

Evaluation of the Primeira Infância Melhor Program



Primeira Infância Melhor (PIM) is an intersectoral public policy of the Brazilian State of Rio Grande do Sul that promotes early childhood development.



The program aims to support families, based on their own culture and experiences, in promoting the full development of children, from pregnancy to age six.

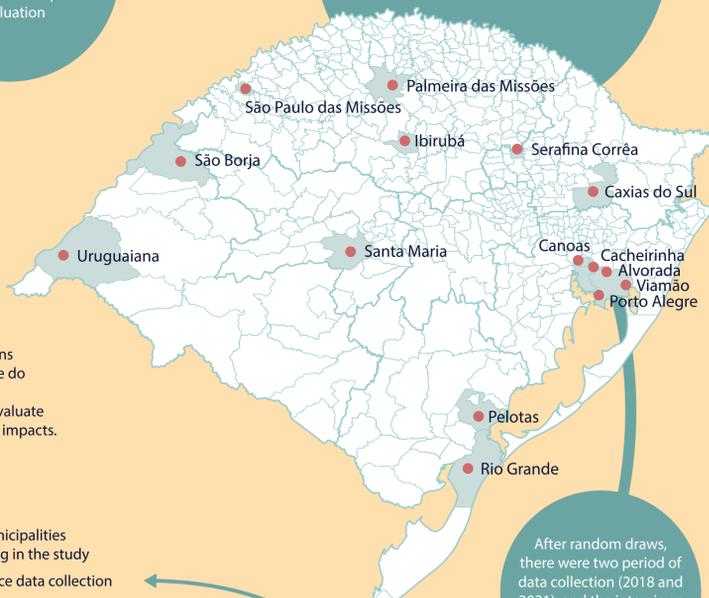
PIM acts via a combination of periodic home visits and community meetings, with ludic activities following individualized plans, as well as by integrating the network of public services.

Learn more about the PIM Program: <https://www.pim.saude.rs.gov.br/site/>

Method

Experimental impact evaluation

2419 children up to 3 years of age from families with a socioeconomic profile considered to be aligned with the PIM eligibility criteria were randomly allocated between an intervention group and a control group.



After random draws, there were two periods of data collection (2018 and 2021), and the interviews were answered by the child's primary caregiver.

In December 2018, 502 caregivers were interviewed in person

In the second round, in the second half of 2021, 478 caregivers were interviewed by telephone

Impact Evaluation Research of the PIM Program

The research aimed to identify and measure the impacts caused by the program on child development, parenting, and family access to public services.

Research Timeline

- 2017** Partnership between research institution, funding organizations and the Rio Grande do Sul State Health Secretariat to evaluate the program's impacts.
- 2018**
 - First 4 municipalities participating in the study
 - Face-to-face data collection
- 2019**
 - Lessons learned from the first stages of research and process improvements
- 2021**
 - Revision of the Program's Theory of Change
 - Telephone-based data collection
- 2022**
 - Closing of the second data collection stage
 - Data analysis

ANALYSES

Intention to Treat (ITT) effect, effect caused by the program on children and families randomly assigned to receive an offer to participate in PIM, regardless of their participation, when compared to those who did not receive it.

Local Average Treatment Effect (LATE), effect of the program on the subgroup of families who actually participated in the program due to the offer received to participate.

Results

When evaluating the program, effects were found in child development, child health, parenting, and in the quality of family interactions, as well as in the families' access to the network of services.

Child health and access to services

In 2021, it was found that the intervention group had **16,1% higher probability** of some family member having sought care in the service network in the four weeks prior to the interview, compared to the control group*.

*ITT analyses



Child development

In 2018, children in the intervention group showed **gains in child development in fine motor skills** (coordination and movement of fingers and hands, different from gross motor skills, which concern the coordination and movement of arms and legs, for example).

*ITT and LATE analyses.

Parenting and Family Interactions

There is evidence of positive impact of the PIM program on improving aspects related to parenting.

PIM caused a greater impact for children with caregivers of a lower educational level (up to high school). For these children, developmental gains were observed in the following areas:

Gross motor skills

Fine motor skills

Global development score



Improved parenting skills.

A GAIN IN PARENTING SKILLS WAS FOUND, as measured with an indicator that encompasses all observed parenting skill domains, specifically parental consistency, positive encouragement, coercive parenting, and quality of caregiver-child relationship*.

*ITT and LATE analyses 2021 data

Use of physical punishments with children.

62,4% LOWER PROBABILITY OF USING PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT WITH CHILDREN*.

*LATE analyses 2021 data

Hours the caregiver spends with the child.

INCREASE OF 28,8 HOURS PER WEEK or more than 4 hours per day*.

*LATE analyses 2018 data

Increased interaction between families and children.

31,6% GREATER PROBABILITY OF THE FAMILY SINGING OR TEACHING to the child every day and a **34,6%** INCREASE IN THE PROBABILITY OF HAVING CHILDREN BOOKS AVAILABLE*.

*LATE analyses 2018 data



Lessons Learned

The PIM program is a strategy that enables the strengthening of positive parenting and child development.

The evaluation process, which includes constant contact between researchers and program staff, has allowed the construction of the program's theory of change, the strengthening of monitoring practices, and the constant improvement of the PIM.

The program can be improved with new strategies to reach and retain a larger number of families, and can also promote activities to strengthen other areas of child development, such as socioemotional and cognitive development.

Importance of monitoring and supervision of home visitors regarding the program activities they perform with the families.