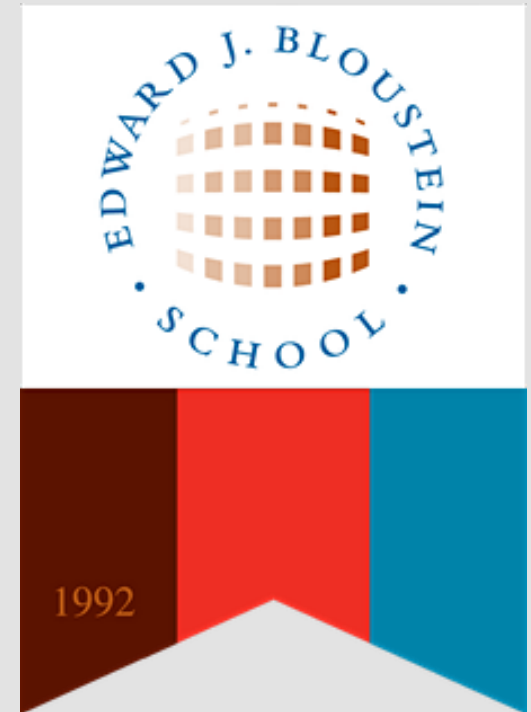# *They Give You A Voice*: Program Evaluation of the Garden State Leaders Program

April 30, 2020

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Agenda

1. Overview of the Project

2. Research Questions and Methods

3. Application Findings

4. Focus Group Findings

5. Survey Development

6. Recommendations and Conclusion

Overview of the Project

- The MPP policy practicum
- Project purpose

Research Questions and Methods

Research Questions:

- What are the benefits for individuals participating in the Garden State Leaders Program?
- What are barriers to participating in and graduating from the program?
- From the point of view of participants, how could facilitators improve the program?
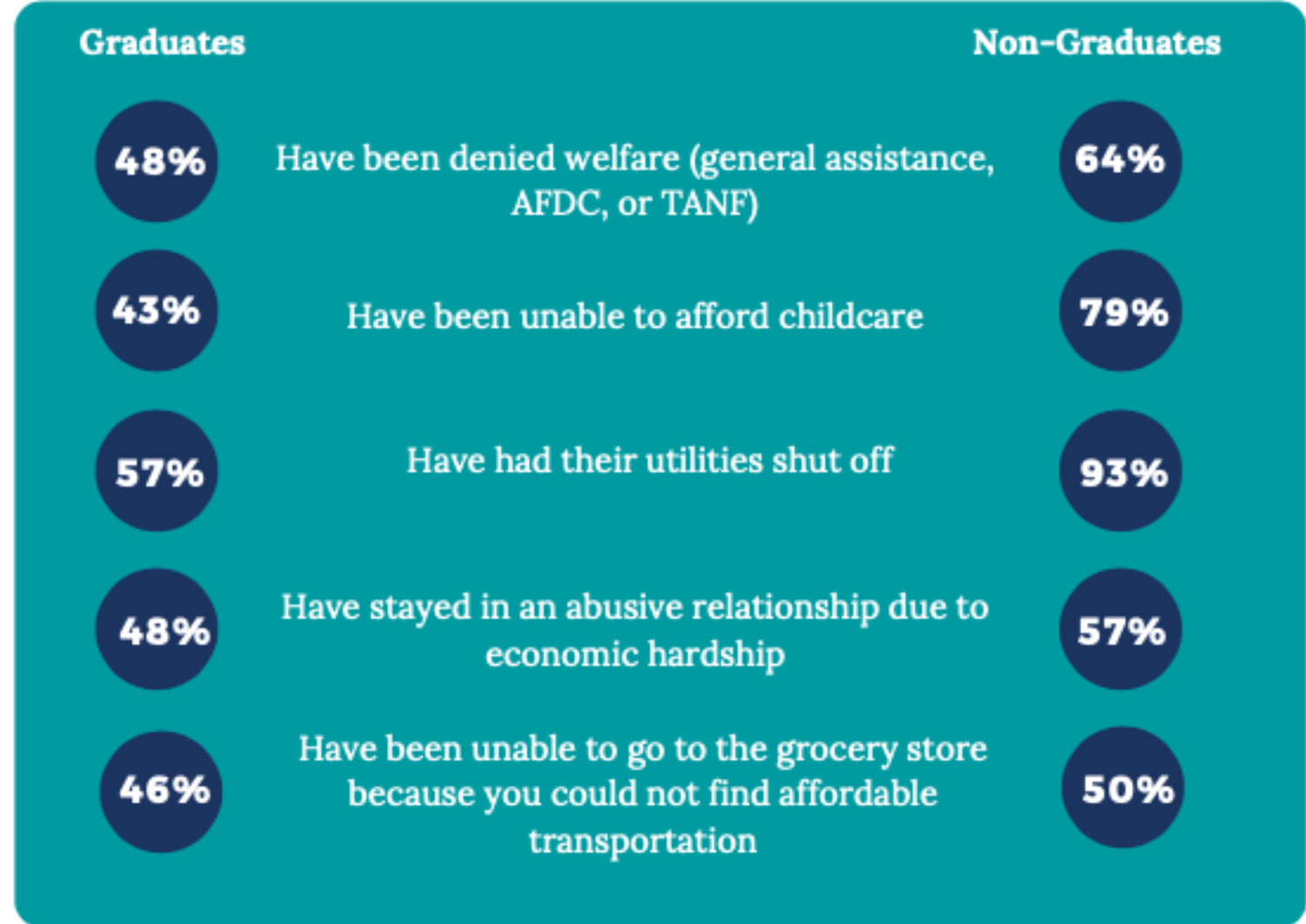
Methods:

- Application analysis
- Focus group
- Survey development

Application Analysis Methods

- Applications from 2016-2019
  - 58 applications
    - 44 graduates
    - 14 non-graduates
  - 18 questions
- Purpose was to determine differences between graduates and non-graduates

Application Findings

Graduates		Non-Graduates
48%	Have been denied welfare (general assistance, AFDC, or TANF)	64%
43%	Have been unable to afford childcare	79%
57%	Have had their utilities shut off	93%
48%	Have stayed in an abusive relationship due to economic hardship	57%
46%	Have been unable to go to the grocery store because you could not find affordable transportation	50%

Focus Group Methods

- Group discussion and participatory action research session

- 13 participants

- Purpose was to understand program benefits, barriers, and areas for improvement

Focus Group Findings

- **How Leaders learned about GSL**
  - Other organizations
  - Alumni

- **The application process**
  - Easy but varying

Focus Group Findings

- **Reasons for joining**
  - Learn about advocacy and resources
  - Represent those with mental health challenges

> *"It's important to give a voice to the voiceless cause there's not many people that have lived experiences, sharing the experience, and advocating on behalf of other people."*

Focus Group Findings

- **Impacts of the program**
  - Professional development
  - Personal development
  - Relationships with peers
  - Relationships with facilitators

"You know, after you experience homelessness...you feel like you've done so much and you just couldn't make it right. They give you a voice and they give you a paradigm on how to voice that voice."

Focus Group Findings

- **Barriers to completing the program**
  - Work conflicts
  - Transportation
  - Lack of supportive services

"It's a hardship for her to lay out money for training in advance. So, if she knew somebody needed that money, they would get it the day they came to the meeting, the workshop. But what if they needed the money to get to the workshop? "

Focus Group Findings

- **Improvements Leaders would like to see**
  - Improve time allocation
  - Decrease group size
  - Expand diversity

"But I think if there's any criticism I have of the classes that you **hold it down to like 10 people** *or something at the most, you know, because 20 was an awful lot of people, it really was."*

Survey Development

- Barriers and supports
- Personal and professional development
- Program evaluation
- Demographics

Recommendations

Improve the application process

Diversify cohorts

Expand supportive services

Improve session logistics

Help Leaders identify next steps after graduation

Implement the end-of-program survey

Acknowledgments and Questions