cabs ... at mdrc

The Center for Applied
Behavioral Science (CABS)
combines MDRC's decades
of experience tackling
social policy issues with
insights from behavioral
science. CABS takes on
pressing problems that our
partners want to solve. Our
approach to problem
solving focuses on ensuring
that people who receive
services are at the center of
designs.





Our Approach to Problem Solving

Identify problems and define those problems in a neutral and measurable way.

Use insights from behavioral science to explain why the problems are occurring. Make the design ideas a reality. Determine how the design will be implemented.

DEFINE DIAGNOSE DESIGN DEVELOP
TEST

Investigate the context to ensure there is a clear understanding of the barriers to success. Create solutions that relate to the barriers uncovered in the diagnosis. Create prototypes of the ideas.

Rigorously evaluate through randomized controlled trials to determine effectiveness.

This approach has generated proven examples including:



Simplifying information



Providing timely reminders and clear deadlines



Personalizing messages to individual circumstances

The interventions typically have low costs, from \$0.01 to \$10 per participant. CABS tests the impacts of interventions rigorously, usually in randomized field trials, often building on the findings by iterating, improving, and reevaluating the original designs.