

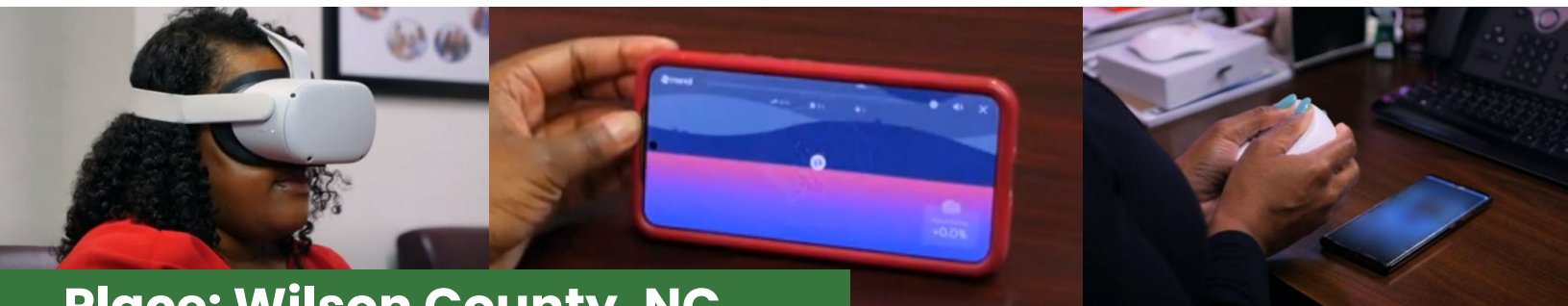
Staff Wellness Pilot

Small Bets Lab Powered by:

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From December 2022-February 2023, Rural Opportunity Institute’s (ROI) Small Bets Lab collaborated with the Wilson County Department of Social Services (WCDSS) on a pilot aimed to promote staff wellbeing.

Over eight weeks, WCDSS Child Support Services staff members used breathing and meditative practices to reduce stress and promote wellbeing.

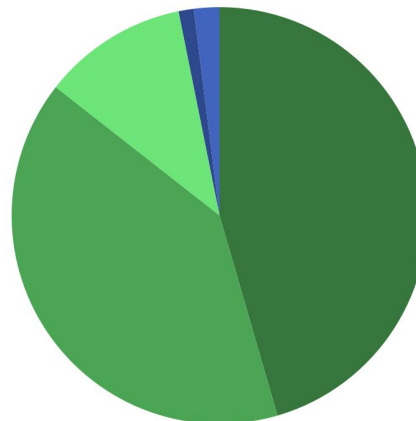


Place: Wilson County, NC

Home to over 70,000 people, Wilson County is located in rural Eastern North Carolina. WCDSS serves more than 1,000 families each year. Many of the families WCDSS works with have experienced generational trauma, leading to adverse outcomes for children. The child support staff are responsible for managing cases of child abuse and neglect—one of the more difficult jobs in social work. As a result, staff members experience high rates of secondary trauma, burnout, and compassion fatigue.



Wilson County, North Carolina



- 46% Caucasian
- 40.5% African American
- 11.4% Hispanic
- 2% Two or More Races
- 1.2% Asian

“I learned to take time for myself throughout the day.”

- Pilot Participant

Key Components of the Pilot

- 16 open-minded and committed staff members
- Consistency: staff members engaged in exercises for 10 minutes 2x per day
- Wellness practice built into the workplace
- Wellness Coaching: 30-minutes per week
- Take home [breathing cards](#) for all participants
- Public-nonprofit sector partnership
- Cutting-edge technology: Participants selected one of three Wellness Technologies:
 - [Oculus with Guided VR Meditation](#)
 - [Mendi](#)
 - [CoreHealth](#)



FACEBOOK    

 Meta



core
by  Hyperice

Previously available only to astronauts, professional athletes, and C-suite leadership in Fortune 500 companies, this is the first time these technologies have been applied in a community-based setting.



 mendi

"I went through a lot of stress in my personal and work life during the pilot and was able to manage the stress by taking a minute and doing meditation on the oculus. This and the breathing techniques really helped me through that difficult period in my life."

- Pilot Participant

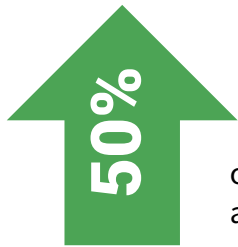
Testimonial Video



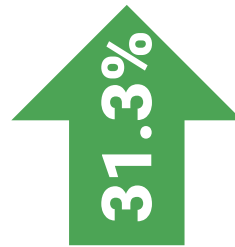
Pilot Goal

To coach the Child Support Services team of Wilson DSS to create measurable improvements in staff wellness measures, using technologies that are designed to reduce stress and improve resilience.

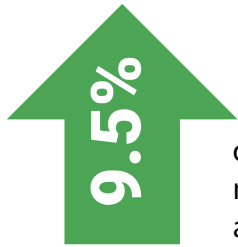
Outcomes: Breathing Assessment Data



of the group increased their ability to self-regulate and cope.



of the group experienced significant improvements.



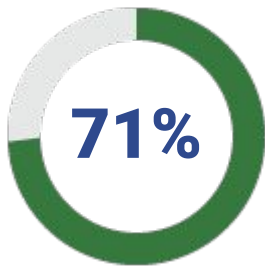
of participants increased their nervous system coherence on average.



of the power of the group's regulation system increased on average.

This indicates that the nervous system has been reset to a more optimal functional state which is associated with increased capacity to self-regulate emotions and behaviors.

Outcomes: Survey Data



experienced an increase in positive feelings



experienced a decrease in negative feelings



increase in using breath as a tool to relax and calm down



decrease in inability to cope with responsibilities



decrease in feelings of nervousness



decrease in trouble relaxing

How the technology devices supported staff members' wellness practice:

- Helped take breaks more regularly (to breathe / to relax)
- Helped correct breathing technique & breathe more deeply
- Helped to see that it only takes a few minutes to recharge
- Helped improve their meditation practices

Lessons Learned

1. Overall, the participants reported feeling better, and more equipped to handle the stresses of life after the pilot program.
2. While the pilot program data showed a lot of positive results, the results were also mixed. Some indicators showed significantly higher improvements while others demonstrated less favorable results at the end of the program. This suggests an opportunity to provide additional support as the program ends.
3. Having a dedicated team leader within the partner organization is essential to drive results.



“If I could change one thing, I would lengthen the pilot to 2 to 3 months as opposed to 6 weeks.”

- Pilot Participant

Lynn’s Experience

“Sometimes you just need a minute to yourself and pull yourself back together. That’s what the Oculus does.” - Lynn

At the beginning of the pilot, Lynn, a Lead Child Support Agent with Wilson County DSS, was experiencing the highest levels of stress of her life—both at home and at work. She felt like she could hardly get through each day. Lynn chose Oculus VR and used it to meditate at least twice per day; in the morning and in the afternoon, and sometimes at lunch, too. Using the Oculus made a notable difference in Lynn’s day-to-day ability to manage stress, so much so that her family member gifted her one to use at home. Now, Lynn uses the Oculus and breathing techniques she learned during the pilot at work and at home. It has helped her be more present with the families she works with, and with her granddaughter, whom she is raising.

“This has been the greatest thing that I’ve ever been involved in.” - Lynn

About Wilson DSS



The Wilson County Department of Social Services seeks positive transformative well-being for children, families and adults. Our services touch every segment of the population to allow families to gain the knowledge, skills, and support that helps them to become strong and healthy.

About ROI’s Small Bets Lab



ROI’s [Small Bets Lab](#) explores promising but risky ideas that show incredible potential to transform the toughest challenges that rural communities face. Modeled after corporate innovation programs like Google X and Bell Labs, the Small Bets Lab is the first initiative that applies the incubator model to rural, community-based settings. [Rural Opportunity Institute](#) builds the capacity of rural communities to support people’s healing from generational trauma to achieve health, safety, connection, and self-determination.