



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 Mecklenburg County Work First 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 Mecklenburg County Work First Program designed and tested an approach for introducing newly enrolled TANF participants to Vroom. We used a control group of participants randomly selected to continue in the program with business as usual – that is, no introduction to Vroom by the TANF employment social worker – to compare TANF engagement outcomes against the treatment group that received an introduction to Vroom.



**Introduce Vroom
during home visit**

TANF employment social worker introduces Vroom during an initial home visit and offers additional information about it if interested



**No introduction
to Vroom**

TANF employment social worker conducts home visit per usual and does not mention Vroom to the participant

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

What we found

Among participants in the group that received an introduction to Vroom, the evaluation found that a little more than half reported accessing Vroom, nearly one in three used it frequently, and nearly half reported Vroom to be “very helpful” for their family. We did not estimate impacts on Vroom engagement because participants in the control group that did not receive any information about Vroom had little-to-no plausible exposure to the resource.

A little more than half of participants in the group that received an introduction reported that learning about Vroom from their employment social worker improved their experience with the TANF program. However, the evaluation did not detect any statistically significant evidence of impacts on the four selected measures of TANF program engagement when comparing the groups.

59%

Participant reported accessing Vroom

31%

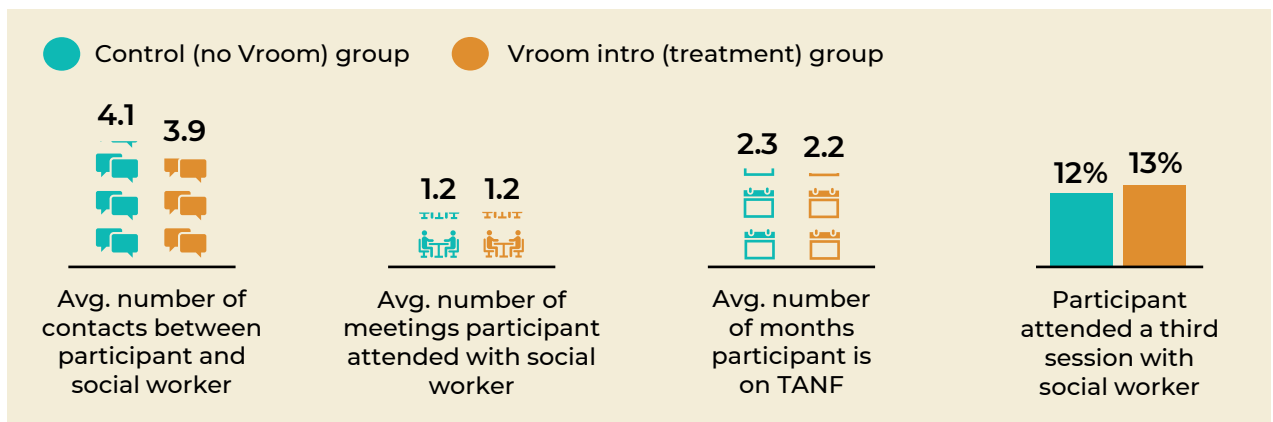
Participant reported accessing Vroom at least twice per week

49%

Participant reported Vroom to be very helpful

54%

Participant reported learning about Vroom improved TANF experience



Qualitative data from interviews with Mecklenburg County Work First participants and employment social workers suggests that Vroom may be more relevant for first-time parents who were eager for more support around navigating care for their first child. Employment social workers and participants also noted that it was difficult to focus on Vroom when families were facing hardships (for example, lack of housing). These insights, taken together with findings from a separate evaluation of integrating Vroom into a county TANF program, highlight the importance of an approach that connects the resource more directly to participants' personal goals and needs for encouraging take-up of Vroom and improving their experiences in TANF.



More information about Vroom
is available at vroom.org