

Why Vroom in TANF

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program provides cash assistance and employment-related services to families with children and low incomes. It serves nearly half-a-million adult caregivers and 1.5 million children nationwide, including a large share of young children. Vroom, a resource created by the Bezos Family Foundation, seeks to bring the science of early childhood development to parents and caregivers through creative tips they can use in everyday interactions with their children. There is a natural opportunity to put Vroom into the hands of families with young children through an intentional strategy of introducing it within the context of a TANF program. The Larimer County Works Program, a local version of TANF, was one of two programs nationally that participated in an innovative research study to examine whether Vroom can be effectively integrated into TANF service delivery and whether doing so improves outcomes related to engagement with Vroom and with the TANF program itself.

What Vroom in TANF looked like

The Larimer County Works Program designed and tested two approaches for introducing newly enrolled TANF participants to Vroom, one of which involved an intentional way of connecting the resource directly to participants' personal goals and needs:



Intentionally introduce Vroom and Action Step

TANF coach introduces the participant to Vroom and invites them to set a related parenting goal using the program's web-based platform, *My Journey to Success*, which involves learning more about Vroom and how to use it ("Action Step")



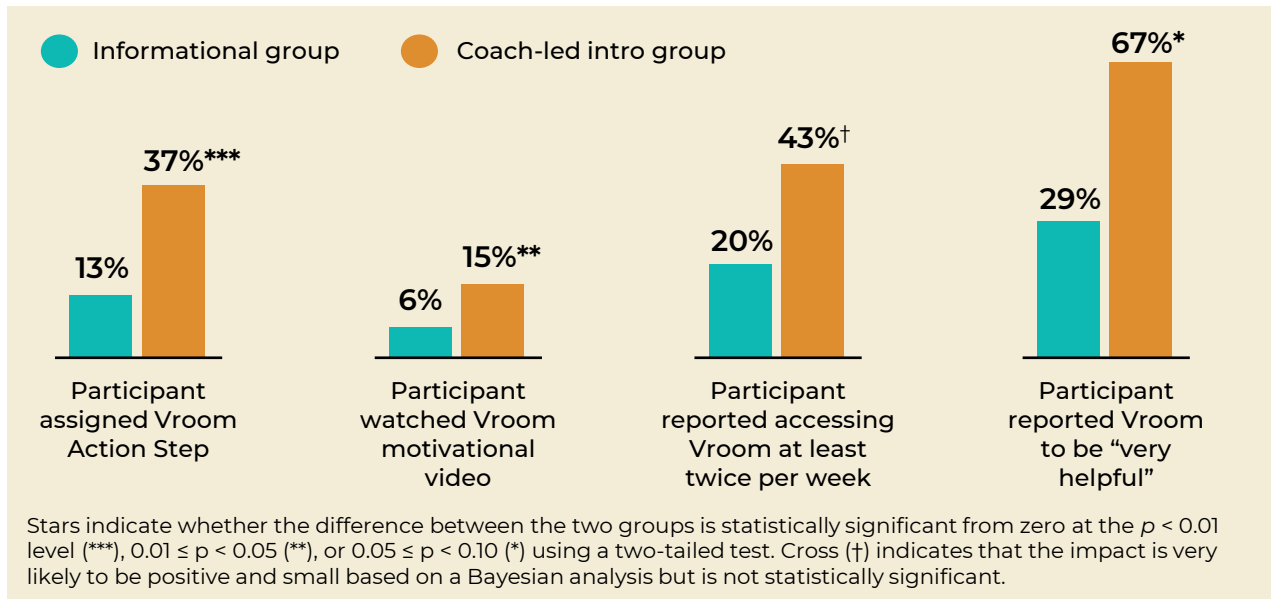
Offer information about Vroom

TANF coach mentions Vroom to the participant and lets them know they can learn more about it using *My Journey to Success*

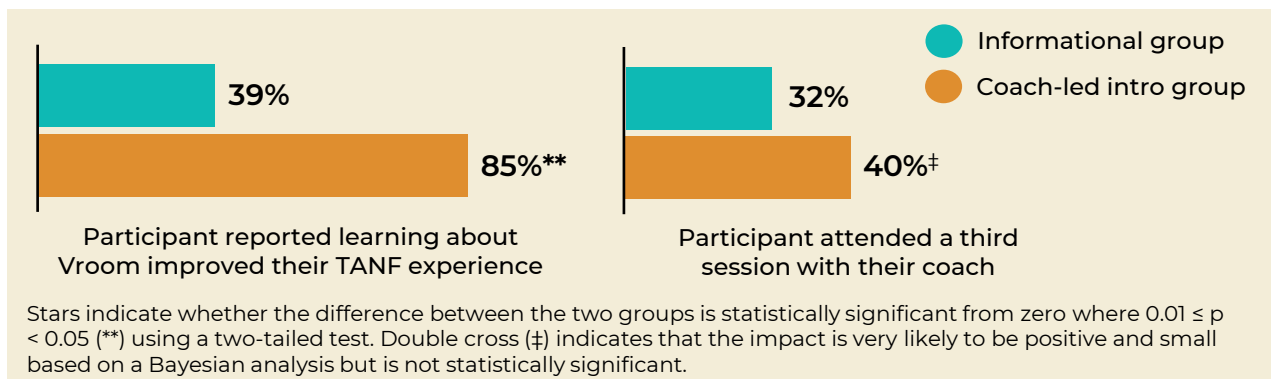
This project was sponsored by the Bezos Family Foundation, conducted in partnership with the Larimer County Department of Human Services. Mathematica was the learning and evaluation partner.

What we found

Participants in both groups reported accessing Vroom, but the coach-led introduction to Vroom + Action Step approach had a positive impact on Vroom engagement. Participants in this group were more likely to set parenting goals related to Vroom and complete Vroom action step activities. Participants in this group were also more likely to report using Vroom more frequently (at least twice per week) and say Vroom was “very helpful” for their family.



The coach-led introduction to Vroom + Action Step approach also had a positive impact on TANF program engagement. Participants in this group were more likely to report that learning about Vroom improved their experience with the TANF program. Based on administrative records, participants in this group also had modestly higher rates of attending one or more TANF case management sessions.



Overall, this evidence suggests that intentionality in introducing Vroom matters for participants’ engagement with Vroom. Participants in the coach-led introduction to Vroom + Action Step group demonstrated higher levels of engagement with Vroom and showed signs of improved engagement with the TANF program. This is consistent with the theory of change that participants’ engagements with Vroom could enhance their experiences with TANF coaches and the program, which in turn supports modest gains in program participation in the short-term. More broadly, this evidence indicates that TANF programs can be a meaningful context for introducing Vroom to families with young children and that approaches which connect Vroom more directly to participants’ personal goals and needs may be important for improving their experiences with TANF.