100% of participants), as well as those that intended to pursue a university program (increasing from 38% of participants at the start of the program to 60% of participants at the end).

Further, after completing the transition program, there appeared to be greater certainty amongst participants about their academic and employment outcomes. Following the program, a greater proportion of respondents indicated that they were now certain about their career goals (increasing from 69% to 100% of participants), would meet the academic requirements of the post-secondary program of their choice (increasing from 56% to 91% of participants), felt ready to enrol in a post-secondary education program in September 2014 (increasing from 69% to 82% of participants), and viewed college or university as a priority (increasing from 81% to 91% of participants). It is particularly noteworthy that there was a substantial decrease in the number of participants expressing concerns about attending a post-secondary program (decreasing from 44% of participants at the start of the program to 18% of participants at the end). Despite these findings, childcare, anxiety about post-secondary programs, and financial difficulties continued to be noted by participants as areas of concern.

The positive outcomes associated with this transition to post-secondary school program were socially validated through a focus group with participants. During the focus group, participants reported that they chose to take part in this program in order to learn about college life, the application process, and the supports being offered at Durham College. After attending the program, participants reported that they had less anxiety about attending college and felt more comfortable on the college campus. Participants also reported that they felt more confident and knowledgeable about the college programs and the application process, and now felt motivated to attend college.

Participants further reported that they would recommend this transition to college program to other LEAP clients. In particular, participants highlighted the speakers, personal stories shared by the program support staff and mentors, and campus tours as impactful components of the program. Participants also noted that child care on campus, a resume workshop, and a resource centre on campus would strengthen the transition to post-secondary education process. A more detailed listing of the feedback shared by participants during the focus group, as well as feedback and recommendations from research assistants and project team member, is included in appendices D and E.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the perceptions surrounding post-secondary education held by LEAP participants, and to design and pilot test an intervention program to support these young parents in their pursuit of higher education.

Based on the information gathered through this investigation, the transition to post-secondary education program appeared to be associated with increased levels of “readiness” amongst participants to attend a post-secondary education program. This is evidenced by participants reporting fewer concerns surrounding their participation in post-secondary programs, increased certainty about academic and employment outcomes, and greater confidence in their ability to enter and succeed in a post-secondary program.

An important component of this intervention was the multi-disciplinary wrap-around approach that was utilized, and this approach may offer an explanation for the success of the program. Within a wraparound model, emphasis is placed on the development of individualized plans based on each participant’s unique strengths, needs, and circumstances. In this transition to post-secondary education program, the curriculum that was developed exposed participants to a broad range of experiences (e.g., campus tours, workshops, in-class experiential activities), as well as a range of multi-disciplinary supports and services (e.g., time management, learning styles, support networks, stress management, life skills, financial assistance). When combined, this curriculum, coupled with the supportive coaching offered by the project staff, program support assistants and mentors, provided each participant an opportunity to develop an individualized post-secondary education transition plan - one that built on their unique strengths and interests, while simultaneously tailored to their individualized needs and circumstances. Through participation in this program, LEAP participants were able to identify the specific college programs that were of most interest to them, as well as the specific combination of supports and services that would support them in their transition to post-secondary education. These individualized plans may have removed barriers previously impeding participation in a post-secondary education program (e.g., financial assistance, child care) and in turn, improved participants’ perceptions surrounding their attendance and success in a post-secondary education program (e.g., improved self-efficacy).

Limitations

There are several limitations of the present study and some potential considerations for future research and practice. This study was conducted with a small sample of LEAP participants. Further, participants' pre-survey responses suggest that this sample of participants may have already held positive perceptions surrounding post-secondary education. As such, it is difficult to generalize the findings of this pilot investigation to all LEAP participants. Future measurement should attempt to obtain data from a larger sample of LEAP participants, as well as from LEAP participants that chose not to attend this transition program. This will help to determine the extent to which the present findings can be generalized to young parents in Durham Region. Future directions could also include measurement of perceptions surrounding post-secondary education upon completion of the LEAP program.

Further, while the information gathered through the pre- and post-tests and focus group suggest that changes in perception surrounding post-secondary education may be due to the intervention program, this relationship requires further investigation. Future research should examine the effects of this intervention program using an experimental design. This may involve a comparison with a sample of LEAP participants not involved in the intervention program (e.g., control group), as well as a comparison of the effectiveness of this type of specialized intervention program and other types of transition to post-secondary education supports offered to young adults. The use of an experimental design may help to separate the effects of the intervention program from other extraneous variables that may have influenced participants' perceptions of post-secondary education.

Another consideration is in regards to the measure used. The surveys administered to participants before and after the intervention program were designed by the project team and offered valuable insight into participants' perceptions surrounding post-secondary education and the barriers to education they have experienced. These surveys allowed for an interesting comparison of responses before and after participation in the intervention program. Future research may strengthen this pre/post comparison process by including standardized, scientifically validated measures.

Further, while participants' perceptions surrounding post-secondary education appeared to have changed following the completion of the intervention program, it is not clear, based on the data collected, which component of the intervention program might have contributed to the changes in participants' perceptions. Future research should attempt to isolate the various components of the intervention program and examine the separate and combined effects of these program components on participants. Another point of consideration is that while the results of this study suggest that participation in the intervention program may have encouraged participants to apply to post-secondary schools, it is not known what longer-term benefits may be experienced by participants as a result of taking part in this program (e.g., increased success in post-secondary education, improved vocational and health outcomes). Future research should consider longitudinal measurement in order to gain insight into the potential longer term effects of this intervention program.

Recommendations for Future Consideration

There are several recommendations for research and practice stemming from this research project. As a next step, the project team is recommending the pursuit of a second research project that would attempt to replicate this study's findings with a larger sample of participants (e.g., a broader range of Ontario Works clients) and use a more rigorous research design and methodology to address the limitations of the current study.

Further, longer-term recommendations from the project team include the development of this pilot intervention into a sustainable program that is available annually to support potential students in their preparation and transition to college life. This sustainable program would expand on the multi-disciplinary and wraparound approach, and engage a broader range of academic, community, and social supports. This would allow Durham College, Durham Continuing Education – Durham District School Board, and The Regional Municipality of Durham Social Services Department to offer a broader range of potential students the opportunity to develop individualized college preparation and transition plans. A listing of the recommendations for research and practice from the project team is included in appendix E, and a plan to disseminate the knowledge acquired from this study is included in appendix F.

Despite the limitations of this pilot project, the present study provides important insight into the experience of young parents in this specialized intervention program. This program offers Durham College, Durham Continuing Education - Durham District School Board, Durham Region Social Services, and The Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, a mechanism by which to collaboratively support young parents in their pursuit of higher education. In doing so, this intervention program provides young parents with a proactive, supportive, and positive-based opportunity to become immersed in college life and improve the long-term personal, professional, and academic outcomes for themselves and their families.



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Appendix A

Project Information and Informed Consent Letters

Improving Access to College Programs for Social Assistance Recipients in the Ontario Works Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) Program Information Letter

Dear Potential Participant,

We are writing you this letter to ask for your participation in a research project. Please read through this information and consider your participation in this project. If you are interested in taking part in this project, please sign the attached consent form and return it in the attached postage paid envelope. If you have any questions about this project or would like to talk to someone about this project, please contact those coordinating this project using the telephone numbers and e-mail addresses provided at the end of this letter. This research project has received approval from the Durham College Research Ethics Board.

What is this project about and how will participants be selected?

We are interested in learning about the effects of an introduction to a postsecondary education program. Young parents currently involved in the Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program offered by the Social Services Department of The Regional Municipality of Durham will be asked to consider taking part in this project.

What will participants be expected to do?

Participants will be asked to take part in an Introduction to Postsecondary Education Program that will involve a few trips to Durham College to attend information sessions, watch classes, participate in classes, and take tours of the college campus. Participants will also be asked to complete a short online survey at the start and end of the introduction to post-secondary education program, and to take part in a short focus group and final online survey.

What are the potential benefits of this project?

This project will provide participants with information about postsecondary education programs and the support services that are available.

Are there any risks associated with participation in this project and is my agreement to participate voluntary?

Visiting a college campus for the first time can make some people feel uncomfortable. This project will provide participants with information about college programs and supports. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary and you may change your mind and withdraw your participation at any time. You are also free to decline completing any part of this project at any time.

Is the information collected about me confidential?

Yes. All information collected about those involved in this project will be kept confidential except as required by law. Please also note that the findings from this project may be published and/or shared at conferences with professionals. In any papers or presentations related to the findings of this project, we will make sure that the names of all participants are never used.

Will choosing not to participate in this project affect the services I am receiving from the Learning, Earning and Parenting Program?

No. Choosing not to participate in this project or choosing to withdraw from this project at any time will not have any negative impact on service delivery to you.

Thank you for considering participating in this project.

Patricia Mongeon
Professor, School of Health and Community Services
Durham College
(905)721-2000 x2193
Patricia.Mongeon@durhamcollege.ca

Darren Levine, Manager, Research and Innovation
Social Services Department, The Regional Municipality of Durham
(905) 668-4113 extension 2835
Darren.Levine@durham.ca

Improving Access to College Programs for Social Assistance Recipients in the Ontario Works Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) Program
Consent Form

I, (please print)_____ have read and understand the information on the research project Improving Access to College Programs for Social Assistance Recipients in the Ontario Works Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) Program, which is to be conducted by Patricia Mongeon and Dr. Darren Levine and all questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to voluntarily participate in this research and give my consent freely. I understand that the project will be conducted in accordance with the Information Letter, a copy of which I have retained for my records.

I understand I can withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty, and do not have to give any reason for withdrawal.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Improving Access to College Programs for Social Assistance Recipients in the Ontario Works Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) Program
Focus Group Information Letter

Dear Project Participant,

The purpose of this letter is to ask for your participation in a focus group, as part of the research project that you have been participating in. Please read through this information and consider your participation in the focus group. If you are interested in taking part in the focus group, please sign the attached consent form and return it to the focus group facilitator at the beginning of the session. If you have any questions about the focus group or the research project in general, please contact those coordinating the project using the telephone numbers and e-mail addresses provided at the end of this letter. This research project has received approval from the Durham College Research Ethics Board.

What is this project about and how will participants be selected?

We are interested in learning about the effects of an introduction to a postsecondary education program. Young parents currently involved in the Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program offered by the Social Services Department of The Regional Municipality of Durham who have taken part in the Introduction to Postsecondary Education program will be asked to consider taking part in this project.

What will participants be expected to do?

You will be asked to participate in a focus group. This focus group will involve questions about your reasons for choosing to enroll in the Introduction to Postsecondary Education Program, your thoughts about enrolling in a postsecondary program now, and how a postsecondary education might affect your future. The focus group is expected to take about an hour and will take place at the Durham College Oshawa campus. The focus group will be conducted by Principal Investigators Patricia Mongeon and Darren Levine, and a research assistant will take notes. A complementary lunch will be provided for all focus group attendees.

What are the risks and benefits of participating?

There is some risk involved if, for example, you share confidential information during the focus group to other attendees. Other attendees may discuss information outside of the focus group and so there is some risk that information could be released in an unauthorized manner. Therefore, you are encouraged to share only information that you are comfortable sharing. You do not have to answer any questions or discuss any topics that make you feel uncomfortable. No other risks have been identified.

There are no direct benefits to you. However, your participation will contribute to a better understanding of the experiences of LEAP participants entering Durham College programs as well as provide an opportunity to influence change and recommend improvements.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary and you may change your mind and withdraw your participation at any time.

Is the information collected about me confidential?

Yes. All information collected about those involved in this project will be kept confidential except as required by law. Please also note that the findings from this project may be published and/or shared at conferences with professionals. In any papers or presentations related to the findings of this project, we will make sure that the names of all participants are never used.

Will choosing not to participate in this focus group affect the services I am receiving from the Learning, Earning and Parenting Program?

No. Choosing not to participate in this project or choosing to withdraw from this project at any time will not have any negative impact on service delivery to you.

Thank you for considering participating in this project.

Patricia Mongeon
Professor, School of Health and Community Services
Durham College
(905)721-2000 x2193
Patricia.Mongeon@durhamcollege.ca

Darren Levine, Manager, Research and Innovation
Social Services Department, The Regional Municipality of Durham
(905) 668-4113 extension 2835
Darren.Levine@durham.ca

Improving Access to College Programs for Social Assistance Recipients in the Ontario Works Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) Program
Focus Group Consent Form

I, (please print) _____ have read and understand the information on the research project Improving Access to College Programs for Social Assistance Recipients in the Ontario Works Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) Program, which is to be conducted by Patricia Mongeon and Dr. Darren Levine and all questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to voluntarily participate in this research and give my consent freely. I understand that the project will be conducted in accordance with the Information Letter, a copy of which I have retained for my records.

I understand I can withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty, and do not have to give any reason for withdrawal.

I consent to:

- Participate in the focus group for participants in the Introduction to Postsecondary Education program. Specific time and location details to be confirmed.

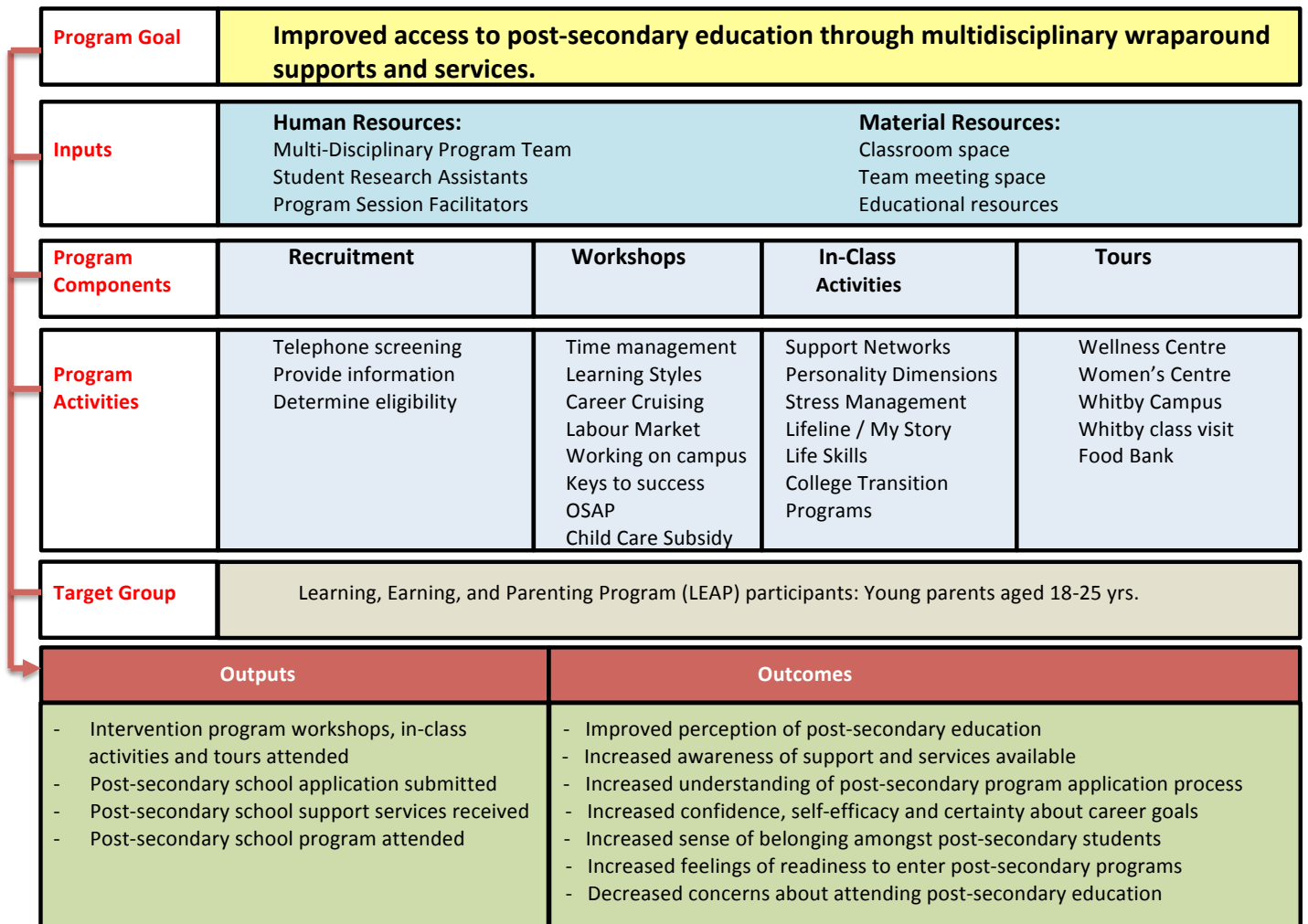
Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

"Leap to Durham College" Logic Model



Appendix C

Pre / Post Survey

1. What is your age:

- ☐ Less than 18
- ☐ 18
- ☐ 19
- ☐ 20
- ☐ 21
- ☐ Over 21

2. What is your gender:

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

3. When did you complete your Grade 12 diploma?

- ☐ Month (drop down box)
- ☐ Year (drop down box)

4. Which City/Township do you live in?

- ☐ Oshawa
- ☐ Whitby
- ☐ Ajax
- ☐ Pickering
- ☐ Clarington
- ☐ Uxbridge
- ☐ Scugog
- ☐ Brock

5. Did either of your parents attend post-secondary (college, university or apprenticeship training)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6. What is your experience with school up to this point?

Very unpleasant

neutral

very positive

1

2

3

4

5

7. Do you want to pursue more education in the future?

Definitely Not

I am not sure

Definitely

1

2

3

4

5

8. Have you ever thought about attending college?

Never

neutral

Often

1

2

3

4

5

9. What is the highest level of education you see yourself completing?

- ☐ Grade 12
- ☐ College certificate or diploma
- ☐ College degree
- ☐ University undergraduate degree
- ☐ Master's degree or higher

10. How sure are you about your career goals?

- ☐ Very unsure
- ☐ Somewhat unsure
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Sure
- ☐ Very sure

11. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

| When I think about going to college or university... | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Not sure | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-------------------|----------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1 Attending college or university is important to me. | | | | | |
| 2 Attending college or university is a priority for me right now. | | | | | |
| 3 I will have enough money to pay for my education. | | | | | |
| 4 I can find child care arrangements. | | | | | |
| 5 I will have stable transportation arrangements. | | | | | |
| 6 I have the grades to be accepted into the program. | | | | | |
| 7 I have the academic ability to succeed in the program. | | | | | |
| 8 I will feel comfortable with the other students in my class. | | | | | |
| 9 I will make new friends. | | | | | |
| 10 My friends and family will support my decision to attend post-secondary education. | | | | | |
| 11 My program will be interesting to me. | | | | | |
| 12 I will participate in extra-curricular activities. | | | | | |
| 13 I will have enough time to devote to homework. | | | | | |
| 14 I will take pride in being a post-secondary student. | | | | | |
| 15 I will connect with the teachers. | | | | | |
| 16 I will be able to finish the program. | | | | | |

12. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

| If I were to complete a post-secondary program, I would... | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Not sure | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|---|-------------------|----------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | Have better job prospects. | | | | | |
| 2 | Be able to earn more money. | | | | | |
| 3 | Be more satisfied with my job. | | | | | |
| 4 | Be better positioned to reach my career aspirations. | | | | | |
| 5 | Be proud of my accomplishments. | | | | | |
| 6 | Not need social assistance anymore. | | | | | |
| 7 | Have a more stable and secure future for my children. | | | | | |

13. How ready to do feel to enroll in post-secondary education in September 2014?

Not very ready

I am not sure

Very ready

1

2

3

4

5

14. Do you have any concerns about attending college or university?

Yes

No

If yes, please list your concerns:

15. Is there anything that might prevent you from attending college?

16. Do you plan to submit application to attend a post-secondary educational institution?

- ☐ Yes – Durham College
- ☐ Yes – another post-secondary educational institution
- ☐ Not yet – I may decide to apply later
- ☐ No

******* FOR POST-PROGRAM SURVEY, THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WILL BE ADDED TO THE ABOVE LISTED QUESTIONS *******

17. Which Introduction to College program activities did you take part in:

In-class activities led by Patricia:

- ☐ Orientation to “LEAP to Durham”
- ☐ Personality Dimensions
- ☐ Support Networks
- ☐ Lifeline / My story / new chapter
- ☐ Life skills: high school and college comparison
- ☐ Stress management
- ☐ College transition programs

Tours:

- ☐ Wellness Centre/Flex Centre tour (Heather and Angela)
- ☐ Women’s Centre tour with “Healthy Relationships” workshop (Stephanie)
- ☐ Whitby campus (Mary and Greg)
- ☐ Whitby class visits
- ☐ Women’s Centre food bank

Workshops led by others:

- ☐ SALS workshop: Learning Styles (John)
- ☐ Career Cruising (Anna)
- ☐ Labour market information (Anna)
- ☐ OSAP (Chris)
- ☐ Working on campus (Anna)
- ☐ Child care subsidy (Cindy)
- ☐ SALS workshop: Time Management (Danelle)
- ☐ SALS workshop: Keys to Success (Danelle)

18. How helpful was each activity to you?

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|---|----------------------|---|---------------------|
| | <i>Not very helpful</i> | | <i>I am not sure</i> | | <i>Very helpful</i> |
| <i>List as above</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please explain why the activities were, or were not, helpful to you.

19. Do you have any recommendations about how we can improve the Introduction to College Program?

20. Did you submit an application to attend a post-secondary educational institution?

- ☐ Yes – Durham College
- ☐ Yes – another post-secondary educational institution
- ☐ Not yet – I may decide to apply later
- ☐ No

21. If not, do you plan to submit application to attend a post-secondary educational institution?

- ☐ Yes – Durham College
- ☐ Yes – another post-secondary educational institution
- ☐ Not yet – I may decide to apply later
- ☐ No

Thank you for taking time to complete this short survey.

Appendix D

Focus Group Questions and Participant Responses

(Responses transcribed by Research Assistants)

Question #1: Why did you choose to participate in the Introduction to Post-secondary Education program?

- “Choose Leap to help with transitioning and wanted to go to college; and learn more about the supports being offered at Durham College.”
- “I knew that I would get to see the college and there were great tours around the college and information about the services the college has for students.”
- “Found the Leap program very helpful and felt more comfortable getting all the help they needed to get started; I felt Stuck.”
- “Was interesting touring around the college and gave me perspective of what college life was like.”
- “Helped us figure out what they wanted to do and the programs that are offered which would be the best fit for my needs and personality.”
- “College is scary; my expectation of college was very different, I did not know that we would be so welcomed and have people be willing to help us out.”
- “Had the time to get to know the college and programs; more opportunities than expected when it comes to joining clubs or having all the support we need.”
- “Participants shared that they felt more prepared in having all the information about the services, programs, SALS, etc.”
- “Helped me stay focused and become serious, I didn’t know the process of how to apply ie; step one, step two.”
- “Helped me to turn thought into action.”
- “Daycare, lunch, and transportation was provided.”

Question #2: Please describe your experience at Durham College.

- “Reduced feelings of anxiety in coming to college.”
- “I already feel like a student.”
- “I feel comfortable in the College now.”
- “Very positive experience, help desks and even other students are very friendly and willing to help.”
- “Found the tour of the Whitby campus helpful.”
- “Tours of the different programs beneficial.”
- “Hard to get to due to weather.”

Question #3: What are your thoughts now about enrolling in a program at Durham College or another post-secondary institution?

- “Excited.”
- “I feel more confident and knowledgeable about the programs and the process ie; OSAP.”
- “Workshop was detailed and step-by-step.”
- “The speaker (Sylvia) from Whitby was inspiring. She was able to get around obstacles in her life.”
- “Having RAs who were single moms was also helpful to show that it is possible to go to school.”
- “I feel like I am going somewhere, and taking that first step through applying to go to college for the spring or fall.”
- “Comfortable knowing I have the choice to switch my program.”

Question #4: Is this different than how you felt before taking part in the Introduction to College Program at Durham College?

- "I feel rejuvenated and motivated- ready to take on the world."
- "I have the ambition to get back out there and get into College."
- "I feel like I am getting somewhere."

Question #5: Would you recommend the Introduction to Post-secondary Education program to other LEAP clients who are thinking about enrolling in college?

- "Yes. This program keeps you practical and informed."
- "Yes. This program helped me through the humps and slumps I was feeling about college."
- "Yes. I would recommend it to someone else because it gives me more ideas about programs being offered and gives a new perspective on myself on knowing what she is capable of doing and what I like/dislike."
- "Yes. I hope to be an RA one day and be a positive role model for the next generation of single moms."

Question #6: What would you recommend to Durham College administration to improve the Introduction to Post-Secondary Education Program?

- "More information about what the program is at the beginning."
- "Would like to get an outline, to see what will be covered each day."
- "Campus childcare is too far."
- "Want to one day see a resource centre on campus for single moms."
- "Would like to have a resume workshop to sit and work on resumes; what to put in and where."

Question #7: What were some highlights from the program?

- "Speaker from Whitby (Sylvia)."
- "Personal stories from RAs who are moms."
- "First and Second Generation- Lucy is a good resource."
- "Enjoyed the career cards activity."
- "Engineering faculty (Katie) inspiring- story of her in Russia, studying while kicking the stroller."
- "Whitby campus tour, those professions are 'not just a man's job.'"
- "SALS tour".



Appendix E

Project Team Recommendations for Research and Practice

Recommendations for future research:

- Replicate with a larger sample of LEAP clients.
- Replicate in collaboration with other post-secondary institutions.
- Gather information from those choosing not to attend the program (e.g., to gain insight into their decision).
- Replicate with other at-risks groups (e.g., Ontario Works clients, young fathers).
- Use an experimental design including a control group, and a comparison as to the effects of this specialized intervention program and other supports available to potential students.
- Use standardized, scientifically validated measures, as well as formal interviews with participants to gain deeper insight into their perceptions surrounding post-secondary education.
- Attempt to isolate the various components of the intervention program and examine the separate and combined effects of these program components on participants.
- Examine whether the length of the intervention program may contribute to greater effects.
- Consider longitudinal measurement in order to gain insight into the potential longer term effects of this intervention program.

Recommendations for future service delivery:

- Development of this pilot intervention into a sustainable academic-community collaborative program that is available annually to support potential students in their preparation and transition to college life.
- Develop and introduce web-based components to reduce barriers related to transportation to campus.
- Identify opportunities for future collaboration (e.g., provision of seamless supports) between LEAP Counsellors and Durham College faculty and staff (e.g., embed components of transition to college program within LEAP program to begin early preparations for transition to college, and examine ways to carry-over LEAP program supports onto Durham College campus).
- Develop and introduce longitudinal wraparound-based supports following successful application to Durham College (E.g., from application through to graduation).



Appendix F

Knowledge Dissemination Plan

Spring 2014

- Share via internal sharing of final report with faculty and staff of Durham College School of Health & Community Services, School of Interdisciplinary Studies & Employment Services and Student Affairs.
- Share via internal sharing of final report with staff of the Social Services Department, Income and Employment Support Division, The Regional Municipality of Durham.
- Share via presentation at Durham College Research Day.
- Share via presentation at meeting of the Innovation and Research Team, Social Services Department, The Regional Municipality of Durham.
- Share via posting of project summary on the web pages of Durham College and the Social Services Department, The Regional Municipality of Durham.

Fall 2014

- Share via presentation at the Innovation and Research Forum hosted by the Social Services Department of The Regional Municipality of Durham.
- Submit for consideration for a presentation at the 2014 Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) conference.
- Submit for consideration for a presentation at the 2014 Canadian Institutional Research and Planning Association (CIRPA) conference.
- Submit for consideration for a presentation at the 2014 Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) Applied Research Symposium.
- Seek appropriate outlets for publication.



For more information, please contact:

DEBBIE MCKEE DEMCZYK

Director, Research Services
Durham College

debbie.mckeedemczyk@durhamcollege.ca

PATRICIA MONGEON

Professor, School of Health and Community Services
Durham College

patricia.mongeon@durhamcollege.ca

DARREN LEVINE

Manager, Research and Innovation
The Regional Municipality of Durham
Social Services Department

darren.levine@durham.ca

