

# **Service Delivery and Institutional Linkages**

## **Early Implementation Experiences of Employment Retention and Advancement Programs**

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# Overview

Considerable interest exists among state and local welfare departments, workforce investment agencies, community colleges, and other nonprofit community-based service providers to find ways to promote job retention and advancement among employed welfare recipients and other low-wage working families. Little is known, however, about what services are effective. The Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) evaluation, designed to provide more information about what works in this area, is the largest and most comprehensive study of its kind.

Conceived and sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the evaluation is being conducted under contract by MDRC, a nonprofit, nonpartisan social policy research organization. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has provided additional funding for the project. As of December 2002, a total of 15 ERA programs are being tested in 8 states. This report describes the initial experiences of those programs, focusing on implementation issues and institutional connections.

## Key Findings

- **Increasing participation in postemployment services.** Based on early program assessments, the ERA sites have been fairly successful in contacting and initially engaging participants. Most sites have been able to generate at least one postemployment contact with 70 percent to 80 percent of the people assigned to the ERA program. Encouraging participation in ongoing program activities, however, has been more difficult: In many of the sites, less than half of the employed program group members participated in ongoing activities. To encourage participation, many sites designed creative marketing strategies, and some use financial and in-kind incentives.
- **Restructuring retention and advancement services.** Because the programs that are designed to increase retention and advancement are so new, staff have found the early phase of the ERA project to be a learning experience; they must understand how to work with participants in a postemployment context. To achieve this, sites have had to create new tools and restructure services. Some have created interview guides and checklists to uncover retention-related issues and explore advancement and training opportunities. Others have trained staff in ways of working with participants (and, in particular, in ways of working with them on advancement issues).
- **Creating institutional linkages.** Most of the ERA programs use relatively complex organizational arrangements to deliver services. Typically, the programs represent partnerships among several agencies and organizations, including welfare agencies, workforce investment agencies, nonprofit community-based organizations, community colleges, and others; however, at each site, the welfare agency usually takes on the lead organizing role. Rather than forge new relationships for ERA, most programs created partnerships by building on the linkages they had already established for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. A key factor in involving the workforce investment system in the ERA program (a linkage that occurred in some sites but not all) is that coordination between workforce investment agencies and welfare agencies is largely driven by funding that flows from the TANF system to the workforce investment system for the purpose of serving welfare recipients or working individuals.

Each ERA program is being evaluated using a research design that assigns people, by chance, either to a program group that receives the new services or to a counterfactual group that receives the services that were available before ERA was developed. MDRC will follow the two groups for three to five years and will produce both site-specific and crosscutting reports that describe the programs and assess their effects.



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## Executive Summary

Considerable interest exists among state and local welfare departments, workforce investment agencies, community colleges, and other nonprofit community-based service providers in finding ways to promote job retention and advancement among employed welfare recipients and other low-wage working families. Little is known, however, about what services are effective. The Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) evaluation, designed to provide more information about what works in this area, is the largest and most comprehensive study of its kind. The project has been in existence since 1999 and was conceived and sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). MDRC, a nonprofit, nonpartisan social policy research organization, is under contract with ACF to conduct the evaluation and is working with The Lewin Group to provide technical assistance to the participating sites. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) is also providing funding to the project, in part to learn more about the linkages between welfare and workforce investment agencies in the ERA programs.

With 15 program tests in 8 states, the ERA project will, over the next several years, provide a wealth of information about the effectiveness of a wide array of program models, including preemployment and postemployment strategies for job retention and career advancement, employer initiatives, and services to increase job retention among the hard-to-employ. Although each program is unique and has multiple goals, the programs fall roughly into one of three groups based on their primary focus:

- **Advancement.** Two of the ERA programs focus primarily on helping employed participants advance, either by encouraging them to enroll in further education and training or by helping them find a “better” job with higher wages, more benefits, or advancement opportunities. Both of these programs target employed welfare recipients whose earnings are low enough to maintain their eligibility for cash assistance. Although advancement is the main focus, these programs also provide work supports and other retention-related services as needed.
- **Placement and retention.** Four of the ERA programs target people with a greater number of barriers to employment. These programs are more focused on helping participants find and keep jobs. The target populations for these programs include people with disabilities, people with identified substance abuse issues, long-term welfare recipients, welfare recidivists, and individuals who have cycled in and out of employment.

- **Mixed.** The remaining programs focus on both retention and advancement and serve a broader target population. Three of the sites provide job search services to unemployed Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) applicants and recipients. Seven of the nine sites provide postemployment retention and advancement services to employed TANF recipients and welfare leavers.

This document is the second cross-site report for the ERA project. It describes early implementation experiences and the institutional connections that the ERA programs comprise.

## **Early Implementation Experiences**

As of June 2003, all program tests have started research and program operations. Although program administrators and staff have accomplished a great deal since the project began, the implementation process has been challenging, particularly given that there are few existing program models to replicate. A number of lessons have emerged from the early experiences of the ERA sites:

- **Generating creative strategies to increase participation in postemployment services is necessary, particularly when services are voluntary and targeted to working families.**

Based on early program assessments, the sites have been fairly successful in contacting and initially engaging participants. Most sites have had at least one postemployment contact with 70 percent to 80 percent of individuals assigned to the ERA program. Getting people to participate in ongoing program activities, however, has been more difficult — in many of the sites, less than half of the employed program group members participated in ongoing program activities.

Many sites designed creative marketing strategies, and some use financial and in-kind incentives to encourage program participation. In some sites, staff make services more convenient for working families by meeting them at their homes or worksites to save them time. Many staff work a flexible schedule in order to meet people after normal working hours. A few sites have designed more elaborate financial and in-kind incentive strategies. Texas, for example, provides a generous stipend — \$200 per month — if participants maintain employment and participate in one employment-related activity per month. South Carolina and Illinois use smaller financial and in-kind incentives to encourage participation in specific program activities and to reward participant accomplishments (such as completing a personal development plan, finishing a certificate program, or maintaining employment for three months).

- **ERA programs have had to restructure their assessment and case management strategies to focus on retention and advancement and to better serve working people.**

Because the path toward retention and advancement is different for each person, ERA staff work individually with participants to identify two concerns: (1) barriers to employment retention (for example, child care concerns, work attendance problems, and substance abuse issues) and (2) long-term career goals. Some sites have created interview guides to obtain such information, while others rely on informal checklists and participant interviews.

The Los Angeles Reach for Success (RFS) program and the Eugene, Oregon, program created interview guides to help staff uncover information about job retention issues, including child care problems, basic needs (like food, housing, and health insurance), personal finances, work habits and attendance, and job performance. Eugene's interview guide also includes questions to obtain advancement-related information, such as details about transferable job skills and training opportunities. Staff from the programs in Medford and Salem, Oregon, use informal checklists to uncover similar information, mostly about retention-related issues. Because its target population is so broad, the South Carolina program relies on informal interviews with participants. Sites working with the hard-to-employ have more in-depth formal assessment tools to help identify barriers to work and job retention. Examples of the interview guides and checklists are included in Appendix B.

In addition to restructuring the upfront assessment, many staff have had to develop new strategies for working on retention and advancement issues on an ongoing basis with employed participants. Many ERA staff have found that it is important to maintain a focus on participants' long-term career goals, but, at the same time, to formulate small, manageable steps to help participants reach those goals. For example, the first step in pursuing a career in computer technology is to better understand the skills required for an entry-level job in the field. If a participant interested in computer technology needs further training, the second step would be to find a suitable training program in the area.

- **Job loss is more common and pervasive than many sites expected.**

Although staff know that job loss is a common problem for the ERA target populations, many were still surprised by the pervasiveness of the problem in spite of intensified program efforts. As a result, many programs had to strengthen their focus on rapid reemployment and retention-related services. In the Texas sites, ERA program managers established a goal of employing individuals within 2 weeks of job loss. In addition, staff in Corpus Christi decided to conduct employer site visits at 2 weeks and 1, 6, 12, and 18 months after a participant finds a job. ERA staff in Los Angeles also work intensively with participants for at least 30 days to help them find another job. As a result, however, the job developers in Los Angeles spend much

of their time helping unemployed participants find jobs rather than helping employed participants get better jobs, thus compromising the program's advancement strategy.

- **ERA program staff were often uncomfortable with their role as career counselors, and they were unfamiliar with the tools and services available to help participants with career advancement. Many sites provided training to build staff expertise in this area.**

Providing career advancement services is an entirely new role for most ERA staff. Many of the sites provided counselors with training to help them (1) become more comfortable with their new role, (2) articulate career advancement plans and design activities to support this goal, and (3) better understand the local resources available to help participants pursue advancement. In some sites, outside consultants were brought in to help staff better understand the roles and responsibilities of a career counselor, work with employers, and help participants negotiate life changes. Some sites also provided in-house training for staff to help them become more familiar with local career resources available to participants.

- **Program benchmarks and staff performance measures have helped many sites focus on program goals and define successful participant outcomes.**

In most welfare-to-work programs, success is achieved when a participant finds a job. The ERA programs, however, are more focused on longer-term employment outcomes, which are harder to measure and take longer to achieve. Sites have found that clearly defining program goals is important for keeping staff focused on retention and advancement outcomes. As such, most of the sites have created benchmarks — such as sustained employment and wage increases — for outcome measures. Some sites have created ERA-specific databases to track this information.

Other sites have gone further to create performance measures for staff. In the Riverside Phase 2 and Corpus Christi programs, managers use performance standards to determine whether staff are achieving program goals. Performance measures in Riverside include goals for employment retention and engagement in and completion of education and training. Performance measures in Corpus Christi are different depending on staff roles, but they focus primarily on job placement, sustained employment, and wage increases.

## **Institutional Structure and Linkages in ERA Programs**

Most of the ERA programs use relatively complex organizational arrangements to deliver their services. These programs typically represent partnerships among several agencies and organizations, including welfare agencies, workforce investment agencies, nonprofit community-based organizations, community colleges, and others. Key findings include:

- **In most ERA sites, the welfare office plays the lead role. The workforce investment system is an important partner in some — but not all — of the programs.**

The lead role of the welfare department in ERA programs is not surprising, given that most of the programs focus on TANF recipients or leavers. In Minneapolis, Texas, and Oregon, the workforce system plays a lead or joint leadership role in ERA and brings expertise and resources on employment-related issues to the programs. Some programs (Illinois, Riverside, most Oregon sites, and Texas) colocate the ERA program at One-Stop Centers, and some (the Texas and Oregon sites) also colocate a few “team” welfare and workforce investment staff to work together to provide ERA services. However, other programs only use workforce investment services on an “as-needed” basis, and there is little coordination with the welfare system. Sites with more coordinated services between the two systems find that this arrangement leads to access to high-quality job search resources, job leads, employer connections, and training funded by the workforce investment system and that it creates a positive environment for participants.

- **In most sites, the institutional linkages between the welfare and workforce investment systems that were established for the ERA program are based on those forged for the TANF program.**

While a focus on retention and advancement issues might be expected to provide common ground for the development of new linkages, such linkages generally did not occur in the ERA programs. However, in a few sites, the ERA program did enhance coordination between the systems. As discussed above, the Texas and Oregon sites created “teams” of welfare and workforce staff under ERA, while in Riverside the workforce investment agency (which previously had only minimal involvement in TANF-related programs) took complete responsibility for one of the programs being tested.

- **Coordination between the workforce investment and welfare systems in these sites is largely driven by the flow of TANF or Welfare-to-Work grant funds to the One-Stop system to provide services to welfare recipients and working individuals.**

This flow of funding enables One-Stop Centers to serve ERA participants without having them count as part of the workforce investment performance standards, which are often viewed as a barrier to serving welfare recipients or working individuals through workforce investment agency funding. Other factors, such as state guidance and past partnerships, also enhance institutional linkages between the two systems. In addition to performance standards, factors that hinder coordination in these sites include the different goals and target populations of the two systems, different regional jurisdictions and organizational cultures, and a lack of coordinated decision-making processes between the two systems.

- **Nonprofit community-based organizations provide key program services in several ERA projects; for-profit agencies provide services in one site.**

Whether or not the welfare or workforce investment agency played a lead role in the ERA programs, nonprofit community organizations are an important service provider in five of the sites. These organizations are generally under contract to either the welfare or workforce investment agency to provide employment and other services to ERA participants. For example, each of the Texas sites contracts with one nonprofit agency to provide services, while others (such as Minneapolis and Illinois) use multiple providers. Only one site in the ERA evaluation, Illinois, contracts with for-profit organizations to provide program services. In addition, a few sites, primarily in Oregon, involve community colleges in their ERA programs.

- **Programs serving a hard-to-employ population generally established new linkages with other organizations.**

These new linkages bring to programs special expertise on the difficult barriers facing the hard-to-employ population. In the New York PRIDE program, for example, the agency which also operates the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program is a major partner. Because of the VR group's experience in serving a population whose employability is limited by physical or mental health problems, the welfare agency viewed the involvement of the organization as critical to the success of the program. Several of the providers in Minneapolis contract with licensed psychologists from organizations with mental health expertise to conduct the in-depth family assessment that is an important first step in the program there. In Portland, the community college that runs the ERA program employs in each office a mental health specialist who conducts screenings and makes referrals to a local community mental health provider.

## **Upcoming Research in the ERA Project**

Each of the ERA programs is being evaluated using a random assignment design, in which clients are assigned by chance to a program group that is eligible for ERA services or to a counterfactual group that receives the services that were available before the ERA project was developed. MDRC will use surveys and administrative records to follow both groups for three to five years. Because individuals are assigned to the two groups at random, there are no systematic differences between the groups' members when people enter the study. Thus, any differences that emerge during the follow-up period are attributable to the ERA program being tested.

This design will allow ACF and MDRC to obtain reliable data about whether or not programs increase employment rates, employment stability, wage progression, earned income, and other important outcomes. The study will also assess whether results differ for important



subgroups of the target population — for example, people without a high school diploma — and will compare the financial costs and benefits of the programs.

MDRC will produce a separate interim report describing the implementation and early effects of each ERA program. Crosscutting reports will draw lessons from the many program tests.

## **Policy Implications**

Although still at an early stage, the ERA project has already demonstrated that states and localities can mount innovative, large-scale programs to promote employment retention and advancement for welfare recipients and other low-wage workers. The states' strong commitment to the ERA programs — even in the face of mounting budget pressures — suggests that their vision for welfare reform includes a focus on long-term self-sufficiency for families. These investments are particularly critical as time limits on the receipt of cash benefits expire and the economy weakens. In this environment, the importance of employment stability and wage progression is magnified.

The tremendous flexibility inherent in the block grant structure that was created in the 1996 federal welfare law (the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, or PRWORA) has facilitated this evolution in welfare reform. As welfare caseloads have declined, many states have been able to shift resources from providing basic assistance to building a new set of supports for low-income working families. The states' ability to sustain and expand these efforts will likely depend on whether the funding level and the flexible approach are maintained — and even enhanced — when the TANF block grant is reauthorized.



## Chapter 1

# Background and Introduction

Welfare reforms over the last decade have fundamentally altered the philosophy and structure of public assistance programs for low-income families. Cash assistance now brings with it the expectation for work, and welfare programs have become more focused on helping people find jobs. Indeed, many welfare recipients are able to find employment. The increased focus on work, however, highlights low-wage working families' difficulties in achieving economic independence. Some heads of household lack the skills necessary to advance to better-paying jobs. Others cycle in and out of employment, sometimes because their jobs are temporary, their family responsibilities get in the way, or they face personal barriers like substance abuse or depression.

Although there is considerable interest in promoting job retention and advancement among low-wage working families, little is known about what services are effective. The Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) evaluation, designed to provide information about what works in this area, is the largest and most comprehensive study of its kind. The project has been in existence since 1999 and includes 15 experiments in 8 states spanning the geographic range from New York to California. ERA was conceived and is sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). MDRC, a nonprofit, nonpartisan social policy research organization, is under contract with ACF to conduct the evaluation. MDRC is also working with The Lewin Group to provide technical assistance to the participating sites. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) is also providing funding to the project, in part to learn more about the linkages between welfare and workforce investment agencies that exist as part of the ERA programs.

Over the next several years, the ERA project will provide a wealth of information about the effectiveness of a wide array of program models, including preemployment and postemployment strategies for job retention and career advancement, employer initiatives, and services to increase employment retention among the hard-to-employ. This document is the second cross-site report to describe the early experiences of the ERA programs. While the first report addressed early design and start-up issues, this report focuses more closely on program implementation issues and institutional connections. This chapter provides an overview of the ERA programs and the evaluation; Chapter 2 focuses on the experiences sites have had in implementing and operating the ERA programs; and Chapter 3 describes institutional linkages in the ERA programs, with a particular focus on connections between welfare and workforce investment agencies.

# Laying the Groundwork: What We Know About Retention and Advancement

## The Policy and Economic Environment

A number of trends have emerged over the past three decades, affecting the lives of low-wage working families and the public support services available to them.

- **Falling wages and dwindling job opportunities for low-skilled workers have increased the proportion of working families living near or below the poverty line.**

Beginning in the 1970s, long-term structural changes in the U.S. economy began to reduce sharply the availability of well-paying jobs for people without a college education. Between 1979 and 1995, the inflation-adjusted average hourly wage of non-college-educated workers fell by 12 percent, and the average hourly wage of workers without a high school diploma fell by 23 percent. Consequently, low-wage working families became more likely to fall below the poverty line; in 1995, 14.4 percent of all workers earned hourly wages that — with full-time, year-round work — would leave a family of four below 75 percent of the federal poverty line, as opposed to 4.2 percent in 1975.<sup>1</sup> As the late 1990s ushered in declining unemployment rates, the disparity in demand between those with and without college degrees became apparent. While college-educated workers enjoyed an unemployment rate of 2 percent, non-college-educated workers experienced an unemployment rate of 7 percent.<sup>2</sup>

Low-wage workers have also experienced an erosion of employer-sponsored benefits. The percentage of workers without a high school degree who had employer-provided health coverage fell from 63 percent in 1979 to 45 percent in 1993. The 1980s also saw increases in employment instability, involuntary part-time work, and “contingent” or temporary work.<sup>3</sup>

Wages started to increase for low-wage workers in the late 1990s, but the current economic downturn is likely to depress wages further. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that in the next decade the growth rate for jobs that do not require a postsecondary certificate or degree will be slower than the growth rate for jobs that require more education.<sup>4</sup>

- **Welfare programs have become increasingly focused on work as a requirement for receiving cash assistance. Although welfare recipients have**

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<sup>1</sup>Mishel, Bernstein, and Schmitt, 1997.

<sup>2</sup>White and Rogers, 2000.

<sup>3</sup>Mishel, Bernstein, and Schmitt, 1997.

<sup>4</sup>Hecker, 2001.

**been successful in finding employment, the jobs they find are usually low-paying, and their retention and advancement outcomes are often poor.**

Under federal waivers in the early 1990s, states started experimenting with different strategies for increasing employment among welfare recipients. Some of the strategies included expanding earned income disregards (allowing employed welfare recipients to keep more of their cash grants), increasing the number of people mandated to participate in work activities, and imposing time limits and sanctions for those who do not participate. These changes culminated in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996. PRWORA replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). TANF gave states more flexibility to design their welfare programs, but increased work participation requirements and limited the receipt of federal cash assistance to 60 months for most families. Thus, state TANF programs limited participation exemptions, shifted their focus to rapid employment, and imposed greater penalties for noncompliance.

After TANF was implemented, welfare rolls decreased by around 50 percent, in part due to the economic expansion that occurred simultaneously. Studies have shown that a large proportion of those who left welfare were working at some point in the year following their exit. However, a much smaller proportion consistently worked during that time. A recent synthesis of “welfare leaver” studies found that around three-quarters of those who left TANF worked at some point in the year following their exit from welfare, but only slightly over one-third worked all four quarters, indicating a high level of instability.<sup>5</sup> This job instability often leads to welfare recidivism. One study with a nationally representative sample found that of the welfare recipients who left TANF between 1997 and 1999, 22 percent returned by the end of 1999.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, the jobs that welfare recipients take tend to be low-paying, with limited wage progression. Average hourly wages were \$7.15 for a nationally representative sample of people who left TANF between 1997 and 1999.<sup>7</sup> Another study examined five years of data for a group of women who had left welfare, finding that hourly wages increased by about 1 percent per year. However, annual earnings increased more substantially — by more than 40 percent — a result that must have been driven primarily by increases in hours worked.<sup>8</sup>

- **The workforce investment system has new opportunities to provide employment services to welfare recipients.**

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<sup>5</sup>Acs and Loprest, 2001.

<sup>6</sup>Loprest, 2002.

<sup>7</sup>Loprest, 2001.

<sup>8</sup>Cancian et al., 1999.

As states implemented TANF, two major changes took place at the federal level within the workforce investment system operated by the Department of Labor (DOL). First, as part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, Congress passed legislation creating the \$3 billion Welfare-to-Work (WtW) grant program, providing resources for employment and job retention services for hard-to-employ welfare recipients. Second, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), under which the majority of the country's job training services for low-income individuals were funded, was replaced by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in 1998. WIA required the establishment of One-Stop Centers, which provide universal access to a wide range of employment services with the goal of decreasing service fragmentation and increasing collaboration among different federally funded programs.

The WtW legislation and WIA create opportunities for collaboration between TANF agencies and the workforce investment system. In some states and local areas, the workforce investment agency has taken a major role in developing and delivering services to TANF recipients, in conjunction with the welfare agency.<sup>9</sup> These collaborations present an opportunity for different public agencies to provide more coordinated employment services and work supports for families. More information on the linkages between the welfare and workforce investment systems in the ERA project is provided in Chapter 3.

### **The Effectiveness of Services to Promote Retention and Advancement**

A number of federal, state, and local policies and programs have been implemented over the years to meet the needs of the working poor:

- **Work supports.** Over the past decade or more, in part to encourage work, federal and state governments expanded income supports and health insurance for low-income working families. The federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) — which can raise family income by as much as 40 percent — was dramatically expanded during this period. Many states also expanded earned income disregards for TANF eligibility, and transitional Medicaid was provided to those who leave welfare for work. Health insurance was expanded to reach more children, first through Medicaid expansions and then through the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). In addition, more federal and state dollars were set aside for child care subsidies for low-income working families.
- **Postemployment services.** Because job loss among the welfare population is so common, welfare-to-work programs are now more likely to continue pro-

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<sup>9</sup>Martinson and Holcomb, 2002; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2002.

viding services after participants find employment. These programs generally include periodic postemployment follow-up by case managers to see whether participants are still working and, if they are not, to help them find another job. Some case management services focus more on career advancement, either by encouraging participants to enroll in training or by helping them find better jobs with their existing skills.

- **Services for the hard-to-employ.** People with more serious barriers to employment (disabilities, mental health issues, substance abuse problems, etc.) are often less likely to keep a job, even for a short period of time. They may need more intensive services (such as subsidized employment, a supported work environment, and intensive job coaching) in order to maintain employment for a reasonable length of time. For many participants, retention is the first priority, and career advancement is addressed further down the road.
- **Industry-based and employer-based strategies.** Another new retention and advancement strategy is to provide services to low-wage employees within a particular industry or at an employer site. In several communities, consortia (often including employers, community colleges, unions, and community-based organizations) have worked within an employment sector or industry to create career ladders for entry-level workers. In other areas, retention services are provided at an employer site. For example, case managers from a welfare office may provide supportive services and retention-related workshops to low-wage employees at their worksites. If these services increase retention rates, the program is beneficial to both employers and employees.

Although these services provide much needed assistance to low-wage working families, there is limited rigorous research demonstrating the effectiveness of most of these strategies. However, previous program evaluations provide some clues about what works (and what does not work) to increase retention and advancement outcomes.

- **Welfare-to-work programs.** Rigorous studies of preemployment welfare-to-work programs show mixed results on whether these services affect retention. Findings from the HHS-sponsored National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (NEWWS) show that programs mixing job search and adult basic education are more effective in promoting sustained employment than programs that emphasize job search and work experience almost exclusively. In fact, the Portland, Oregon, program (which had the largest impacts on sustained employment of the 11 programs tested in the study) encouraged par-

ticipants to wait for “good” jobs — full-time jobs that paid more than the minimum wage and offered opportunities for advancement.<sup>10</sup>

- **Earnings supplements.** Earnings supplements provide additional cash benefits to working families, either through an earned income disregard (policies that disregard some or all of welfare recipients’ earnings when calculating their cash grants) or income supplements administered outside of the welfare program for working families. Two programs that provided generous earnings supplements have been evaluated: the Canadian Self-Sufficiency Project (SSP) and the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). SSP provided a substantial earnings supplement for up to three years to long-term single-parent welfare recipients who worked full time (at least 30 hours per week). MFIP increased the earned income disregard for employed welfare recipients and provided preemployment services for those who did not have a job. Both programs had impacts on employment as well as employment retention (defined as sustained employment for a year or longer).<sup>11</sup> Earnings supplements hold promise as a retention intervention; however, like the EITC and other policies for redistributing income, these programs increase the receipt of transfer payments, resulting in modest increases in government costs.<sup>12</sup>
- **Postemployment case management.** There have been only two random assignment evaluations of postemployment case management services — one study of the Work Incentive (WIN) program in the late 1970s and one of the Postemployment Services Demonstration (PESD) in the mid-1990s. In both evaluations, the services had no effect on steady work or welfare recidivism.<sup>13</sup> However, PESD did provide a number of valuable lessons about program design and implementation. PESD case managers found it difficult to provide the same level of services to all participants, suggesting that services should be targeted to those most in need. PESD also suggested that people may be more open to participating in program services if case managers have a chance to work with them prior to finding a job, because that way case managers would have a chance to build a relationship with participants prior to employment.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Michalopoulos, 2001; Hamilton et al., 2001.

<sup>11</sup>Michalopoulos, 2001.

<sup>12</sup>Berlin, 2000.

<sup>13</sup>Slaughter, Whiteneck, and Baumheier, 1982; Rangarajan and Novak, 1999.

<sup>14</sup>Rangarajan and Novak, 1999.



- **Services for the hard-to-employ.** Hard-to-employ individuals may have trouble maintaining steady employment for a variety of reasons. Some lack previous work experience, some are facing substance abuse or mental health problems, and others have low basic skills or learning disabilities. Such people may need more targeted services, including intensive on-the-job support, therapeutic counseling, or basic skills training. Findings from traditional welfare-to-work program evaluations also support targeting services to the hard-to-employ. An analysis of 20 welfare-to-work programs revealed that increases in earnings were similar for long-term welfare recipients who lacked a high school diploma but had recent work experience compared with other less disadvantaged recipients. However, the most disadvantaged group earned only one-sixth the amount earned by the least disadvantaged group. So, although these programs had impacts on employment and earnings among the hard-to-employ, more intensive retention and advancement services may be needed to help the hard-to-employ support themselves economically.<sup>15</sup>

## The Evaluation

### History of the ERA Evaluation

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) divided the study into two phases: (1) a planning phase to help states and local agencies formulate innovative retention and advancement strategies and (2) an evaluation phase to test the programs' effectiveness. During the first phase in 1998, ACF awarded planning grants to 13 states and contracted with The Lewin Group to provide technical assistance. A year later, interested states submitted proposals to ACF in order to participate in the evaluation phase.

After sites were selected for the evaluation, it became clear that more technical assistance was needed to ensure that the ERA project tested innovative program strategies. MDRC and The Lewin Group continued to work with the sites to strengthen the programs prior to implementation. Some sites with well-developed programs moved forward quickly, while others have just recently implemented their programs. Over the course of three years, a few sites left the evaluation, and a number of others were added.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Michalopoulos and Schwartz, 2000.

<sup>16</sup>In addition to those originally selected to be part of the evaluation, two New York sites were added to the study in 2001, and the Cleveland, Ohio, site was added in 2002. The Florida, Virginia, and Tennessee projects were discontinued during 2001.

## The ERA Experimental Design

To test the effectiveness of the ERA programs, ACF required an experimental research design, in which individuals are randomly assigned either to a program group that is eligible to receive ERA services or to a counterfactual group that is not eligible to receive the services. The counterfactual group — or control group — serves as a benchmark against which to measure the ERA program; in most of the sites, members of this group receive services that reflect what they would have received in the absence of the ERA program. So, although counterfactual group members are not eligible for ERA-specific services, they can continue to receive other services (for example, child care subsidies and health coverage) based on other measures of eligibility, and they are able to access other community resources, including employment assistance and training programs.

Created by random assignment, the program and counterfactual groups (called the research sample) are essentially the same in terms of demographic characteristics, educational attainment, employment history, and other characteristics that are not measurable. The only difference between the two groups is whether or not they received ERA services. Thus, the impact of the ERA program is determined by the differences that emerge during the follow-up period in employment retention and advancement outcomes between the program and counterfactual group members. For example, if, in the follow-up period, the program group had a higher average wage than the counterfactual group, the wage increase can be attributed to the program services.

MDRC will use participant surveys and administrative data (welfare and wage records) to track the outcomes of the research sample in terms of employment, earnings, welfare receipt, and participation in other programs and services. There will also be field research to better understand program design, service delivery, and implementation issues. Financial data will be collected in order to conduct an analysis of the benefits and costs of the program.

The evaluation eventually will answer three sets of questions:

- **Impact analysis.** To what extent do the programs improve employment retention, career advancement, and other outcomes for participants and their children? Which approaches are effective and for whom are they most effective?
- **Process/implementation analysis.** What services are provided, how are they delivered, who receives them, and why? What problems are encountered when implementing the programs and how are those problems addressed?
- **Benefit-cost analysis.** What are the costs of the programs, and to what extent do the benefits outweigh the costs from the perspectives of program participants, taxpayers, employers, and the larger society? How do these findings vary by program type and participant characteristics?

The study will produce a combination of site-specific reports and cross-site documents summarizing results and lessons from the various sites. The first cross-site report was released by ACF in September 2002.<sup>17</sup>

## **The Sites**

### **Overview of the ERA Sites**

As mentioned above, ERA includes 15 random assignment experiments in 8 states. The states cover all the major regions in the United States, with sites that represent the nation's largest cities (New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston) as well as rural areas in South Carolina (the Pee Dee Region) and Oregon (Medford). Most of the states are operating ERA programs in multiple sites and some (California, Oregon, and New York) are testing more than one program model. As of June 2003, all of the programs have started random assignment. Table 1.1 gives an overview of the sites, program names, and start dates.

### **Overview of the ERA Programs**

Although each program is unique, they fall roughly into one of three groups: (1) programs that focus primarily on advancement, (2) programs that focus primarily on placement and retention, and (3) programs with a mixed focus. Table 1.2 gives a brief description of the target population and service strategies for each ERA program, and Appendix A provides a more detailed description.

#### **Advancement-Focused Programs**

Illinois and Riverside Phase 2, the two advancement-focused ERA programs, target employed welfare recipients — people who are working but not earning enough to leave cash assistance. In these sites, one of the motivations for serving participants is to help them earn their way off welfare before they reach the federal time limit.<sup>18</sup>

The advancement-focused models provide personalized career counseling services to participants. Counselors work with participants to help them advance through “work-based” strategies, such as pursuing a promotion from their current employers or finding jobs that pay

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<sup>17</sup>The report, “New Strategies to Promote Stable Employment and Career Progression: An Introduction to the Employment Retention and Advancement Project,” is available on MDRC’s Web site ([www.mdrc.org](http://www.mdrc.org)) and ACF’s Web site ([www.acf.dhhs.gov](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov)).

<sup>18</sup>In Illinois, welfare recipients may continue to receive cash assistance after the federal time limit as long as they are working 30 hours per week.

## The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

**Table 1.1**  
**Overview of the ERA Sites and Programs**

<b>State</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Program Name (If Site Is Testing More Than One Program)</b>	<b>Start of Random Assignment</b>
California	Los Angeles County	Enhanced Job Club (EJC)	June 2003
		Reach for Success (RFS)	August 2002
	Riverside County	Phase 2 <sup>a</sup>	January 2001
		Post-Assistance Self-Sufficiency (PASS)	July 2002
Illinois	Cook County (Chicago) and St. Clair County (East St. Louis)		February 2002
Minnesota	Hennepin County (Minneapolis)		January 2002
New York	New York City	Personal Roads to Individual Development and Employment (PRIDE)	December 2001
		Substance Abuse Case Management (SACM)	June 2003
Ohio	Cleveland		August 2002
Oregon	Eugene	PROGRESS	October 2002
	Medford	Transition, Advancement, and Growth (TAAG)	February 2002
	Portland	Career Builders	June 2002
	Salem	VISION	May 2002
South Carolina	Pee Dee Region (six counties)		October 2001
Texas	Corpus Christi, Fort Worth, Houston		October 2000

NOTE: <sup>a</sup>The “Phase 2” program is the second phase of Riverside’s larger welfare-to-work program. Phase 1 emphasizes job search for those who are unemployed, and Phase 2 emphasizes advancement for those who are working but still receiving cash assistance.

more, have better benefits, or provide promotion opportunities.<sup>19</sup> Helping participants find better jobs may mean creating specialized job development strategies and instituting employer site visits. In addition, counselors help participants pursue advancement through “education-based” strategies, in which they work with participants to explore education and training opportunities.

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<sup>19</sup>Sites have different names for the ERA staff providing employment, retention, and career services. For the purposes of clarity, this report calls these staff “counselors.”

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Table 1.2

Target Populations and Service Strategies

State	Location	Target Group	Primary Service Strategies
<b>Advancement Projects</b>			
Illinois	Cook County (Chicago) and St. Clair County (East St. Louis)	Welfare recipients who have worked at least 30 hours per week for at least six consecutive months.	Combination of services, with customized incentive programs, that promote career advancement (targeted job search assistance, education and training, assistance in identifying and accessing career ladders, etc.).
California	Riverside County Phase 2	Newly employed welfare recipients working at least 20 hours per week.	Test of two ERA programs to promote participation in education and training activities in combination with employment: The Work Plus group requires that participants work at least 20 hours per week, and the Training Focused group is not subject to a specific work requirement.
<b>Placement and Retention (Hard-to-Employ) Projects</b>			
Minnesota	Hennepin County (Minneapolis)	Long-term welfare recipients who were unable to find jobs through standard welfare-to-work services.	In-depth family assessment; low caseloads; intensive monitoring and follow-up; emphasis on placement into unsubsidized employment or supported work with referrals to education and training, counseling, and other support services.
Oregon	Portland	Individuals who are cycling back onto welfare and those who have lost jobs.	Team-based case management; job search/job readiness components; post-employment follow-up services; mental health and substance abuse services for those identified with these barriers; supportive and emergency services.
New York	New York City PRIDE (Personal Roads to Individual Development and Employment)	Welfare recipients whose employability is limited by physical or mental health problems.	Two main tracks: 1) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), where clients meeting state/federal eligibility requirements receive unpaid work experience, job search/job placement services, and retention services tailored to account for medical problems; 2) Work Based Education, where those who do not meet VR eligibility requirements participate in unpaid work experience, job placement services, and adult basic education.
New York	New York City SACM (Substance Abuse Case Management)	Welfare recipients with a substance abuse problem.	Intensive case management to promote participation in substance abuse treatment, links to mental health and other needed services.

(continued)

**Table 1.2 (continued)**

<b>State</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Target Group</b>	<b>Primary Service Strategies</b>
<b>Projects with Mixed Goals</b>			
California	Los Angeles County EJC (Enhanced Job Club)	Welfare recipients who have been referred to job club.	Job search workshops promoting a step-down method designed to help participants find a job that pays a “living wage” or has advancement opportunities.
California	Los Angeles County RFS (Reach for Success)	Newly employed welfare recipients working at least 32 hours per week.	Stabilization/retention services, followed by a combination of services to promote advancement: education and training, career assessment, targeted job development, etc.
California	Riverside County PASS (Post-Assistance Self-Sufficiency)	Individuals who leave welfare with employment or who become employed within the 12 months following the termination of cash assistance.	Intensive, family-based support services delivered by community-based organizations to promote retention and advancement.
Ohio	Cleveland	Entry-level low-wage workers with specific employers making under 200% of the poverty line who have been in their current jobs less than 6 months.	Regular on-site office hours for counseling/case management and access to supportive services; Lunch & Learn meetings for social support and presentations; newsletter for workers and employers; and Supervisory Training for employer supervisors.
Oregon	Medford	Employed former welfare and food stamp recipients.	Individualized services which are delivered by case managers and career counselors, including stabilization/retention services; combination of services to increase enrollment in education and training and to promote advancement through “work-based” strategies.
Oregon	Eugene	Employed current and former welfare recipients.	Same as Medford.
Oregon	Salem	Welfare applicants.	Pre-employment: job search assistance combined with career planning. Post-employment: education and training; employer linkages to promote retention and advancement.
South Carolina	6 rural counties in Pee Dee Region	Individuals who left welfare (for any reason) between October 1997 and December 2000.	Individualized services delivered by case managers, including reemployment and support services; advancement services including job search, career counseling, and education and training; and individualized incentives used to encourage program participation, retention, and advancement.
Texas	Corpus Christi, Fort Worth, and Houston	Welfare applicants and recipients.	Individualized team-based case management; monthly stipends of \$200 for those who maintain employment and complete activities related to employment retention and advancement plan.

Although retention-related and reemployment services are not the primary focus of these sites, the programs also provide such services for those who need them.

Although Illinois and Riverside Phase 2 use both work-based and education-based strategies for advancement, each site has a different focus. Riverside administrators and staff believe that the most effective path to advancement is combining educational activities with employment. Because of this, the site is testing two different ERA programs: the Work Plus program (representing the county's standard approach) and the Training Focused program (operated by the local workforce investment agency). Participants in both program groups are strongly encouraged to enter education and training activities, but participants in the Training Focused group are not subject to any specific work requirement. Participants in the Work Plus group, on the other hand, are required to work at least 20 hours per week. These groups differ from the counterfactual group — called the Work Focused group — in that members of the counterfactual group receive minimal follow-up and are encouraged to use only employment as the path to retention and advancement (however, they are able to participate in education and training if they request it).

In Illinois, services are more focused on helping participants find better jobs, but counselors help participants explore education and training depending on their individual circumstances, and work hours can be reduced in order to allow participants to take part in education and training activities.

### Placement and Retention-Focused Programs

Minnesota, Portland (Oregon), and New York are running placement and retention-focused sites, which target people with more serious barriers to employment. For example, the Minnesota site is working with long-term welfare recipients unable to find jobs through the standard welfare-to-work services. Portland is working with participants who have cycled either on and off TANF or in and out of jobs. New York has two programs that fall into this category: the PRIDE program, which targets welfare recipients with disabilities, and the SACM program, which targets welfare recipients with identified substance abuse problems. In all of the placement- and retention-focused programs, eligible individuals are unemployed when they enter the program.

Because participants have a wide variety of issues preventing them from finding and keeping jobs, assessment is an important service these programs provide. For example, the Minnesota program includes intensive assessments of mental and physical health, substance abuse, housing, and domestic violence. Based on these assessments, services are tailored to meet the specific needs of the participants. In the New York PRIDE program, individuals with serious disabilities work closely with specialized providers who place them in tailored work

experience programs. These participants also receive support and assistance from vocational rehabilitation professionals.

### Programs with a Mixed Focus

Texas, Los Angeles EJC, Salem (Oregon), Cleveland, Los Angeles RFS, Riverside PASS, South Carolina, and Medford and Eugene (Oregon) offer programs with a mixed focus. As the category label suggests, these programs emphasize both retention and advancement; as such, they serve a broader target population. Some programs start working with people before they become employed, and some programs start afterward. The Texas, Los Angeles EJC, and Salem programs, for example, target TANF applicants who are required to participate in welfare-to-work services. Being an employer-based initiative, the ERA program in Cleveland targets recently hired, low-wage, entry-level employees who earn less than 200 percent of the poverty level and who work for participating employers. The remaining sites (Los Angeles RFS, Riverside PASS, South Carolina, and Medford and Eugene) target current and former welfare recipients. South Carolina targets those who left TANF up to four years prior to random assignment, so many people who are assigned to the program group are unemployed when initially contacted by program staff.

Because they work with unemployed participants, the Texas, Salem, South Carolina, and Los Angeles EJC programs provide preemployment job search services. The Los Angeles EJC program is a job club designed to help people look first for better paying jobs or jobs with advancement opportunities. If the participants are unable to find a job after three weeks, they are encouraged to take a part-time job in combination with training. In Salem and Texas, program services attempt to affect the quality of the placement as a means to improving retention. In addition, preemployment workshops in these locations were created to help participants think about their long-term career goals.

Other than Los Angeles EJC, all of the models in this category have a postemployment component. These services are similar to those provided by the advancement-focused models but with a greater focus on initial job stabilization. For example, the Riverside PASS service providers assess participants at program intake for supportive service needs (such as child care and transportation) and then arrange for specific services (such as child care provider referrals, car repair, gas money, and bus tickets) in order for participants to continue working. Many of the sites decided to combine preemployment and postemployment services in response to lessons from the Postemployment Services Demonstration (PESD) study that suggested that developing a relationship with participants in the preemployment phase may encourage their participation in postemployment services. The Texas program includes a financial incentive to encourage retention and advancement. As an employer-based initiative, the Cleveland program, Achieve, has a different focus (see Box 1).



## Box 1

### Employer-Based Initiatives to Improve Retention Outcomes: Cleveland's Achieve Program

The Achieve program is the only employer-based program in the ERA evaluation. Its goal is to improve job retention among entry-level workers. A local nonprofit service provider called Towards Employment operates the Achieve program with funding from local and national foundations, and also from Cuyahoga County TANF dollars. In its current phase, the program targets entry-level employees in the health care industry with wages below 200 percent of the poverty line; it is working with employees at 22 long-term nursing care facilities in the Cleveland area. Program services include:

- **One-on-one case management.** After an orientation that invites low-wage workers to participate in the program, interested individuals can sign up for an intake meeting with an Achieve counselor. At this meeting, information is collected on demographics, job characteristics, current barriers, and work/life goals. Career counseling is provided, and the counselor works with the participant to create the next steps for advancement. Retention services — such as aid in accessing public benefits, budgeting assistance, and any work-related emergency assistance — are also provided based on participant need.
- **Lunch & Learn.** The program sponsors biweekly discussions open to all participants (as well as other employees in the firm), covering such topics as home ownership, substance abuse, and the Earned Income Tax Credit.
- **Supervisory training.** In addition to employee services, Achieve provides supervisor training focused on problem solving, relationship building, and managing employee styles.

### Characteristics of the ERA Sample Members

Each of the ERA sites collects baseline data, basic demographic characteristics, and employment information that provides a “snapshot” of its population at the point of random assignment. Table 1.3 provides an overview of these baseline data on the entire research sample (program and counterfactual group members combined) for 13 of the 15 sites.<sup>20</sup>

As the table illustrates, the characteristics of sample members differ across the sites depending on their target populations. In Minnesota's program targeting the hard-to-employ, for

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<sup>20</sup>At the time the table was produced, baseline data were not yet available for four sites: Los Angeles EJC and New York SACM are not included in the table because, at the time of this report's publication, these sites had just started random assignment operations.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

**Table 1.3**  
**Baseline Characteristics of ERA Sample Members**

Characteristic (%) <sup>a</sup>	Cleveland <sup>b</sup>	Eugene, OR	Illinois	Los Angeles RFS
<b>Age</b>				
20 years or younger	13.8	8.6	1.0	5.8
21 to 30 years	43.7	51.3	35.6	49.0
31 to 40 years	19.8	29.5	46.3	30.6
41 years or older	22.7	10.7	17.0	14.6
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
Hispanic	5.8	6.4	8.1	37.4
Black/Non-Hispanic	56.9	3.6	87.2	55.6
White/Non-Hispanic	34.1	84.1	4.0	4.6
Other	3.2	5.9	0.7	2.4
<b>Number of children</b>				
0	40.4	0.0	0.4	0.8
1	23.6	47.7	10.2	36.6
2	18.5	32.9	22.3	28.6
3 or more	17.5	19.5	67.1	34.1
<b>Age of youngest child</b>				
2 years old or younger	33.9	43.0	25.5	39.4
3 to 5 years old	20.5	24.1	23.2	24.4
6 years old or older	45.6	32.9	51.4	36.2
No high school diploma or GED <sup>c</sup>	28.0	25.0	56.0	51.9
Employed at baseline <sup>d</sup>	100.0	99.5	n/a	97.9
Received welfare for 2 years or more <sup>e</sup>	n/a	29.5	n/a	52.4
<b>Employment in the last 3 years</b>				
Did not work	n/a	6.1	n/a	n/a
Less than 7 months	n/a	12.5	n/a	n/a
7 to 12 months	n/a	19.3	n/a	n/a
13 to 24 months	n/a	33.6	n/a	n/a
More than 24 months	n/a	28.4	n/a	n/a
Lives in public or subsidized housing	17.1	24.6	n/a	11.1
Sample size	411	560	1,591	2,237

(continued)

**Table 1.3 (continued)**

Characteristic (%) <sup>a</sup>	Medford, OR	Minnesota	New York PRIDE	Portland, OR
<b>Age</b>				
20 years or younger	6.1	3.2	0.8	5.5
21 to 30 years	45.6	47.8	15.4	50.6
31 to 40 years	34.2	31.8	33.6	30.3
41 years or older	14.1	17.2	50.2	13.5
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
Hispanic	4.1	2.0	47.4	7.2
Black/Non-Hispanic	1.1	65.4	38.4	39.5
White/Non-Hispanic	90.1	16.9	10.8	42.6
Other	4.7	15.8	3.4	10.7
<b>Number of children</b>				
0	0.0	0.9	20.2	0.3
1	39.3	31.1	30.2	41.4
2	32.4	31.0	25.1	27.8
3 or more	28.3	37.0	24.4	30.5
<b>Age of youngest child</b>				
2 years old or younger	38.8	43.1	21.3	45.2
3 to 5 years old	24.3	20.9	17.2	21.6
6 years old or older	36.9	36.0	61.5	33.2
No high school diploma or GED <sup>c</sup>	21.9	56.3	n/a	34.0
Employed at baseline <sup>d</sup>	96.9	14.8	n/a	9.1
Received welfare for 2 years or more <sup>e</sup>	16.6	69.8	n/a	45.0
<b>Employment in the last 3 years</b>				
Did not work	0.9	22.0	n/a	13.9
Less than 7 months	5.4	18.5	n/a	29.4
7 to 12 months	10.3	20.7	n/a	18.3
13 to 24 months	18.6	21.4	n/a	22.2
More than 24 months	64.7	17.4	n/a	16.2
Lives in public or subsidized housing	22.5	51.1	32.7	44.5
Sample size	918	1,609	3,213	636

(continued)

**Table 1.3 (continued)**

Characteristic (%) <sup>a</sup>	Riverside Phase 2	Riverside PASS	Salem, OR	South Carolina	Texas
<b>Age</b>					
20 years or younger	6.3	8.8	8.2	0.9	12.1
21 to 30 years	47.1	42.3	54.1	49.1	52.2
31 to 40 years	33.4	32.9	26.1	35.7	26.1
41 years or older	13.2	15.9	11.6	14.3	9.7
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>					
Hispanic	42.4	49.7	14.4	0.4	37.8
Black/Non-Hispanic	20.4	15.8	2.5	78.6	45.8
White/Non-Hispanic	33.2	31.6	72.8	20.2	15.1
Other	4.0	2.9	10.3	0.8	1.4
<b>Number of children</b>					
0	0.5	0.9	3.3	0.9	1.0
1	32.1	37.5	43.8	27.3	40.9
2	30.0	30.8	31.2	32.8	29.5
3 or more	37.4	30.8	21.8	39.0	28.6
<b>Age of youngest child</b>					
2 years old or younger	46.7	39.1	42.9	17.8	51.1
3 to 5 years old	22.6	23.0	22.5	32.2	20.5
6 years old or older	30.7	37.8	34.6	50.0	28.4
No high school diploma or GED <sup>c</sup>	42.3	43.5	31.9	44.6	51.0
Employed at baseline <sup>d</sup>	100.0	89.3	10.1	52.6	6.7
Received welfare for 2 years or more <sup>e</sup>	42.0	42.7	20.6	53.5	17.6
<b>Employment in the last 3 years</b>					
Did not work	4.7	4.8	10.8	n/a	14.2
Less than 7 months	23.5	23.6	11.8	n/a	20.4
7 to 12 months	19.8	19.9	14.5	n/a	19.4
13 to 24 months	23.6	22.7	15.7	n/a	20.7
More than 24 months	28.4	29.0	47.2	n/a	25.3
Lives in public or subsidized housing	12.6	12.0	15.1	n/a	20.8
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>2,750</b>	<b>2,739</b>	<b>873</b>	<b>3,329</b>	<b>5,260</b>

SOURCES: Calculations from ERA baseline forms, automated records, and administrative data.

NOTES: N/a = not applicable. In this case, the data for these measures have not yet been made available.

<sup>a</sup>Numbers include both program and counterfactual group members. Los Angeles EJC and New York SACM are not included because, at the time of this report's publication, these sites had just started random assignment operations.

<sup>b</sup>These data only represent baseline characteristics from the first wave of program operations.

<sup>c</sup>In South Carolina, participants with 12 or more years of education are considered to have a high school diploma. Information on educational attainment is not available.

<sup>d</sup>In South Carolina, this information is based on Unemployment Insurance records as of March 2001.

<sup>e</sup>In constructing the total prior welfare receipt variable, in Texas and in Riverside Phase 2, the measure is based on estimates of how many months participants have received Aid to Families with Dependent Children or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families in the previous 10 years.

example, sample members tend to be long-term welfare recipients. Close to 70 percent of the sample in Minnesota have received welfare for two years or more, and 22 percent have not worked in the last three years. By comparison, in Texas's program, which targets all TANF applicants, only 18 percent of the sample members received welfare for two years or more, and 14 percent have not worked in the last three years.

In Illinois, participants eligible for the ERA program must be working 30 hours per week in addition to receiving welfare. As a result, sample members in Illinois tend to have more children than in the other sites — 67 percent have three or more — because larger families are less likely to earn their way off of TANF. In most of the other sites, only around one-fourth to one-third of the participants have three or more children. Since having children is not a requirement for receiving services in Cleveland, 40 percent of the sample members there have none.

In South Carolina, around half of the former TANF recipients in the sample were unemployed at the point of random assignment, because many eligible participants had already lost their jobs. As expected, in the programs providing only postemployment services (Riverside Phase 2, Los Angeles RFS, Eugene, Medford, and Cleveland), nearly the entire sample was employed at random assignment. The programs targeting TANF applicants and recipients (Texas, Portland, Salem, and Minnesota) have very few sample members who were employed at random assignment.

Finally, the racial/ethnic characteristics in each site largely reflect the demographic characteristics of the target area. The Illinois and South Carolina sites serve a predominantly black/non-Hispanic population; Los Angeles RFS serves a predominantly black and Hispanic population; and Riverside Phase 2 serves a predominantly white and Hispanic population. Sample members in the Oregon sites (other than Portland) are primarily white/non-Hispanic. The Minnesota site serves a fairly diverse population, including a significant number of Asians (mostly Hmong) and American Indians (both are included in Table 1.3 under the "other" category).



## Chapter 2

# Early Lessons from ERA Program Implementation

Since the start of ERA, program administrators and staff have accomplished a great deal. Implementing the 15 ERA program evaluations, however, has been challenging for many of the sites: The process of implementing a new program is often complicated, and the ERA programs face the additional hurdle of having very few existing program models to replicate. Despite the difficulty, participating sites have been very committed to the ERA programs and have maintained funding in the face of many states' serious budget problems. This chapter describes the specific challenges sites have faced and the strategies they have used to overcome them.

The challenges include:

- **Encouraging people to participate in program services, particularly when services are voluntary and designed for working families.** Individuals may be reluctant to participate in services that are voluntary when they are juggling work and family responsibilities. Because of this, sites have been redesigning their marketing techniques and using creative financial and in-kind incentives to encourage program participation.
- **Restructuring assessment and case management strategies to better serve working people.** ERA staff had to develop new strategies and the skills necessary to work with participants in a postemployment context. Counselors are learning how to articulate program goals clearly, assess services needs, and help participants take small steps toward larger career goals. Providing these services requires more intensive participant interaction, and as a result most programs lowered caseloads below their traditional size.
- **Strengthening reemployment services.** Job loss is more widespread and happens more quickly than most sites expected. In response, many programs are strengthening their rapid reemployment services. The focus on reemployment, however, often comes at the expense of advancement services. For example, job developers in some of the ERA programs spend more time helping unemployed participants find jobs than helping employed participants find better jobs.
- **Building staff expertise in the area of career advancement.** Providing career advancement services is an entirely new role for most ERA program staff. Many of the sites provided training to counselors to help them (1) be-

come more comfortable with their new role, (2) articulate career advancement and design activities to support this goal, and (3) better understand the local resources available to help participants pursue their career goals.

- **Understanding what constitutes “success” in the context of postemployment services.** Career advancement and job retention are long-term goals. As such, it is difficult to define whether the ERA programs have succeeded in the short term to move participants closer to these goals. Some programs are using participation measures as a proxy, including participation in job search activities, completion of a career plan or assessment, and enrollment in education and training activities. In order to monitor success, some sites have created benchmarks for participation and participant outcomes.

## **Participation and Engagement Strategies for Working Families**

### **Early Levels of Participation in Postemployment Activities**

The most comprehensive information on levels of program participation thus far comes from the early assessments conducted in each of the sites that have started random assignment. Participation data were collected primarily from automated program tracking systems and/or case file reviews, with up to nine months of follow-up on early cohort members. Two sites (Texas and South Carolina) have supplementary tracking systems designed specifically for their ERA programs. These early program assessments provide preliminary descriptive information on program implementation; however, data from the client survey and administrative records will provide more conclusive findings.

Using only findings from the early assessments, it is difficult to compare levels of participation among programs: Each has a slightly different target population and a unique point of random assignment. However, as Table 2.1 shows, most of the ERA sites have achieved high levels of initial contact with employed program group members. Initial postemployment contact is generally around 70 percent to 80 percent, ranging from a low of 33 percent in Fort Worth to highs of 87 percent in Los Angeles and 88 percent in Eugene. Levels of participation in program activities like job search and training, however, are considerably lower in some sites. In many of the sites, less than half of the employed program group members participated in subsequent activities.



**Table 2.1**  
**Levels of Participation in Postemployment Activities**  
**for Employed Program Group Members**  
**(Results from Early Program Assessment)**

<b>Site<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Percentage Contacted<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Percentage Who Participated in a Postemployment Activity<sup>c</sup></b>	<b>Months of Follow-Up<sup>d</sup></b>
Illinois	76	43	3-6
Los Angeles RFS	87	61	1-3
Oregon			
Eugene	88	73	2-6
Medford	74	71	2-9
Salem	Not available	50	2-9
Riverside Phase 2			
Work Plus	Not available	46	3-6
Training Focused	Not available	40	3-6
Riverside PASS	61	39	4-6
Texas <sup>e</sup>			
Corpus Christi	81	70	5-8
Fort Worth	33	8	5-8
Houston	67	27	7-8

NOTES: <sup>a</sup>Sites that do not serve a sizable employed population (Portland, Minnesota, and New York PRIDE) and sites that had not completed an early assessment at the time the report was published (Cleveland, Los Angeles EJC, and New York SACM) are not included in this table. Postemployment participation rates for South Carolina are not listed because information was not collected separately for the South Carolina group.

<sup>b</sup>Contacted (in person or by phone) by staff for the purpose of introducing and marketing the program.

<sup>c</sup>Activity type varies slightly by program, but usually includes career exploration/assessment, job search, or training.

<sup>d</sup>Months of participation data on participants tracked in the early assessments.

<sup>e</sup>Texas initially engages participants in preemployment services, but these numbers include only employed people.

What constitutes a postemployment activity varies slightly among programs. Retention activities can include job coaching, retention workshops, community resources involvement, and rapid reemployment activities for individuals who lose their jobs. Advancement activities include education and training as well as work-based advancement strategies, such as helping participants find better jobs and explore advancement opportunities with their current employers. Most sites offer a mix of training and work-based advancement strategies, although some tend to focus on one over the other. For example, most of the participants in Illinois have been working with job developers to find higher-paying jobs. In contrast, the primary focus of the Riverside Phase 2 program has been to encourage working participants to enroll in education and training, primarily basic education or short-term vocational training.

South Carolina serves both employed and unemployed TANF leavers. Among leavers assigned to the program group within the first six months of random assignment, staff contacted 79 percent — a notable achievement considering that the program targets people who left TANF up to four years before. Around one-fourth of the program group participated in program activities within five to eight months after random assignment, and, for participants who were unemployed, most of the activities that they participated in were related to job search.

The early assessment of the New York PRIDE program showed a high level of initial contact — 90 percent of the program group members in the study attended a preemployment intake session within six months of random assignment. However, only about one-third completed an assessment and were assigned to participate in either work-based education or individualized vocational rehabilitation services. The drop-off in participation occurred in part because the PRIDE providers often identified additional or worsened medical conditions. Before individuals are randomly assigned into PRIDE or the counterfactual group, the welfare agency conducts an initial screening to determine whether each individual can handle work-related activities (utilizing information obtained during the intake interview, as well as information from a physical exam conducted by a health service agency contracted by the city). After conducting a more in-depth assessment, the PRIDE providers often felt that many of individuals referred for services were not ready for work because of the seriousness of their conditions or because other health issues had arisen. Instead of referring these people to employment services, the providers referred them directly back to the welfare agency.

### **Strategies for Engaging Participants**

Generating participation in postemployment services is difficult because activities are usually voluntary and working single parents may not want to add more commitments to an already hectic schedule. Sites have used a number of different strategies to encourage participation, including marketing program services, financial and in-kind incentives, and the use of sanctions for noncompliance.

- **Many of the ERA programs have redesigned their intake/orientation sessions and their printed materials to focus on the benefits of the program rather than just describing their services.**

Program managers and staff have been working hard to refine the first message people hear about the program. Just like people who sell any service, ERA staff must highlight how participating in the program will benefit individuals. Originally, many of the sites created brochures that described program components but had less information about how services would improve participants' lives, allowing them, for example, to make more money or get a promotion. These materials were redesigned to highlight the advantages of participation. Specifically, in South Caro-

lina, Oregon, and Illinois, brochures and invitation letters were adapted to include graphics that indicated how participants could benefit, by displaying dollar signs and one-hundred-dollar bills to imply increased income and hot-air balloons to imply upward movement. The South Carolina ERA program created a monthly newsletter to encourage people to participate; this newsletter is sent to all program group members, and it provides ERA success stories, letters from participants, information on job search services, details about available training funds, and highlights about other services that the ERA program can provide. ERA staff in Corpus Christi also use a newsletter to communicate with participants. It includes participant stories and a calendar of ERA events. Some examples of these marketing materials appear in Appendix B.

In Cleveland, eligible employees first hear about the Achieve program in an introductory session conducted by program staff. Counselors present the program as an opportunity for participants to identify and address barriers in their work and personal life. Food is provided, and prizes are raffled off at the end of the session. Often employees are worried about participating in a research study, but usually they feel more comfortable when their employer attends the session and is able to vouch for the program and the purpose of the evaluation.

In the Los Angeles Reach for Success (RFS) program, counselors from the county welfare program are flexible about where they conduct their initial meetings. Often people eligible to participate feel more comfortable if counselors come to their homes or workplaces, or if they meet their counselors at a neutral place, like a restaurant or coffee shop. Some counselors promise to buy prospective participants a meal or a cup of coffee as an incentive to get them to show up. With people who do decide to participate in program activities, counselors continue to be flexible. They meet participants in the evenings or in a location other than the welfare office if doing so is more convenient for the participant. Many of the sites have flex hours for staff in order to accommodate participants' work schedules. Counselors in Illinois, for example, are given cell phones so participants can reach the counselors at any time if they need assistance.

In Riverside Phase 2, counselors in the Work Plus group encourage individuals to engage in education and training by citing the opportunity for higher wages and better jobs. Counselors understand that participating in training is a big commitment for many people. They "plant the seed," using a one-on-one marketing strategy, and often they find that people are ready to participate after they realize that, without additional training, they may be unable to attain the wages and the positions they want. Participants are informed about local education and training providers, and participants and counselors work together to find the best provider to suit a participant's needs and interests; the participant then proceeds to the provider to enroll. Providers who are informed about the ERA Work Plus program may also sell their programs to participants by leaving informational pamphlets in welfare-to-work offices and by speaking about their programs during job search activities.

- **A few of the sites designed creative financial and in-kind incentive strategies to encourage ongoing program participation and positive retention and advancement outcomes.**

Texas provides a generous stipend — \$200 per month — to encourage both employment retention and advancement. Individuals are eligible for the stipend after they find a job and leave TANF, if they are working at least 30 hours per week or working 15 hours per week and participating in another activity (such as education and training) for 15 hours per week. In order to receive the stipend, individuals must also participate in one site-approved, postemployment activity each month — such as an ERA workshop on life skills, workplace issues, or other topics; an education or training program; or on-the-job training. The stipend is available after individuals receive a four-month earnings disregard, although it can be dispersed before the disregard.

All three sites in Texas have found that stipend usage was lower than expected, particularly during the early stages of the program. This could be attributed to the fact that requirements for eligibility to receive the stipend were initially quite substantial: Participants had to engage in three hours of postemployment activities each month. In addition, employers had to provide verification of the number of hours participants worked each month, and some employers did not complete the required paperwork. The program addressed these issues by reducing to one hour per month the amount of postemployment activities required; increasing the number of postemployment workshops offered during hours that working people could attend; and expanding the definition of what counts as an advancement activity. They also allowed paycheck stubs to count as an employment validation in lieu of an employer signature.

In spite of these changes, program staff are still concerned about the low use of the stipend. MDRC examined the stipend receipt rates in Houston and Corpus Christi six months after participants had started a job. The analysis found that only one-third were receiving the stipend after six months. The most common reason for not receiving it was job loss. Other reasons were that the program had lost contact with participants or that participants were still receiving the earned income disregard (indicating that an individual had lost the initial job and then found another one). This analysis indicated that preventing job loss and providing reemployment services were critical issues for program operators to address.

South Carolina and Illinois use smaller financial and in-kind incentives to encourage participation in specific program activities and to reward participant accomplishments. In South Carolina, for example, participants can receive incentive payments ranging anywhere from \$10 to \$150 for completing program components: They receive a \$10 coupon for completing a personal development plan or assessment and \$150 in cash for completing a certificate program or earning a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. They also receive three \$50 in-

centive payments for keeping a job — one after one month, one after three months, and one after six months — and \$50 for finding a job with benefits or a wage increase.

Illinois's program is similarly structured, but instead of cash it offers mostly gift certificates. The program's letter encouraging people to participate in ERA is accompanied by a \$10 gift certificate to McDonald's. If individuals attend orientation, they receive a \$50 gift certificate for groceries. Other incentives are provided for achieving additional benchmarks.

- **In order to increase participation, two of the sites are mandating postemployment activities for participants who are still receiving cash assistance in addition to working.**

Because of the generous earnings disregards in their states, the Illinois and Riverside Phase 2 programs specifically target employed TANF recipients in order to help them exit welfare by increasing their earnings. As a result, program staff have the power in many cases to sanction individuals who fail to participate in ERA activities. In Illinois, welfare recipients who participate in at least 30 hours of work or work-related activities per week can continue to receive a welfare grant without having it count against the 60-month time limit on cash benefits. A special provision for ERA participants allows them to reduce work hours to 20 hours per week if they participate in an education or training program for the remaining 10 hours. In addition, participants in Illinois must attend ERA-specific activities over and above the 30 hours. In Riverside Phase 2, individuals are required to participate in 32 hours per week of welfare-to-work activities. Participants in the Work Plus group must work for at least 20 hours per week as part of those 32 hours. Participants in the Training Focused group are allowed to reduce their hours of work (or eliminate work hours altogether) in order to participate in more intensive training programs, as long as they are participating in activities for at least 32 hours per week.

Program group members in both Illinois and Riverside Phase 2 who fail to meet these requirements are subject to a sanction. Counselors in these programs, however, do not want to rely on sanctions as the primary tool for motivating participants; they prefer to spend time using positive incentives — rather than resorting to making threats with sanctions — in order to convince people to participate. They feel that sanctioning working families discourages the behaviors that the program is trying to foster, and they worry that it creates the wrong kind of relationship — one that is punitive rather than one that promotes trust and collaboration. As a result, in Riverside, Work Plus counselors give participants multiple opportunities to participate in additional activities prior to sanctioning them, and they never sanction people who meet the requirements solely through work.

## **Restructuring Assessment and Case Management Strategies**

### **Uncovering the Paths Toward Job Retention and Career Advancement: Interview Guides and Assessment Tools**

Because the path toward retention and advancement is different for each person, counselors in the ERA programs work with participants to identify (1) barriers to employment retention (such as child care, work attendance, substance abuse issues, etc.) and (2) long-term career goals.

- **A few sites have created interview guides to help staff identify potential barriers to job retention and understand the career goals and transferable job skills of each participant.**

Staff at Los Angeles RFS created an interview guide that counselors use in the first few meetings with each new participant (see Appendix C). For three months after a participant finds a job, the RFS program focuses primarily on employment stabilization, so most of the issues covered in the interview guide focus on job retention and basic needs. The guide is organized by topic, including information about child care arrangements; basic needs like food, housing, and health insurance; personal finances; and job retention issues such as work habits, job performance, and personal relationships on the job. Under each topic heading is a series of related questions. For example, the “work habits” section asks participants whether they get into work on time every day, go to work when they are scheduled to be there, dress appropriately, use appropriate language, and complete job duties. The guides were designed to create a comprehensive and uniform way to identify potential retention issues, but counselors are given the flexibility to skip topics that are not applicable to a certain participant, while spending more time on topics that are. Information obtained from the interview is used to create the one-month and three-month goal agreements that the counselor and participant sign at the end of the meeting.

The Eugene PROGRESS team created a similar interview guide, also arranged by topic, with each topic organized into a worksheet format that either participants or counselors can complete. The guide incorporates both retention- and advancement-related issues, and it includes worksheets for participants or counselors to list transferable skills and potential training opportunities. When interviewing a participant, rather than covering all topics at once, counselors use the guide to help participants address issues and problems as they arise, on an ongoing basis. At the end of each worksheet, there is space for participants and counselors to explore two or three steps participants will take to resolve any identified issues or concerns. When they reach this section of the worksheets, counselors refer participants for further services if necessary. The steps participants agree to take are included on their action plans and, ideally, participants complete these steps before they return for their next appointment.

- **Other sites rely on informal checklists and participant interviews to obtain information on participant barriers and career interests.**

Staff in Illinois and South Carolina conduct informal interviews with participants to get information on their retention and advancement issues. In these sites, program designers were concerned that long, formal interviews would only increase their paperwork rather than help uncover participant needs. Additionally, in South Carolina, the needs of the target population are quite broad, and the program designers were concerned that a comprehensive interview guide would be too cumbersome to use. Because they are working with people who left TANF up to four years ago, some participants are unemployed and need new jobs, while others may have been employed steadily for quite a while and are ready to start thinking about advancement. As such, counselors in South Carolina have found that an individualized approach works best for them.

ERA staff in Salem and Medford use a checklist to guide early conversations with participants and identify problem areas (see Appendix C). Counselors in Medford use a “Retention Continuum” to identify whether participants have employment-related problems. In Salem, counselors use a “Self-Sufficiency Scale” to rate participants on a variety of different retention-related issues, including child care arrangements, transportation, work absences, legal problems, and health care. If participants rate low on any of these issues, counselors work with them to resolve problems.

- **Sites working with a hard-to-employ population rely on a series of formal assessment tools to identify more serious barriers to employment.**

Participants in Minnesota’s ERA program receive an in-depth family assessment to uncover mental health and substance abuse problems, learning disabilities, domestic violence issues, and basic skills deficiencies. Some providers use a licensed psychologist to conduct these assessments and, in coordination with counselors, to make appropriate referrals (recommending, for example, mental health counseling or substance abuse treatment) to address any problems that are identified. In the New York PRIDE program, participants undergo an assessment to determine their work readiness. Based on the results of the assessment, they are assigned to one of two tracks. Those who meet the state/federal Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) eligibility requirements are referred to the VR track. Those who are not VR-eligible are referred to the Work-Based Education (WBE) track, where they participate in work experience for three days per week and basic education for two. Participants in this second group receive individualized services depending on their needs.

Other sites incorporate formal screening tools to identify potential barriers to employment and retention and to refer participants to appropriate services. For example, all participants in the Illinois and Texas programs receive the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to identify basic skills deficits. The Fort Worth program in Texas uses a screening tool to identify par-

ticipants with learning disabilities, and the Corpus Christi program uses a questionnaire to screen for substance abuse. In Portland, all participants take the Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (SASSI), a screening for potential substance abuse issues, and the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), a screening for basic skills deficiencies. Over the course of working with a participant, counselors may uncover other problems that participants face and that require attention or additional assessment; most sites have a variety of formal assessments at their disposal. For example, if career consultants in South Carolina identify a more serious problem, they can refer participants to TANF staff or other agencies (such as One-Stops, vocational rehabilitation providers, mental health centers, and the housing authority) to get a formal assessment.

In addition to formal assessments of barriers to employment, the Portland site incorporates a “strength-based” model for assessment in its two-week preemployment class focused on career planning and exploration. In this class, participants explore their learning styles, work environment preferences, transferable job skills, and career interests. The purpose of the exercises they undertake is to learn what kind of job best fits not only their skills and interests but also their personal characteristics and strengths. For example, if a participant is more receptive to hands-on learning than to reading instructions, she may be best suited for a job repairing machinery or computer equipment. Someone who learns best by reading may be better suited to a clerical or office job, in which instructions are presented through memos or manuals.

In conducting preemployment exercises, staff members help participants explore why past jobs may or may not have been a good fit and how future employment choices can be made with more information. More importantly, however, staff members focus on participants’ strengths rather than their weaknesses. Their philosophy is that participants are more likely to succeed if they are told what they can do rather than what their “barriers” are. This philosophy of strength-based assessment continues in the staff’s ongoing interaction with participants during the job search and postemployment phases of the program.

### **Redesigning Case Management: Working with Participants in a Postemployment Context**

Providing postemployment services requires slightly different case management strategies and, in many cases, intensive interaction with participants. Many sites made a conscious effort to keep caseloads low so counselors would have enough time to spend with each participant. In the Los Angeles RFS program, for example, caseloads for ERA counselors are limited to 75. This caseload size is much lower than what exists for regular postemployment workers — they carry an average of 110 cases and provide only basic postemployment supportive services, such as child care, health care coverage, and transportation. If necessary, they also provide referrals for mental health issues, domestic violence, and education and training.



Based on MDRC's observations and discussions with site staff, there are a few case management strategies that appear to be particularly helpful when working with participants in a postemployment context:

- **Site staff have found that clearly articulating program objectives helps participants maintain a focus on employment and career advancement.**

Although service strategies vary by site, some of the ERA programs have found that if participants understand the main objectives of the program, they may be more likely to stay employed and advance in a career. Counselors work with participants to create individualized long-term goals that reflect these program objectives. Long-term goals could include anything from becoming a Licensed Vocational Nurse to finding a job that pays \$15 per hour or more. Although there are many small steps (such as obtaining training and work experience) that need to be taken in order to reach these larger goals, retention-focused and advancement-focused objectives are of primary importance.

In order to present a clear and consistent message to participants, it is critical for ERA staff to have a clear sense of the program goals. During the early stages of the program in Salem, for example, each staff member described the benefits of the ERA program slightly differently. Some were focused on the benefits of having services colocated at the local One-Stop, some described the extra support participants receive once they are employed, and others focused on services available to help participants find better jobs. While these statements all describe important features of the program, they do not convey the main program objectives. In subsequent months, the staff in Salem were articulating a more uniform message focused on retention and advancement.

For the Riverside Phase 2 program's Work Plus group, the local welfare agency created a special unit for postemployment counselors in order to foster a clear and consistent understanding of program goals among staff. At first, the Riverside welfare administrators assigned postemployment responsibilities to counselors who also provided preemployment services. These counselors found it difficult to balance the education and training focus of the postemployment program with the work focus of Riverside's preemployment program. In response, Riverside created a separate unit to carry out postemployment program operations. These Work Plus counselors deliver a clear and consistent message to employed participants, informing them that the acquisition of additional education, training, and job skills provides advancement opportunities that lead to self-sufficiency. The separate unit allows Work Plus program managers to create performance measures for staff that focus on the enrollment, participation, and completion of education and training activities, and it allows staff to concentrate on the goals of the Work Plus program.

- **Several sites focus on identifying small, manageable steps toward retention and advancement, and they hold participants accountable for completing these steps.**

Many of the ERA participants have not experienced a lot of success in their lives — neither in school nor at work — and pursuing an ambitious career goal may feel daunting to them. Some programs have found that counselors can make long-term goals seem more attainable to participants by focusing on the small steps necessary to reach a larger objective. For example, the first step in pursuing a career in computer technology is to better understand the skills required for an entry-level job in the field. If a participant needs further training, the second step would be to find a suitable training program in the area.

In Eugene, counselors use the first few meetings with participants to learn more about their work history and career ambitions. Once they have a better sense of what participants want to do, counselors help them map out the steps they will have to take to reach their goals. The first couple of steps may be small; for example, if a participant wants to find a higher-paying clerical job, she might first create a list of her transferable skills. If she wants a promotion, her first step may be showing up for work on time every morning or asking her supervisor what skills need to be demonstrated in order to make it to the next level. Second and third steps may be bigger ones — perhaps applying for a new job or enrolling in a training program. These steps are not always advancement-focused; this is particularly true if the participant is facing issues that affect job retention (like housing instability or car maintenance trouble). However, the retention-focused steps are always taken with longer-term career goals in mind. In the words of one of the counselors in Eugene, mapping out small steps “sets participants up for success” and helps them realize that their career goals are within their reach.

Many of the ERA counselors feel that participants will be more successful if they are held accountable for completing the small steps. In Eugene, participants leave each meeting with an updated plan listing the steps that they will take before they meet again with their counselors. At the next meeting, counselors follow up on participants’ progress, and together the counselor and participant come up with next steps. This follow-up is important because it creates continuity from meeting to meeting and fosters accountability on the part of the participant. Similarly, participants and counselors in the Los Angeles RFS program work together to create one- and three-month goal agreements. Counselors follow up participants’ progress at subsequent meetings.

## Strengthening Retention and Advancement Services

### Providing Reemployment Services and Preventing Future Job Loss

Many of the sites strengthened their focus on employment retention by providing more intensive reemployment services and on-the-job supports for participants who are working.

- **Job loss was more pervasive and occurred more quickly than many sites expected. As a result, many of the sites strengthened their reemployment services.**

Although staff knew that job loss was a common problem for the ERA target population, many of the sites were still surprised by the pervasiveness of the problem in spite of intensified program efforts. In the Texas sites, staff expected the stipend itself to reduce job loss. When stipend receipt was lower than expected, staff received training and began working more intensively on ways to prevent job loss before it occurred. They also stepped up reemployment efforts with the goal of employing individuals within two weeks of their losing a job. In Corpus Christi, staff conduct employer site visits at 2 weeks, and 1, 3, 6, 12, and 18 months after an individual finds a job. During the employer site visit, program staff talk to both the worker and his or her supervisor about performance and any issues that might have arisen on the job (such as attendance, punctuality, or relationships with coworkers). After the individual has been stabilized in the job, staff members discuss advancement with both the employee and employer. ERA staff work with program participants on things they need to do to move into a better job, like, for example, obtaining more skills or training or taking more initiative on the job. Employers are also asked what workers need to do to advance in their jobs, as well as how often they evaluate employees and give raises.

In the Los Angeles RFS program, which targets employed TANF recipients, participants who lose their jobs have 30 days to work with their ERA counselor and job developer to find another job before their case is transferred back to a regular TANF case manager. Because recent economic conditions have led to more participants becoming unemployed than program staff initially expected, the job developers that work with the ERA counselors are spending much of their time helping unemployed participants find jobs, rather than helping employed participants get better jobs, thus compromising the program's advancement strategy. In Medford, reemployment services are designed with the specific intent to keep people from reapplying for TANF. The team works individually with participants to help them find jobs, but if participants reapply for TANF, their cases are transferred back to the welfare office until they are reemployed.

- **Sites serving the hard-to-employ are focused almost entirely on improving placement and retention outcomes. These sites offer supported work options for individuals less able to maintain unsubsidized employment.**

The service providers in Minnesota offer supported and transitional work options to help hard-to-employ participants move more easily into a work environment. One provider operates a program that places participants with private employers in industries that interest them. Once they are working, a job coach works closely with the participants and the employers to help participants adjust to the work environment and address problems and conflicts as they arise. Another provider operates four transitional employment programs that provide clerical training in a supported work environment for about six months.

In the New York PRIDE program, unpaid work experience positions are tailored to the participants' needs, depending on their individual disabilities. The providers primarily place participants in slots where they already have an established relationship with the employer and can address issues if they arise.

### **Providing Advancement Services: Reframing Staff Roles and Brokering Resources**

In general, ERA program staff have extensive experience helping welfare recipients and low-income families find jobs, and some have experience helping people keep their jobs. To help them with career advancement issues, however, staff members have had to learn new skills and adjust to new responsibilities.

- **In many sites, training was provided to help ERA staff better understand how to work with participants on advancement issues.**

Most of the ERA sites, often with the help of MDRC, have provided training to help staff with three specific tasks: (1) becoming more comfortable in their new roles as career counselors, (2) articulating career advancement and design activities to support their increasing comfort with their new objectives, and (3) better understanding the local resources available to help participants pursue their career goals. In many of the sites, staff often found it hard to transition from a job placement and stabilization focus to an advancement focus. In South Carolina, for example, many of the ERA counselors were more comfortable working with unemployed participants, but they provided few services — if any — to those who already had jobs and were ready to think about advancement. As a result, program administrators provided advancement training for their staff.

Other sites found it hard to move away from a focus on barrier removal. In Medford, staff found it hard to move from a “crisis mode” of solving participants' short-term, retention-related problems to one in which the focus is on long-term employment goals. Instead, they were working with participants on immediate problems, such as housing instability and child care emergencies. While these are important retention issues, staff were spending more time handling these problems for participants than focusing on participants' career goals. The Medford team has since

worked together to refocus the way it works with participants, and the state provided training to all the Oregon ERA sites to help staff develop an expertise in providing advancement services. The training was designed specifically to help staff incorporate a focus on advancement starting from the initial meeting. For example, when participants first get a job, the counselor can guide them to ask their employers (1) what is expected of them in the current job and (2) what skills and experience are needed to advance to the next level. This exercise gives participants a better sense of employer expectations and plants the seed for future advancement.

The state welfare agency in Texas, which sponsors the ERA program at the state level, also made a significant commitment to training staff on a range of issues, including advancement. Training topics included strategies for getting participants promoted to better jobs; helping counselors redefine their roles as guides who help shape longer-term career goals (rather than simply helping people find initial jobs); and working with employers. Some sites also provided in-house training for staff to help them become more familiar with local career resources available to participants. For example, the Los Angeles RFS counselors received special training from the California Employment Department in using their on-line services for skills and interest inventories and job matching.

- **Some sites have very specific approaches to advancement, while others tailor services to individual participants. In sites with specific advancement approaches, success is somewhat easier to define, although a tailored approach provides more flexibility for participants.**

The Riverside Phase 2 Work Plus and Training Focused groups aim primarily to facilitate advancement through a combination of employment and education and training services. For some participants, this model puts a short-term wage increase on hold for a future payoff. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the ERA staff in Chicago focus initially on getting participants into a better-paying job that relies on their current skills (although counselors also work with participants who are interested in pursuing training). This strategy provides immediate payoffs in terms of income, but focuses less on long-term career goals and future advancement through training. In both of these models, defining “success” from the counselor’s perspective is, for the most part, straightforward. In the Riverside Work Plus and Training Focused groups, counselors are successful if they can encourage participants to enroll, participate in, and complete education and training. In Chicago, counselors are successful if they are able to find a higher-paying job for participants, utilizing participants’ current skills.

Most of the sites are somewhere in the middle of this spectrum, using both work- and training-focused strategies for advancement, depending on the needs of individual participant. In this approach, success is harder to define — it could mean finding a better job, completing a career assessment, or exploring training options. Because long-term goals are often the focus,

participants will rarely reach their final goal within the duration of the program, although they may make steady progress. Even defining a “better” job is difficult in this structure. For some participants, a better job might be one that does not necessarily pay more but that nevertheless provides advancement opportunities in their areas of interest. Despite the difficulties, this model provides more flexibility for individual participants. The ERA evaluation will provide more information about the effectiveness of these different strategies for advancement.

## **Program Management: Defining and Measuring Success**

Most of the sites have created program benchmarks for participation and job retention and advancement outcomes. However, little is known about what kind of participation levels to expect in voluntary postemployment service components, particularly if sites have not delivered a similar program in the past. Defining ambitious but realistic goals for participant outcomes is even harder. Welfare agencies and ERA providers often do not have access to up-to-date information on job retention rates and wage progression for the counterfactual group, making it hard to know whether the program is improving on these outcomes. The state welfare agency in Texas set benchmarks for the local ERA programs using the research on retention and advancement outcomes among welfare recipients as a baseline. The benchmarks serve as rough guidelines, rather than strict program standards, and if they seem either too low or overly ambitious based on early program outcomes, they are adjusted accordingly. Currently, the benchmarks include measures of employment retention (at three, six, and nine months) and wage increases. Each Texas site submits a monthly report to the state and is monitored quarterly to determine its performance against the benchmarks. As a result, the benchmarks are used as a management tool on the local level to assess which areas of program operations need adjusting.

Measuring program participation and participant outcomes is also difficult. Some local data systems are not equipped to collect such data. As such, a number of sites (in South Carolina and Texas) have created their own data systems for individuals assigned to the ERA program group. While these data systems are useful for the sites, they often require that counselors spend more time on additional data entry because they still have to enter information into the regular TANF system. In South Carolina, the ERA data system was designed to take the place of paper records in order to increase efficiency; this goal, for the most part, has been achieved. Often sites have to manage the competing priorities of serving participants and tracking and measuring success. A complicating factor is that some information on participant outcomes is hard to collect. For example, some participants may only need services for the first few months after finding a job. If they are not in contact with their counselors, the counselors will not know whether they were able to keep their jobs over an extended period of time.

Another problem is that participant-counselor interactions, which are critical for building the relationships that lead to success for participants, often cannot be readily entered into

preemployment program tracking systems, which are designed for tracking the status of programs and component referrals. Rather than compelling its contracted PASS service providers to use its existing preemployment program tracking system, Riverside PASS created a separate PASS program tracking system. PASS provider staff use the system to enter all attempted participant contacts, the reasons for the contacts, and the outcomes of the contacts.

Two of the sites, Corpus Christi and Riverside Phase 2 (Work Plus group), use performance standards to determine whether program staff are achieving program goals. Performance standards create guideposts for staff to help them better understand their roles and responsibilities in the context of job retention and advancement. They also create staff accountability and help to identify which counselors are doing well and which may need more training and guidance.

The Riverside welfare agency uses performance standards for all of its staff. As described earlier, the agency created a separate postemployment unit; this was in part so it could have distinct performance benchmarks for the Work Plus counselors. Unlike the preemployment counselors, whose performance is measured based on job placements, Work Plus counselors are measured by the job retention rates for people on their caseloads; the number of people they are able to engage in education and training programs; and the number of people who complete training. On a regular basis, supervisors review whether each counselor meets, exceeds, or falls below the expectations. Work Plus counselors meet expectations if 80 percent or more of the people on their caseload maintain employment, 35 percent or more engage in training, and 4 percent or more complete training. If counselors are not able to meet these standards, they meet with their supervisors to determine what might be causing the problem and how to resolve it.

Corpus Christi has different performance measures depending on the type of staff. Career counselors, who manage the ERA cases, have performance measures based primarily on participation levels — they are expected to have at least two-thirds of their caseload actively participating in program activities at any one time. Employment counselors, who are responsible for helping participants find jobs, are evaluated primarily on job placement rates and average wage at placement. Career advancement planners who work with employed participants are evaluated based on wage rates and participants' retention during the first month of employment and at 6, 12, and 18 months after employment. They are also required to contact each participant monthly, meet with each participant quarterly, and conduct at least 25 worksite visits per month.

Each staff person in Corpus Christi meets individually with his or her supervisor for a monthly review. These reviews are designed to discuss progress made toward meeting individual performance benchmarks. If a staff member is not meeting benchmarks, supervisors review cases with him or her to find ways to make improvements.

Some of the sites have performance standards based on staff job duties, rather than on retention and advancement outcomes. For example, Portland ERA staff are required to have

weekly contact with participants while the participants are looking for a job and to contact them during the first and second week after they have found a job; they must then contact them at least monthly for the next three months. They are required to keep track of participant contacts and to forward reports to program managers. South Carolina uses similar performance standards. The site developed for staff a list of job functions that is included in performance evaluations. Job functions include engaging participants, maintaining regular contact, developing an ERA plan with career objectives, and entering participant data into the ERA data system.



## Chapter 3

# Institutional Structure and Linkages in ERA Programs

With the enactment of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), welfare programs have significantly more organizational partners than they had in the past.<sup>1</sup> The ERA programs also use relatively complex organizational arrangements to deliver employment-related and other services. They typically represent a partnership among several agencies and organizations, which can include welfare agencies, workforce investment agencies, nonprofit community-based organizations, community colleges, and others.

This chapter discusses the type of institutional linkages involved in operating the retention and advancement programs. Key findings from this chapter include:

- **The welfare agency plays a lead role in most sites. The workforce investment system is an important partner in some but not all of the programs.** The strong role of the welfare department is not surprising given that most of the programs focus on recipients or leavers in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. In some programs, the workforce system plays a lead or joint leadership role in ERA, bringing to the programs resources and expertise on employment-related issues. Some programs have also colocated the ERA program at local One-Stop Centers, and a few teamed welfare and workforce investment staff to provide ERA services. However, some programs only use workforce investment services on an “as-needed” basis, and there is little coordination with the welfare system. Sites with more coordinated services between the two systems have found that this arrangement leads to access to high-quality job search resources, job leads, employer connections, and training funded by Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and that it creates a positive environment for participants.
- **In most sites, the institutional linkages between the welfare and workforce investment systems established for the ERA program are based on those forged for the TANF program.** While one might expect that a focus on retention and advancement issues would provide common ground for new linkages to be developed, this generally did not occur in the ERA programs. However, in a few sites, coordination between the systems was enhanced due to the implementation of the ERA program.

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<sup>1</sup>Martinson and Holcomb, 2002.

- **Overall, coordination between the workforce investment and welfare systems in these sites is largely driven by the flow of TANF or Welfare-to-Work (WtW) grant funds to the workforce investment system to provide services to welfare recipients and working individuals.** This flow of funding enables One-Stop Centers to serve ERA participants without having them count as part of the One-Stop performance standards, which are often viewed as a barrier to serving welfare recipients or working individuals through workforce investment agency funding. Other factors, such as state guidance and past partnerships, also enhanced institutional linkages between the two systems. In addition to performance standards, factors that hinder coordination in the ERA sites include the different goals and target populations of the two systems, different regional jurisdictions and organizational cultures, and a lack of coordinated decisionmaking processes between the two systems.
- **Nonprofit community-based organizations provide key program services in several ERA projects; for-profit agencies provide services in one site.** Both nonprofit and for-profit agencies generally provide services under contract to either the welfare or workforce investment agency. A few sites, primarily in Oregon, involve community colleges in their ERA programs.
- **Programs serving a hard-to-employ population generally established new linkages with other organizations.** These new linkages bring to the program special expertise on the difficult barriers facing this population.

The remainder of the chapter examines the role of both the welfare and the workforce investment systems in the ERA programs and discusses the benefits and issues that have arisen in establishing and maintaining the linkage between the two systems. The chapter also examines coordination with other types of organizations and the role those organizations play in ERA programs.

## **The Role of the Welfare Agency**

The local welfare agency has historically played the lead role in delivering various benefits and services to eligible individuals receiving cash assistance. Indeed, the welfare agency is generally responsible for administering the TANF program and implementing the new rules of PRWORA.

- **In 12 of the programs in the evaluation, the welfare agency is responsible for the ERA project and plays a central role in its operation.**

Table 3.1 shows the lead agency for each ERA program and demonstrates whether the program contracts with other organizations for services. As shown, the welfare agency is the lead agency in many sites, although its role varies. In some cases, the welfare agency is the sole provider of most program services. For example, in Los Angeles RFS, Riverside Phase 2 (Work Plus group), and South Carolina, staff at the welfare agencies provide employment and retention services in-house rather than contracting with other organizations to provide them.

In other sites, however, the welfare agencies play the lead role in administering the program, but they contract with other organizations — such as nonprofit community-based organizations, the workforce investment agency, for-profit agencies, and community colleges — to provide services; the sites in this group are Los Angeles EJC, Riverside Phase 2 (Training Focused group) and Riverside PASS, the Illinois sites, and Eugene. In Los Angeles, the welfare agency contracts with the County Office of Education to operate the job clubs. In Portland, Oregon, the welfare department jointly administers the program with its prime contractor for services, a community college. In the New York PRIDE program, although the welfare agency plays the lead role, the State Education Department contracts with nonprofit providers for program services. In Riverside, the programs being evaluated in the Phase 2 evaluation have different organizational arrangements: one, the Work Plus group, is operated by the welfare agency, and the other, the Training Focused group, is operated by the workforce investment agency (under contract to the welfare agency).<sup>2</sup>

The lead role of the welfare agency in the ERA projects is not surprising, given that almost of the projects target TANF applicants, recipients, or recent leavers. Because ERA was developed by the Administration for Children and Families, the initiative was designed to build on the welfare reform efforts of state welfare agencies — albeit in partnership with other relevant organizations — and to respond to their substantial interest and investments in the area.<sup>3</sup>

## **The Role of the Workforce Investment System**

The workforce investment system, overseen by the U.S. Department of Labor, encompasses a broad range of employment, vocational education, and training services and programs for employers, job-seekers, and students. Both the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) (formerly the Job Training Partnership Act) and the Employment Service, authorized by the Wagner-Peyser Act, are part of the workforce investment system. WIA requires localities to provide

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<sup>2</sup>There is a third program in the Riverside Phase 2 study — the standard TANF employment program in the county, which serves as the control group program in this study. This program is operated by the welfare agency.

<sup>3</sup>Bloom et al., 2002.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Table 3.1

Institutional Structure of ERA Programs

State	Location/Program	Lead Agency at Local Level	Organization(s) Under Contract for Program Services	ERA Program Colocated at One-Stop?	Welfare and Employment Service Provider Staff Colocated?
California	Los Angeles EJC	Welfare agency	County Office of Education	No	No
	Los Angeles RFS	Welfare agency	None	No	No
	Riverside Phase 2: Training Focused Group	Welfare agency	Workforce agency	Yes	No
	Work Plus Group		None	No	No
	Riverside PASS	Welfare agency	Nonprofit agencies and community college	No	No
Illinois	Cook County	Welfare agency	For-profit agency	Yes (at one office)	No
	St. Clair County	Welfare agency	Nonprofit and for-profit agencies	No	No
Minnesota	Minneapolis	Workforce agency	Nonprofit agencies	Yes (at one provider)	Yes (at two providers)
	New York PRIDE	Welfare agency	Nonprofit agencies; Vocational Rehabilitation agency is program partner	No	No
New York	New York SACM	Welfare agency	Nonprofit agencies	No	No
	Cleveland	Nonprofit agency	None	No	No
	Eugene	Welfare agency	Community college	No	Yes
Oregon	Medford	Workforce agency	Workforce agency	Yes	Yes
	Portland	Joint: welfare and community college	Community colleges	Yes (at one office)	Yes
	Salem	Joint: welfare and workforce agency	Community college	Yes	Yes
South Carolina	Pee Dee Region	Welfare agency	None	No	No
Texas	Corpus Christi	Workforce agency	Nonprofit agency	Yes	Yes
	Fort Worth	Workforce agency	Nonprofit agency	Yes	Yes
	Houston	Workforce agency	Nonprofit agency	Yes	Yes

many workforce investment services at One-Stop Centers, such as making available information about the labor market, job openings, and education and training programs. One-Stop Centers are generally (but not always) operated by organizations under contract to the workforce investment agency.

As shown on Table 3.1, MDRC found a range in the level of institutional linkages between the One-Stop system and the TANF programs in the study sites. Overall, high levels of coordination were found in the Oregon, Texas, and Minneapolis sites, with lesser (although varying) levels in the other sites (Box 2 provides an overview of the institutional arrangements in these three sites).

- **In two of the sites, the workforce investment agency manages and operates the ERA program.**

In two ERA sites (Minneapolis and Texas), the workforce investment agency receives TANF funds from the welfare system to manage and operate the ERA program. The workforce agency then contracts out for the provision of these services, and sometimes they are delivered at the One-Stops as well as other locations. For example, in Minneapolis, the workforce investment agency contracts with six primarily nonprofit agencies to operate the ERA program; it also monitors program and contractor performance. In this site, the decision to give this ERA administrative responsibility to the workforce investment agency was made at the local level. In contrast, in Texas, state legislation enacted before PRWORA requires local WIA agencies to provide all employment-related activities to TANF recipients throughout the state. When developing the ERA program, the state welfare agency continued this arrangement and provided TANF funding to the local workforce investment agency to manage and oversee the ERA program. In the Texas sites, the local workforce investment agency in turn contracts with a nonprofit agency to operate the program.

- **In six of the programs, ERA services are provided by the same organization and at the same place as WIA One-Stop services.**

In another configuration, the workforce investment agencies are involved in the ERA program through operation of both the ERA program and the One-Stop Center, with the ERA program colocated at the One-Stop Center. Sites using this arrangement are the Riverside Training Focused program, Illinois (at one office in Chicago), Medford, Salem, Portland (at one location), and the Texas sites.<sup>4</sup> But while the programs are run by the same organization, the ERA

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<sup>4</sup>In addition, in Minneapolis, one of the six ERA providers is colocated at a One-Stop Center, although the ERA program and the One-Stop are operated by different organizations. In the New York PRIDE program, the workforce investment agency is considered a key partner because of the financial resources it provides to the program through a Welfare-to-Work grant. However, the workforce investment agency does not directly provide services in this site.

program and staff are generally separate and distinct from the One-Stop Center staff. Most of the workforce investment agencies in these sites contract with other organizations, such as non-profit agencies or community colleges, to operate the ERA and One-Stop services, but in the Riverside Training Focused program and Medford, the workforce investment agency itself directly operates the two sets of services.

- **Four sites designed ERA services so that welfare and workforce investment agency staff work as a team to provide services, with staff from the two organizations housed in the same offices.**

## **Box 2**

### **Profiles of ERA Sites with Strong Linkages Between the Workforce Investment System and the Welfare Agency**

**Oregon (Eugene, Medford, Portland, and Salem).** All of the ERA sites in Oregon have built on the historically close partnerships that exist between the welfare offices and workforce agencies. In each of the four sites, the local workforce investment agency is under contract with the welfare agency to work in partnership to design and deliver ERA services. The welfare agency provides TANF funds for the ERA program. The ERA programs in Medford, Portland, and Salem have enhanced coordination between the two systems by colocating eligibility staff from the TANF agency and employment services staff from the workforce agency at the One-Stop Center. In these sites, full-time TANF eligibility staff are colocated at the One-Stop and work closely with ERA career counselors to help participants find jobs. In Eugene, the ERA program is located at the welfare office, but TANF eligibility staff work closely with career counselors from a community college — a workforce provider — to provide ERA services.

**Texas (Corpus Christi, Fort Worth, and Houston).** In Texas, state legislation passed before the enactment of WIA or PRWORA requires the workforce investment system to provide employment services to welfare recipients; the legislation provides TANF funds for these services. All TANF employment services are provided at One-Stop Centers across the state, although separate staff work on WIA-funded and TANF-funded activities. For the TANF-funded ERA program, coordination between the two systems is further improved through the collocation of welfare agency and workforce investment staff at the One-Stop Centers. In addition, collaboration between welfare agency and workforce staff is encouraged under ERA through “team-based” case management (which explicitly requires staff from these two agencies as well as other program partners to work together in serving participants).

**Minnesota (Minneapolis).** In Minneapolis, the local workforce investment agency has overall responsibility for the administration of TANF employment services and the ERA program and receives TANF funds from the local welfare agency to operate both these programs. For the ERA program, the workforce agency contracts with five nonprofit agencies and one public agency to operate the program — one of the providers colocates ERA staff at a One-Stop Center.

As previously discussed, several sites formally involve the workforce investment agency in the program by contracting with the organization that also operates the local One-Stop Center. In most of these sites — Medford, Salem, Portland, and the Texas sites — the staff from the welfare agency and from the contracted agency operate as a team to provide services to ERA participants. As shown on Table 3.1, welfare and workforce staff in each of these sites operate from the same location.<sup>5</sup> In addition, in Eugene, the welfare agency and community college staff operate as a team to provide services and are colocated (although services were not linked with the One-Stop Centers). Workforce investment agency staff, because of their expertise, generally provide employment, retention, and advancement services — such as teaching job readiness classes, providing job search assistance and career planning, and addressing problems that may affect job retention. Welfare agency staff focus on issues related to eligibility for TANF, food stamps, and Medicaid and support services, such as child care and transportation.

- **Staff at ERA sites with strong institutional connections between the One-Stop and the ERA program — particularly at sites in which ERA services and One-Stop Centers are colocated — found that these linkages brought several benefits.**

Although there is variation across the sites in the level of coordination between ERA programs and the One-Stop services in these sites, staff generally report that the ERA program benefits in several ways from being physically located in the same place:

1. **Higher-quality job search resources, access to job leads, and employer connections.** Programs that involve the One-Stop Centers in providing ERA employment services (Oregon and Texas) consistently report that they made this arrangement so they could access the expertise of the workforce investment system in linking individuals to jobs. Program staff report that One-Stop Centers had more job search resources — such as computers, job banks, and career planning resources — than the ERA program and that they benefit from having access to these. They also benefit from the employer connections — particularly job leads and job fairs — developed by One-Stop Center staff. Staff in the Texas and Oregon sites uniformly report that they have “first-hand” access to new job openings because they are colocated at the One-Stop Centers and can move quickly to help ERA participants fill the positions. Staff in these programs also report they have access to job developers located at the One-Stop Centers.

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<sup>5</sup>In Minneapolis, welfare and workforce staff are colocated at two of the six providers; however, the staff do not formally work together as a team to provide ERA services.

2. **Easier or guaranteed access to WIA training programs.** Enrolling participants in WIA programs and services, particularly training, is easier when the ERA programs are colocated at One-Stop Centers. For example, in Fort Worth, because of its connections with the One-Stop, the ERA program is able to reserve a certain number of WIA training slots exclusively for ERA participants. In Houston, whenever an ERA participant becomes employed, ERA staff are encouraged to check with One-Stop Center staff to see if the individual is eligible for training through WIA funding. This process is facilitated by the fact that WIA and ERA staff sit next to each other, rather than in separate parts of the building they are located in. In Salem, coenrollment is augmented by an ERA staff person who carries a caseload of both ERA and WIA cases.
3. **Nonstigmatizing environment.** Staff at the Oregon sites report that one of the biggest benefits of being located at the One-Stop Center is the separation from the welfare office; this separation creates a “positive” environment, one that lacks the stigma of the welfare office. Staff thought that the ERA program has a philosophy different from that of the typical welfare program — rather than emphasizing rules and mandates, it focuses more on employment and career issues. Staff report that they find it appropriate for a program with such a focus to be located outside the welfare department.
4. **Coordinated interagency services.** Programs with workforce investment and welfare staff who are “teamed” at the same location (as in Oregon and Texas) report that participants benefit from the collocation of staff because services are more “seamless.” If the employment staff identify a support service need (such as child care), they can go directly to the welfare agency staff to handle it — and it is taken care of immediately instead of in a few days. For example, staff in Salem find that participants benefit when both types of staff are involved in developing employment plans, because such a procedure minimizes “mixed messages” that can occur regarding program requirements, making the participant more accountable to both employment and welfare staff.
5. **Better data reporting.** Staff in the Texas ERA program have found that a greater level of coordination between welfare and workforce staff results in better data reporting on program performance, because both agencies are more up-to-date on participants’ activities and status. In addition, because of better communication between the two organizations about individual cases (which is enhanced by the collocation of TANF eligibility and ERA employ-



ment staff) staff are able to ensure that individuals receive transitional benefits when they leave assistance for employment, which improves participants' employment outcomes and also reduces the need for appeals at the welfare agency.<sup>6</sup> In Eugene, to improve participation data, the ERA program is starting a pilot in which staff have access to the WIA tracking system to verify attendance in WIA activities.

6. **A more limited role for the workforce investment system.** While the workforce investment system plays an important role in many of the ERA programs, in several other sites its role is minimal. Some sites use One-Stop services only on an “as-needed” basis and refer individuals when staff find doing so appropriate. In Los Angeles PES, while some referrals have been made, staff reported that the primary services offered through the One-Stop Center are very similar to what the ERA program offered, and thus they did not see much benefit in making a referral. Some sites have also found that obtaining intensive services such as training (available under WIA to individuals who do not find jobs through other One-Stop services) is a time-consuming and lengthy process; they do not access the services for this reason. In South Carolina, despite efforts to develop partnerships with the One-Stop Centers during the planning phase in some counties, referrals in several counties have been limited for similar reasons.

There is variation in the extent to which the ERA programs make referrals to the One-Stop system. In Eugene, while the ERA program is not located at the One-Stop Center, ERA staff meet regularly with participants at the One-Stop to walk them through the services available there, or to work with them on résumé development and job search activities. In South Carolina, some of the counties involved in ERA are more likely than others to make referrals to One-Stop Centers, suggesting differences in opinion among staff about whether One-Stops have the capacity to meet the needs of their participants.

Few ERA programs include a role for the Employment Service, another program in the workforce investment system. The exceptions are several of the Oregon sites, in which the Employment Service agency plays a small role. In Medford and Eugene, the ERA program utilizes staff from the agency to provide assistance with résumé development, interviewing skills, and job leads for individuals who have lost their jobs. In Portland and Salem, although they are not officially part of the ERA program, staff from the Employment Service are colo-

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<sup>6</sup>Individuals are generally eligible for “transitional services” such as child care and Medicaid when they leave cash assistance for work.

cated at the One-Stop Center or welfare agency, along with the ERA program, to provide job development services.

In the ERA sites, several reasons were identified for the lack of coordination between the welfare and workforce investment systems.

1. **Different goals and target populations.** Staff in some sites (Los Angeles, Riverside, South Carolina) report that the One-Stop system and the TANF system have different program goals, which makes the coordination of services difficult. For example, some staff report that the One-Stop system is primarily focused on serving the needs of employers rather than the needs of populations — like the ones on TANF — that face employment barriers. In addition, some report that the TANF program serves an entirely different population from the one served by One-Stops; they add that One-Stop Centers are only interested in working with a broader “voluntary” population which is job-ready. Finally, staff at some sites report that the systems have different goals because the welfare system is exclusively focused on immediate employment, while the One-Stop system provides opportunities for training and skill-building.
2. **Ability to meet performance standards.** The existence of WIA performance standards were identified as another important reason why some of the One-Stops in the ERA sites were reluctant to use WIA dollars to serve the ERA population (which is typically harder to employ than the general population). In addition, performance under WIA is measured by placement, retention, and earnings gains for individuals who were initially placed in jobs, not for those who entered a One-Stop already holding a job. Thus, there is a strong incentive to serve the unemployed rather than the employed. Systems with more successful collaborations generally provide TANF funds to serve ERA recipients, which means that TANF recipients are not included in WIA performance standards. Some staff also report that the performance standards of the two systems are perceived to be different — with TANF more focused on “process” measures (like participation rates), and WIA more focused on “outcomes” (such as job placement and retention) — and that this contributes to coordination difficulties.
3. **Different regional jurisdictions.** The welfare and workforce systems often have different yet overlapping regional jurisdictions, which complicates coordination. This is a problem particularly in larger urban areas. For example, in Los Angeles, there are eight WIA regions and eight TANF regions, and

none of the WIA regions are the same. This lack of overlap requires individual TANF offices to establish connections with multiple One-Stop Centers in their regions, a process which has been difficult.

4. **Different organizational cultures.** Particularly in programs that colocate staff from the two systems, some difficulties were encountered in integrating staff members from the welfare agency into the larger culture and community of the One-Stop Center. In Salem, managers had to take steps to smooth the transition by ensuring that welfare agency staff were included in all staff meetings, committees, and other events.
  5. **Lack of coordinated decisionmaking processes.** Some sites (Los Angeles and Texas) report that the WIB is not a good forum for addressing issues related to TANF or ERA, particularly given the number of other issues that must be handled and the number of agencies involved. In sites with more coordinated services, smaller working group meetings are held to focus on issues related to TANF or ERA. Staff in Riverside report that differences in the organizational structure of the welfare and workforce investment agencies hinder coordination — primarily because welfare agencies have a hierarchical structure that makes it easier to implement program and policy changes, while such changes are more difficult to enact in the more decentralized One-Stop system.
- **The linkages between the welfare and workforce investment agency build on those established for the TANF program. The ERA program by itself generally did not spur new connections between these organizations.**

Sites generally used the already established relationships between the two systems to develop structures for their ERA programs. If linkages did not exist, new ones were not established. For the most part, the linkages between the welfare and workforce investment systems in the ERA program were established for the TANF program, if not before. For example, when TANF was implemented, several sites (Minneapolis, for instance) expanded their institutional linkages with the workforce investment system because of the focus on employment in the new law. In other places, such as Texas and Oregon, the major role for the workforce investment system in welfare programs predates the enactment of TANF. With such cases, it might be expected that a focus on retention and advancement issues would provide common ground for additional linkages to be forged; however, generally, no new linkages occurred. There were two important cases in which new linkages did emerge, though:

1. **Oregon and Texas: colocation of welfare and workforce staff at the One-Stop.** The Oregon and Texas ERA sites had relatively strong connections between the workforce investment and welfare systems under TANF, and these linkages were strengthened when the sites developed their ERA programs. As discussed above, most of the ERA programs in these sites created staff “teams” made up of both workforce investment staff and welfare agency staff, with the aim of providing coordinated services to participants at the One-Stop Centers. Program administrators in these sites decided to create the colocated interagency teams precisely because they allowed a range of participant needs to be addressed at one place; this was viewed as critical to retention and advancement efforts.
  2. **Riverside: new program for the One-Stop system under ERA.** In Riverside, the welfare agency had historically been responsible for all aspects of welfare-to-work efforts in the county, but for the ERA evaluation, the workforce investment agency took complete responsibility for one of the programs being tested. In this site, the workforce investment agency had long expressed an interest in serving the welfare population, but the welfare agency maintained control of employment services. As welfare reform progressed, however, program administrators in Riverside found that many people combined work with welfare and did not have the skills to move into jobs that would allow them to leave cash assistance. The development of the ERA evaluation — which, in Riverside, examines the effects of increased education and training on employment outcomes — created an opportunity to compare a program operated by the workforce investment system to one operated by the welfare agency. The ERA program operated by the workforce system in Riverside is funded by TANF, WtW, and Employment Service funds.
- **Coordination between the One-Stops and the ERA programs in the ERA sites is largely driven by the flow of TANF or WtW funds to the One-Stop system to provide services for participants. Other factors, such as state guidance and past partnerships, also enhanced institutional linkages.**

The availability of TANF funds, WtW funds, or both appeared to significantly increase coordination between the two systems. The workforce investment systems in Oregon, Texas, and Minneapolis all receive TANF funds to provide ERA services to welfare recipients. These are the sites that achieved the closest levels of coordination between the systems, most of them

operating the ERA programs at the One-Stop Centers and providing employment services via workforce investment staff. In Riverside, the WtW funds were used to develop training services (provided through the One-Stop system) for working TANF recipients. WIA funds generally are not used in any systematic way for ERA participants; because WIA resources are relatively limited, in many of the sites ERA participants only receive WIA-funded services when they seek them out on their own or are referred by ERA.

Other factors also contributed to strong institutional linkages between the two systems. First, collaboration at the local level is enhanced when the state provides clear direction and guidance regarding the nature of the collaboration. In Texas, the major role for the workforce investment system in TANF is mandated by the state legislature and resources are provided to fund services (through TANF). Some of the pre-TANF collaborations in Oregon also started as a result of the state directives. In these cases, the state workforce and welfare agency provided specific guidance defining the role of both the welfare system and the workforce investment agency under the new institutional arrangement. While localities were given some discretion in implementing the new requirements, the basic parameters of the institutional connections were established by the state agencies. It is important to note that some local systems (such as Minneapolis) have developed coordinated services with little or no guidance from the state level. When state guidance is not provided, there can be significant variation at the local level in terms of One-Stop involvement with TANF. For example, in South Carolina, where counties are given the discretion to determine the relationship between the One-Stop system and TANF, the welfare agency is a partner in the One-Stop system in only one of the six counties in the ERA study.

In addition, sites with strong linkages between the two systems sometimes had a relatively long history of working together, with institutional connections that predate the enactment of WIA and PRWORA. For example, most of the Oregon sites had relationships that dated back to the late 1980s and in some cases earlier. At the time, these collaborative efforts were started in order to minimize the duplication of services and also to address issues relating to competition for funding or “turf issues” that had arisen. Historical roles can also work against collaboration. In some systems (such as Los Angeles and South Carolina), the welfare agency has a well-established organizational infrastructure responsible for providing employment services to welfare recipients; it would be difficult to move these services to a different entity.

Finally, sites that established a process for addressing interagency issues beyond meetings of the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) had strong institutional connections. While many of the sites in this study include on the WIB a representative from the TANF agency, the programs with close collaborations (Minneapolis, Oregon, and Texas) generally have formalized, regular meetings between the two agencies and meet on a regular basis to address specific issues related to TANF and ERA. Staff consistently report that linkages between the systems require constant and ongoing communication. Houston has a designated “liaison” at each agency — a person who

can be called directly for a quick response to any relevant issue — and views this as critical to resolving issues that arise.

## **The Role of Other Organizations**

In addition to the welfare and workforce investment system, a range of other organizations play important roles in the ERA program.

- **Nonprofit community-based organizations are key providers of employment services in several ERA sites.**

In six of the ERA sites, nonprofit community organizations proved to be important service providers regardless of whether the welfare or workforce agency played a lead role in the programs. The organizations are generally under contract to either the welfare or workforce investment agency to provide employment and other services to ERA participants. Each of the Texas sites contracts with one nonprofit agency to provide services, while others (such as Minneapolis and Illinois) use multiple providers. Only one site in the ERA evaluation, Illinois, contracts with for-profit organizations to provide program services.

In the Riverside PASS program, which provides services to individuals who have left TANF, involving nonprofit agencies is viewed as key to the success of the program. Administrators decided to contract out PASS program services to community-based organizations because they felt that these organizations could more effectively recruit, enroll, and serve TANF leavers who reside in their communities than welfare agencies could. Administrators thought that many TANF leavers wanted a clean break from the welfare agency and would respond better to PASS recruitment activities from a nonwelfare organization. All three of the nonprofit agencies in the PASS program offer a range of intensive, family-based program services — such as life skills workshops, referrals to social services programs, education and training sessions, and provision of supportive services (transportation, for example). Moreover, each provider uses its particular strengths to serve clients. For example, one utilizes its connections to the local housing authority to refer clients to subsidized housing programs. Others emphasize their job search resource rooms for clients who are seeking jobs with higher pay or better hours. Still another stresses its ability to pay for car repairs and insurance in order for clients to keep working.

- **The programs that focus on the hard-to-employ population bring in other organizations to provide expertise related to the specific barriers that face this population. It is less common for the programs that are focused primarily on retention and advancement do this, but some of them do.**

In the New York PRIDE program, the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) in the State Education Department (SED) — which also operates the Vocational Rehabilitation program — is a major partner. Because of VESID’s experience in serving a population whose employability is limited by physical or mental health problems, the welfare agency viewed the organization’s expertise and involvement as critical to the success of the program. SED contracts with the PRIDE service providers (nonprofit organizations) and also has staff outstationed with each of the providers. VESID contributes resources to the project and facilitates access to the training slots funded through the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

During the initial phases of program development and implementation, VESID had some difficulty adjusting to the welfare agency’s focus on work first. Vocational rehabilitation programs are typically voluntary and allow longer periods for assessment and training. The program managers sought to overcome these differences in culture and philosophy by bringing the different agencies involved in the program together to work closely on program design; this process involved biweekly meetings over the course of several months.

Several of the providers in Minneapolis contract with licensed psychologists from organizations with mental health expertise to conduct the in-depth family assessment that is an important first step in the program. In Portland, the community college that runs the ERA program employs in each office a mental health specialist who conducts screenings and makes referrals to a local community mental health provider.

The Texas ERA sites also involve staff from other organizations that specialize in addressing barriers associated with hard-to-employ populations. For example, in Corpus Christi, staff from a substance abuse organization lead participants through a short questionnaire as part of the initial assessment in order to identify problems and follow up individual cases as needed (with both the participant and a case manager). In Houston, staff from a women’s advocacy organization are located on-site to provide assistance with domestic violence issues; also, a representative from a substance abuse organization conducts monthly workshops for ERA participants.

- **Linkages with community colleges are most common in Oregon, where there is a long history of collaboration between the welfare agency and community colleges.**

In Eugene, Oregon, the community college contracts with the welfare agency to provide ERA program services, and staff from the two organizations are colocated at the welfare department. Staff at the welfare agency provide retention services (particularly support services like child care, transportation, rent, and utility coverage), while the community college staff work with participants on advancement issues — either by helping participants find a better or more suitable job or by counseling and assisting them in enrolling in education and training. The Medford ERA

program has a part-time employee from the local community college who provides educational assessments and referrals to participants interested in further education and training.

A few other programs besides the ones in Oregon have established linkages with community colleges. In Riverside, community colleges are a contractor for training services in the PASS program, and the Phase 2 programs make referrals to community college education and training programs. In South Carolina, the ERA program is partnering with the Technical College system (which includes 15 campuses), primarily to provide occupational training in medical technology, industrial maintenance, and certified nursing aide programs.

In Eugene, ERA program staff report that involving the community college brings to the program expertise on advancement issues. The community college staff have experience in career and academic counseling and can provide participants with valuable guidance about the education and experience needed for various career paths. They often show participants around campus and introduce them to other college staff, which may help individuals feel less intimidated if they decide to attend college.

In Portland, where welfare and community college staff are colocated, one of the biggest issues in implementing the program was trying to help staff from the two agencies overcome their stereotypes and their differing perspectives. For example, welfare agency staff are perceived as being more work-first oriented and as being “hard” on participants when it comes to requirements, sanctions, and other forms of pressure to find jobs. Community college staff, on the other hand, are more focused on education and training and thus are perceived as “more lax” in terms of work requirements. In order to build trust and collegiality between the two groups, the program managers in this site directly confronted these stereotypes in group-building training sessions.



**Appendix A**

**Descriptions of the ERA Programs**

## California: The Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club Program

**Program goals:** To assist welfare recipients in finding higher-wage employment, improve their capability to retain employment, and expand their opportunities for employment advancement in order to increase future earnings.

**Location:** San Gabriel Valley Region III and Central County Region IV of the Los Angeles Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program.

**Target population:** Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients who are required to attend job club.

**Primary services:** The Enhanced Job Club (EJC) program is four weeks long in duration with an option to participate in a motivational fifth week. During the first week, participants attend classroom activities that are designed — with appraisals of skills, interests, education, and employment history — to help them carry out career planning and preparation. The remaining three weeks, devoted to job search, incorporate a step-down approach that is designed to help participants find higher-paying jobs or jobs with advancement opportunities. During the first week of job search, participants combine half-days of classroom preparation with job search. They are encouraged to seek a job that pays above the living wage. If unsuccessful, they take a different approach during the second week, focusing on targeted occupations with potential for growth that will lead to better-paying employment in the future. If they do not find a job within two weeks, they begin to look for jobs that will provide opportunities for skill building and/or part-time employment, together with education and training.

**Service delivery structure:** Services are provided by the Los Angeles County Office of Education under the supervision of the Contract Management and Monitoring Divisions of the Los Angeles Department of Public Social Services.

**Intake process:** All TANF recipients complete an appraisal interview, during which staff determine whether or not they are ready to participate in GAIN, Los Angeles's employment program for welfare recipients. Those determined to be ready are usually referred to job club, the first component in the GAIN program.

**Key funding source:** The program is funded with TANF grant money.

**Research design:** Random assignment takes place after an applicant or recipient is determined to be ready to participate in job club. Applicants or recipients who are assigned to the program group are referred to EJC; those who are assigned to the counterfactual group receive traditional job club services, with minimal classroom preparation and a focus on finding any job (rather than a targeted job).

**Actual or planned implementation schedule:** A pilot of EJC was implemented in September 2002. Full program operations and random assignment began in June 2003.

## California: The Post-Assistance Self-Sufficiency Program

**Program goals:** To assist in getting employed former recipients off aid and to maintain and enhance self-sufficiency through employment retention and advancement.

**Location:** Riverside County, California.

**Target population:** Adult TANF clients who leave welfare with employment or who become employed within the 12 months following termination of cash assistance.

**Primary services:** Riverside County's Post-Assistance Self-Sufficiency (PASS) program is designed to provide employment retention and advancement services to employed former TANF recipients for a 12-month period beginning the first day after termination. Program components include one-on-one and group mentoring, life skills training, referrals to social service programs (to address domestic violence, substance abuse, or mental health issues), emergency assistance, referrals to transitional services, assistance with training and education (oriented toward job advancement), and other services as necessary.

**Service delivery structure:** Intensive individual and family-based support services are delivered by the Rancho Mirage office of the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) and four community-based organizations (CBOs): Riverside Community College (in Riverside and Moreno Valley), the Volunteer Center (in Corona, Norco, and Lake Elsinore), Valley Restart (Hemet, San Jacinto, and Perris), and the Center for Employment and Training Indio (in Palm Springs, Indio, and Coachella). DPSS finalized provider contracts in fall 2001, with program operations starting in November 2001.

**Intake process:** All adults who terminate their TANF grants because of employment or earnings are identified from the Machine Budgeting System (MBS) eligibility database and randomly assigned to either the CBO group or the DPSS counterfactual group. Adults who terminate aid without employment are notified that they may be eligible to receive program services if they become employed at any time during the 12 months following their termination from cash aid. (In order to receive services, such a participant must contact a single point of contact at DPSS and report employment. The participants who fall into this category are nonrandomly assigned to the DPSS counterfactual group for program services and are not part of the evaluation.)

**Key funding source:** The program is funded with federal TANF, state, and local funds.

**Research design:** Participants who are assigned to the CBO group are referred to the CBO in their community and, through that agency, are eligible to receive PASS program services as described in the service delivery section of this summary; those who are assigned to the counterfactual group are eligible to receive, through their local DPSS office, a less intensive set of program components (job coaching, job leads, supportive service arrangements) if they request these services.

**Actual or planned implementation schedule:** PASS began program operations in November 2001. Random assignment started in July 2002 and is slated to end in mid-2003.

## California: The Los Angeles Reach for Success Program

**Program goal:** To help low-wage working welfare recipients advance to better jobs.

**Location:** Regions I, V, and VI of the Los Angeles Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program.

**Target population:** Newly employed welfare recipients who work at least 32 hours per week in low-wage jobs.

**Primary services:** The Reach for Success (RFS) pilot focuses first on job retention and stabilization and then provides a combination of services to foster advancement, through increased education and training enrollment and work-based strategies. Individual case management is provided, including retention services, career exploration, career assessment, career counseling, and referrals to education and training. Work-based strategies help participants find better-paying jobs, identify career ladders in their industries, and take advantage of promotion opportunities at their current jobs. Staff maintain smaller caseloads, allowing for intensive work with participants.

**Service delivery structure:** Services are provided by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services, Welfare-to-Work Division (within which a separate unit of career counselors and job developers has been formed). Adult schools, community colleges, and regional occupational centers provide education and training services. As deemed appropriate, participants may also be referred to One-Stops and to U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) welfare-to-work providers.

**Intake process:** Welfare recipients who participated in preemployment services are aggressively recruited for participation in RFS. Those who meet the full-time work requirement are under no additional obligation; participation in RFS services is voluntary. Participants are required to maintain full-time employment in order to receive services.

**Key funding source:** The program is funded with TANF grant money.

**Research design:** Participants are randomly assigned into the research sample when they are identified as working full time and still receiving TANF. The counterfactual group does not receive the enhanced services but is still eligible for supportive services.

**Actual or planned implementation schedule:** Random assignment and program operations for RFS began in August 2002 and will continue until the end of 2003 or early 2004.

## California: The Riverside Phase 2 Program

**Program goal:** To help working welfare recipients become self-sufficient through a combination of education or training and employment.

**Location:** Riverside County, California.

**Target population:** Newly employed welfare recipients who work at least 20 hours per week and exhibit employment stability.

**Primary services:** There are two ERA program groups: (1) The Training Focused group, in which members are encouraged to attend education and training programs and are given the option of reducing or eliminating work hours while pursuing education and training; (2) the Work Plus group, in which members are encouraged to participate in education and training but are not given the option of reducing work below 20 hours per week. For both groups, a range of education or training programs has been designed to meet the needs of working parents, and other postemployment services are available, including referrals to child care, medical and mental health services, interventions with employers, and regular contact. Workshops on retention and barriers to advancement (such as stress and time management) are also offered.

**Service delivery structure:** The Riverside County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) operates the Phase 2 Work Plus group through its 11 CalWORKs/GAIN offices in the county, with approximately 60 to 70 Work Plus case managers. Separate DPSS case managers serve participants in the counterfactual group (called the Work Focused group). The Welfare-to-Work Division of the Riverside County Economic Development Agency (EDA) runs the Phase 2 Training Focused group, with five case managers located in three regional offices. These case managers perform all the functions of the DPSS Work Plus case managers, including imposing sanctions.

**Intake process:** Eligible recipients are identified after they have been employed 30 days. Participants who meet all three stability criteria are then randomly assigned.

**Key funding source:** The program is funded with federal TANF, state, and local funds.

**Research design:** Random assignment occurs after an individual has demonstrated employment stability, which is defined by three criteria: (1) being employed 20 hours or more per week for at least one week of the preceding 30 days, (2) expecting to work an average of 20 or more hours per week for more than 30 days, and (3) earning at least the state's minimum wage. Participants are randomly assigned into one of three groups: Work Plus, Training Focused, or Work Focused. The Work Focused group was designed as a counterfactual to test the impact of the access to additional education and training services and the part-time work requirement. Although this group has no emphasis on education and training, sample members can participate in an education and training program if they enroll voluntarily, and they can receive the same type of supportive services (child care, transportation, and ancillary services) available to Work Plus and Training Focused clients if they need them in order to participate.

**Actual or planned implementation schedule:** The Phase 2 Work Plus program began program operations in January 1998. Random assignment activities for the ERA evaluation began in January 2001.

## Cleveland: The Achieve Program

**Program goal:** The Achieve program is the only employer-centered program of all the ERA programs. The goal of the program is job retention for recently hired entry-level workers.

**Location:** Cleveland, Ohio.

**Primary services:** Achieve is delivered for one year after an employer is randomly assigned to the program group. Services include supervisory training, with a focus on problem solving, relationship building, managing employee styles, and exploring career advancement possibilities; one-on-one case management, with a focus on career counseling, access to supportive services, goal setting, and improving retention; and lunch-and-learn workshops, biweekly discussions that are open to all entry-level employees (as well as other employees) and that cover topics designed to be of interest to the employer and employees.

**Target population:** The target group for Waves 1 and 2 is recently hired (within the last four months for Wave 1 and within the last six months for Wave 2) employees in entry-level jobs at long-term health care facilities in the Cleveland metropolitan area. These employees, many of whom are in nursing aide jobs, have average wages that are traditionally below 200 percent of the poverty level. The industries to be targeted for Waves 3 and 4 are yet to be determined, but, like the long-term health care industry, they will employ large numbers of entry-level, low-wage employees and suffer from high turnover.

**Service delivery structure:** Achieve is operated by Towards Employment, a small nonprofit service provider. Case managers, who are employed by Towards Employment, provide services to entry-level workers at long-term health care facilities, spending extensive time at the facilities on a weekly basis.

**Intake process:** There will be four waves of baseline collection and random assignment of approximately ten employers in each. Wave 1 of baseline collection began August 5, 2002. Wave 2 baseline collection began October 7, 2002. Waves 3 and 4 will take place in early 2004. In this site, employers — and not entry-level employees — are being randomly assigned. In Waves 1 and 2, a total of 22 employers were randomly assigned to receive Achieve or be placed in control group status; eventually, the sample will consist of at least 42 employers with a minimum of 15 eligible employees in each.

**Key funding sources:** Local and national private foundations primarily fund the project. To date, the project has received Cuyahoga County TANF dollars but no additional government funding.

**Research design:** Random assignment, which is employer-centered, affects both the participating employers and their eligible employees. Employers assigned to the program group receive Achieve program services and work closely with Towards Employment Achieve staff. Those assigned to the counterfactual group do not receive Achieve services but do provide MDRC with access to information about their low-wage workers and data on their firms.

**Actual or planned implementation schedule:** The program services for the Wave 1 program group members began in mid-September 2002. Program services for Wave 2 began in early November 2002. Program services for Waves 3 and 4 are expected to begin in early 2004.

## The Illinois Program

**Program goal:** To help low-wage working welfare recipients advance to better jobs.

**Locations:** Selected welfare offices in Cook County (Chicago area) and St. Clair County (East St. Louis area).

**Target population:** Cash assistance recipients under age 50 who have worked at least 30 hours per week for at least six consecutive months. In the two sites, it is expected that approximately 1,200 people will be referred to the program over a 17-month period.

**Primary services:** The service provider conducts an assessment and helps participants develop an individualized advancement plan. Specific services depend on the plan. For example, if the participant is satisfied with her current employer and there are opportunities for advancement, the provider might help the participant identify and take the steps needed to obtain a promotion (if appropriate, the provider might speak with the employer directly). If there are no opportunities for advancement, the provider might help the participant identify and obtain a better job, enroll in a short-term education or training activity, or do both; following training the provider would offer job search assistance. Recipients who actively participate in education or training are allowed to reduce their work hours to 20 per week, with their time-limit clock suspended. Small incentives, like gift certificates, are used to recruit participants and to reward goal achievement (such as a job upgrade).

**Service delivery structure:** Service providers working under contract to the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) operate the program. In Cook County, the provider is a private company, Employment and Employer Services (E&ES). In St. Clair County, the local One-Stop administrator contracts with one for-profit company, Full Circle Enterprises, Inc., and one non-profit provider, Better Family Life.

**Intake process:** Eligible recipients are identified prior to their annual TANF recertification interviews and then referred to their service provider. The provider is responsible for contacting the participants and engaging them in program services. Participation is mandatory.

**Key funding source:** The program is funded with Welfare-to-Work grant funds.

**Research design:** Recipients who meet the eligibility criteria are randomly assigned when they are scheduled for TANF recertification. Those assigned to the program group are referred to the ERA program; those assigned to the counterfactual group are not referred, but they may receive some advancement-related services from a DHS caseworker.

**Actual or planned implementation schedule:** The ERA program began full-scale operations in March 2002 and will run for approximately two and a half years.

## The Minneapolis Program

**Program goals:** To provide job placement and improve employment retention for welfare recipients who have not found jobs through standard welfare-to-work services.

**Location:** Hennepin County (Minneapolis, Minnesota).

**Target population:** Unemployed individuals who have participated in standard employment services for 12 months without finding a job and who do not have sanctions imposed against them.

**Primary services:** The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) Tier 2 is an enhanced version of the state's welfare-to-work program, and it includes in-depth, up-front family assessment to identify employment barriers and other issues. The program emphasizes rapid placement of participants into unsubsidized employment with close monitoring and occasional home visits while participants are working (to ensure they receive appropriate treatment). Individualized services are provided, including referrals to education and training, counseling, supported work, and other support services.

**Service delivery structure:** The local workforce agency is responsible for providing employment services to TANF recipients, and it contracts with public agencies and nonprofit organizations to serve ERA participants (as well as other TANF recipients in the county). A designated group of contractors provides enhanced services to participants who do not find employment through standard services. The enhanced program, MFIP Tier 2, is the subject of the ERA test. Employment counselors in the ERA project have caseloads significantly smaller than those offered through the standard TANF program (known as MFIP Tier 1). Smaller caseloads (approximately 25-30 participants) allow for intensive monitoring and follow-up, including home visits.

**Intake process:** Welfare recipients are required to participate in placement and retention activities. Recipients who have participated in MFIP Tier 1 for at least 12 months without finding a job are referred to MFIP Tier 2 case managers for engagement in ERA services. Participation is mandatory.

**Key funding source:** The program is funded with TANF grant money.

**Research design:** Participants who meet eligibility requirements are identified on the MFIP system and randomly assigned. Those assigned to the program group are referred to a MFIP Tier 2 provider for services. The counterfactual group continues to receive standard employment services (MFIP Tier 1).

**Actual or planned implementation schedule:** Random assignment started in January 2002 and was completed in April 2003.



## **New York: The Personal Roads for Individual Development and Employment Program**

**Program goals:** The Personal Roads for Individual Development and Employment (PRIDE) program, which has operated since 1999, provides job placement and improves employment retention for welfare recipients whose employability is limited by disability.

**Location:** New York, New York.

**Target population:** The PRIDE program targets welfare recipients (both TANF and General Assistance/Safety Net) whose employability is limited by physical or mental health problems.

**Primary services:** The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) track focuses on tailored, unpaid work experience assignments, and participants receive intensive support and assistance from vocational rehabilitation professionals. The Work-Based Education track combines work experience and adult education. Participants in both tracks receive job placement assistance when they are deemed ready for competitive employment, and retention assistance is provided after they find unsubsidized jobs.

**Service delivery structure:** PRIDE is a partnership of several agencies, including the New York City Human Resources Administration and the state's Department of Labor and Department of Education (which houses the Vocational Rehabilitation program). Program services are delivered by four nonprofit or community-based organizations that have experience working around employment issues for people with disabilities.

**Intake process:** A medical assessment provider first identifies the specific limitations of welfare recipients with physical or mental disabilities who are not exempt from work requirements and then refers recipients to PRIDE for employment services. Individuals who are considered employable with limitations are referred to one of two tracks in PRIDE: VR, for participants who meet state and federal eligibility requirements; or Work-Based Education, for participants who do not meet those requirements. Participation is mandatory.

**Key funding sources:** Welfare-to-Work block grant, TANF, and Safety Net resources.

**Research design:** Individuals assigned to the program group are required to participate in PRIDE services. Members of the counterfactual group do not receive PRIDE services but receive case management assistance to ensure that their medical needs are met. The counterfactual group are not required to participate in work activities unless their nonexempt status changes.

**Actual or planned implementation schedule:** PRIDE began operating in 1999; random assignment for the ERA evaluation began in December 2001 and ended in December 2002.

## **New York: The Substance Abuse Case Management Program**

**Program goals:** The goals are to increase participation and retention in substance abuse treatment by providing intensive case management to substance-abusing TANF and General Assistance/Safety Net recipients, to link participants to employment services, and to improve substance abuse treatment outcomes, job placement, and retention.

**Location:** New York, New York (in the borough of The Bronx).

**Target population:** Welfare recipients (both TANF and General Assistance/Safety Net) who have been identified as having a substance abuse problem that may affect the ability to work.

**Primary services:** Participants are provided with intensive case management geared toward identifying and resolving barriers to participation in substance abuse programs, along with other barriers to recovery and employment (for example, problems with domestic violence, housing, mental or physical health, and child welfare). Services include mental health and substance abuse treatment, linkages to family services and support programs, team-based case management, job search and job readiness components, and emergency services. Case manager contacts typically occur in the field. Once participants become stabilized and make progress in treatment, they are referred for employment services.

**Service delivery structure:** The New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) sub-contracts services to a behavioral health managed-care program affiliated with a major medical center (there are additional case management providers that are not included in this evaluation).

**Intake Process:** After being identified as having a possible substance abuse problem (via a short screening session administered in the welfare office), participants are referred to a case management provider, where a comprehensive assessment is conducted to assess the presence and severity of the addiction and to determine previous treatment history, clinical needs, and barriers to treatment participation and employability. Case managers reach out aggressively to participants in order to try to engage them and to facilitate their entry into and retention in treatment as well as other service domains.

**Key funding source:** The program uses funds from a variety of local, state, and federal funding streams.

**Research design:** Following random assignment, program group members are referred for treatment and receive intensive case management and follow-up services. The counterfactual group is referred for treatment and monitored by welfare staff.

**Actual or planned implementation schedule:** The enhanced case management initiative began in mid-2001; random assignment for the ERA evaluation began in June 2003.

## Oregon: The Career Builders Program

**Program goals:** To provide job placement services and improve employment retention for the hard-to-employ.

**Location:** Portland, Oregon.

**Target population:** TANF recipients who have either (1) cycled off and back onto welfare or (2) quit or were fired from their last job.

**Primary services:** Services include an intensive two-week class designed to identify barriers and help participants explore long-term career goals. After the two-week class, participants receive assisted, individualized job search assistance and/or short-term training. If mental health or substance abuse issues are uncovered, participants are referred to the appropriate services. The program also provides three months of postemployment case management.

**Service delivery structure:** The welfare office and two local community colleges — Mount Hood Community College and Portland Community College — provide the ERA services. All eligible participants will be receiving cash aid, and most will have been unsuccessful in finding a job as part of Portland's 45-day up-front job search and assessment program.

**Intake process:** Eligible recipients are identified during their TANF eligibility recertification interview or after they have completed the 45-day up-front job search and assessment program without finding a job. Participation is mandatory.

**Key funding source:** The program will be funded with TANF money.

**Research design:** Random assignment and baseline data collection takes place during eligibility redetermination interviews with the participant. Those assigned to the counterfactual group will receive the standard welfare-to-work services.

**Actual or planned implementation schedule:** The Career Builders program began random assignment in June 2002.

## Oregon: The PROGRESS Program

**Program goal:** To help participants retain employment and advance into better jobs.

**Location:** Eugene, Oregon.

**Target population:** Newly employed TANF recipients and employed former TANF recipients with extended medical coverage. Eligible participants must be working at least 20 hours per week.

**Primary services:** PROGRESS will provide a combination of services to promote wage progression and job advancement. Services are tailored to the interests and skills of individual participants who have the flexibility to pursue either work-based or training-based approaches to advancement. Services could include education and training, career development activities (including skills/career assessment), or job matching to find better jobs.

**Service delivery structure:** PROGRESS is a collaboration between the welfare department and Lane Community College. In each welfare office, eligible participants are served by a team consisting of a TANF case manager and a career development specialist from the college.

**Intake process:** When TANF recipients find employment, they are referred to the PROGRESS team for outreach and engagement in program services. Participation is voluntary.

**Key funding source:** The program is funded by TANF grant money.

**Research design:** Random assignment takes place after TANF recipients find a job. Baseline data is collected from administrative records, participant forms, and, in some cases, phone calls to the participant. Participants assigned to the program group will be part of PROGRESS. Counterfactual group members will not receive PROGRESS services, but they may receive supportive services based on eligibility.

**Actual or planned implementation schedule:** PROGRESS started random assignment in June 2002 and is slated to end in mid-2004.

## Oregon: The Transition Advancement and Growth Program

**Program goal:** To help participants retain employment and advance into better jobs.

**Location:** Medford, Oregon.

**Target population:** Current or former TANF and food stamp recipients who have full-time jobs.

**Primary services:** The Transition Advancement and Growth (TAAG) program provides a combination of services to promote wage progression and job advancement. Services are tailored to the interests and skills of individual participants, who have the flexibility to pursue either work-based or training-based approaches to advancement. Services could include education and training, career development activities (including skills/career assessment), or job matching to find better jobs.

**Service delivery structure:** TAAG is a collaboration between the welfare department and The Job Council, a publicly funded, county-based organization that provides workforce development services to individuals and employers. A team consisting of a TANF case manager and two career counselors from The Job Council provides services to participants.

**Intake process:** Eligible participants are referred to the TAAG team for outreach and engagement in program services. Participation is voluntary.

**Key funding source:** The program is funded by TANF grant money.

**Research design:** Random assignment takes place after TANF or food stamp recipients find employment. Baseline data are collected from administrative records and through phone calls to the participant. Participants who are assigned to the program group will be part of TAAG. Counterfactual group members will not receive TAAG services but may receive other supportive services based on their eligibility.

**Actual or planned implementation schedule:** The TAAG program started random assignment in February 2002 and is slated to end in early 2004.

## Oregon: The VISION Program

**Program goal:** To improve retention and advancement outcomes through preemployment and postemployment services.

**Location:** Salem, Oregon.

**Target population:** TANF applicants for whom participation in job search activities is mandatory.

**Primary services:** The VISION program provides enhanced job matching services through the One-Stop along with preemployment workshops addressing retention and career advancement issues. Postemployment services are tailored to the interests and skills of individual participants who have the flexibility to pursue either work-based or training-based approaches to advancement. Services could include education and training, career development services (including skills/career assessment), or job matching to find better jobs.

**Service delivery structure:** The VISION program is a collaboration between the welfare department and Chemeketa Community College (the local One-Stop operator). Participants are served by a team consisting of a TANF case manager and a training and employment specialist from the college.

**Intake process:** TANF applicants assigned to the program group are referred to the VISION team for outreach and engagement in program services. Participation in the preemployment services is mandatory; in the postemployment services, it is voluntary.

**Key funding source:** The program is funded by TANF grant money.

**Research design:** Random assignment and baseline data collection take place immediately after individuals are screened for TANF program eligibility. Participants assigned to the program group will be part of VISION. Counterfactual group members will receive traditional welfare-to-work services.

**Actual or planned implementation schedule:** The VISION program started random assignment in May 2002 and is slated to end in December 2003.

## South Carolina: The Moving Up Program

**Program goals:** The Moving Up program seeks to place former welfare recipients in jobs, help them sustain employment and advance, and increase their earnings.

**Location:** The Pee Dee Region, a multi-county area that includes six Department of Social Services (DSS) offices in South Carolina (Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marion, and Marlboro Counties).

**Target population:** Individuals who exited welfare (for any reason) from October 1997 through December 2000 and whose income is below 250 percent of the poverty level.

**Primary services:** Moving Up offers a collection of services (or connects participants with services) depending on participants' individual needs; services include job search assistance and job development, child care and transportation assistance, mental health and substance abuse services, vocational services, educational stipends, training components, and financial incentives for achieving specific benchmarks (such as attending an initial meeting, completing a training program, or retaining a job for three months). Career consultants connect participants with these services, provide reemployment services for those without a job, and offer retention or advancement services for those who are already employed. A workforce consultant is located in each of the county welfare offices and provides job development services to the Moving Up program, including connecting participants to jobs, cultivating relationships with local employers, and developing other workforce resources for participants. An additional service is providing support groups exclusively for Moving Up participants. Services are provided in the welfare offices, in participants' homes, and at other locations in the community.

**Service delivery structure:** The program is operated by each of the six county DSS offices listed above. One-Stop services and Welfare-to-Work funding are also available to eligible participants.

**Intake process:** Participants are identified using the TANF database. Career consultants contact program group members by letter and follow up with phone calls to arrange a face-to-face meeting. Participation is voluntary.

**Key funding source:** Moving Up is funded with TANF grant money that is committed by the state's director. Each county has a separate budget for the program, which is approved by county supervisors.

**Research design:** The TANF database is used to identify people who left welfare between October 1997 and December 2000. These leavers are then randomly assigned either to the program group, whose members receive ERA services, or to the counterfactual group, whose members do not receive the program's special outreach. The sample is assigned over a period of about two years.

**Actual or planned implementation schedule:** South Carolina ran a pilot of the Moving Up program in mid-2001. The official program and random assignment for the evaluation began in October 2001.

## The Texas Program

**Program goals:** To place welfare recipients in jobs, to increase job stability and wages for former TANF recipients, to reduce reliance on cash assistance, and to increase participation in workforce activities.

**Location:** Corpus Christi, Fort Worth, and Houston, Texas.

**Target population:** Welfare recipients with mandatory work requirements.

**Primary services:** The ERA program provides team-based case management with services, including employment assessment, goal setting and career planning, support services, barrier removal, preemployment and postemployment services, job development, and coordination with employers. Monthly stipends of \$200 are provided to participants who are employed for a minimum of 30 hours per week, participate in a postemployment activity, and have left TANF. Service providers seek to establish relationships with participants before they go to work, and they build on those relationships in the postemployment phase of the program, which includes frequent contacts by case managers, retention and advancement workshops, ongoing career planning and assessment of goal achievement, job development related to advancement opportunities, and regular contact with employers.

**Service delivery structure:** The Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), under the umbrella of the Texas Workforce Commission, are responsible for providing employment services to TANF recipients. With funding from the Texas Department of Human Services, the LWDBs contract with local community organizations to provide ERA case management services.

**Intake process:** Participants are identified as potentially eligible when they apply or are recertified for TANF. Immediately following an eligibility interview, participants are introduced to the ERA project. ERA staff members offer support to the participants during the TANF certification process, including ensuring attendance at the Workforce Orientation (a requirement for certification). Once participants are certified, ERA staff are responsible for engaging them in program services. Participation for most recipients is mandatory, but they encourage those who are exempt to participate as well.

**Key funding sources:** ERA is funded primarily with TANF funds and, in some sites, with Welfare-to-Work grant money.

**Research design:** Participants who meet eligibility requirements are randomly assigned after they apply for assistance or recertification and are determined to be eligible for TANF. Those who are assigned to the program group receive case management and employment services from a separate group of staff members and are eligible for the stipend. Those who are assigned to the counterfactual group receive employment services through the state's work-first program, called Choices.

**Actual or planned implementation schedule:** The ERA program began operations in October 2000; random assignment was completed in January 2003.



**Appendix B**

**ERA Program Marketing Materials**

**To ensure that we are flexible in meeting your needs, E&ES has offices at the following Chicagoland locations:**

Southwest (Daley) One Stop  
7500 South Pulaski Road  
Bldg. 100  
Chicago, IL 60652  
(773) 884-7000

Mid-South One Stop  
715 East 47th Street  
Chicago, IL 60653  
(773) 538-5627

Hazel Crest Career  
Center  
17575 S. Kedzie  
Hazel Crest, IL 60429  
(708) 206-2318

Westside One Stop  
3500 West Grand Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60651  
(773) 227-0319

Adams Career Center  
200 West Adams  
Suite 1500  
Chicago, IL 60606  
(312) 629-5627

Cicero/Berwyn One Stop  
2138 S. 61st Street  
Suite 301  
Cicero, IL 60804  
(708) 222-3100

**Trying to get ahead in the income and career race?**



**With one visit, you can be on the *fast track* to a higher-paying job—and walk out with a **\$50 Jewel gift certificate.****

**With one visit, you can improve the quality of your life!  
You have nothing to lose and much to gain!!**

## **How can you earn more money and get a better job?**

**EASY!** You have been selected by the State to work with Employment & Employer Services, Inc. (E&ES) to make this happen!

E&ES is a Chicago company in business for 21 years specializing in getting people **BETTER JOBS** that pay **MORE MONEY!**

## **So what's next?**

E&ES will contact you to schedule a convenient time to meet and develop an acceptable plan to get you a better job that pays more money and offers better benefits.

At the meeting, you will be introduced to a professional Career and Income Advisor who has helped hundreds of people like yourself to increase their earnings and obtain a better job.

**All active participants will receive additional bonuses!**

**Jewel Gift Certificates**  
**Clothing Allowances for Job Interviews**  
**Transportation Reimbursements**  
**Bus Passes**

## **E&ES is dedicated to working with you because of the following reasons:**

### **Why...**

E&ES believes that employment and career growth are the foundations for stability of the individual, family, and community.

### **What we have done...**

Helped 42,000 Chicago-land workers in the past 20 years find new or better jobs.

### **How we did it...**

Every day, over 2,600 Chicagoland employers use E&ES to fill their job openings.

This service is provided at NO COST to you!

## MOVING UP CAREER CONSULTANTS

**RICHARD CRUMMY**, Chesterfield County  
P.O. Box 269, Chesterfield, SC 29709  
Telephone: 843/623-5236  
Cell Phone: 843/861-2357

**JOHN L. GRAHAM**, Darlington County  
P.O. Drawer 1377, Hartsville, SC 29551  
Telephone: 843/332-2231  
Cell Phone: 843/307-0712

**LYNN BARNHILL**, Darlington County  
P.O. Drawer 1377, Hartsville, SC 29551  
Telephone: 843/332-2231  
Cell Phone: 843/307-0592

**LARONNA FAULK**, Dillon County  
P.O. Box 1307, Dillon, SC 29536  
Telephone: 843/774-8284 Ext. 156  
Cell Phone: 843/845-0883

**DEBRA GHEE**, Florence County  
2685 S. Irby Street, Box A  
Florence, SC 29505  
Telephone: 843/669-3354 Ext. 309  
Cell Phone: 843/616-0595

**EDELL JOHNSON**, Florence County  
2685 S. Irby Street, Box A  
Florence, SC 29505  
Telephone: 843/669-3354 Ext. 308  
Cell Phone: 843/616-0790

**JERYL Y. ANDERSON**, Florence County  
345 S. Ron McNair Boulevard  
Lake City, SC 29560  
Telephone: 843/394-8575 Ext. 105  
Cell Phone: 843/616-0470

**TARA MCKENZIE**, Florence County  
345 S. Ron McNair Boulevard  
Lake City, SC 29560  
Telephone: 843/394-8575 Ext. 101  
Cell Phone: 843/616-0852

**DEBORAH MARTIN**, Marion County  
137 Airport Court/Suite A, Mullins, SC 29574  
Telephone: 843/423-4623 Ext. 128  
Cell Phone: 843/430-0390

**LIZ T. STUBBS**, Marlboro County  
P.O. Drawer 120, Bennettsville, SC 29512  
Telephone: 843/479-4389  
Cell Phone: 843/439-0463



## IMPROVE YOUR INCOME

**Getting a Job –  
Keeping a Job –  
Getting a Better Job**





## MOVING UP CAN HELP YOU EARN BIGGER PAY CHECKS

- Learn the secrets of getting a promotion.
- Get help on earning a pay increase.
- Increase your worth to the employer so you get more hours and paid more.
- Get a plan for how to make money.

**Moving Up** can help you move up to a higher income level and break out of low wage jobs.

The whole point of **Moving Up** is:  
**Getting a Job – Keeping a Job –  
Getting a Better Job.**

## MOVING UP CAN HELP!

- \$ The path you take is up to you
- \$ Help finding a better job
- \$ Free tuition
- \$ Free classes for your GED
- \$ Help with child care, rides and health insurance
- \$ Earn bonuses and incentives from **Moving Up** for the positive things you do
- \$ The funds are here. Get your fair share.



Everyone  
needs some help  
some time to get ahead.



may be your chance  
to make a better life  
for you and  
your family.

**Moving Up** is a  
limited time offer!

Moving Up will only offer these services for a short time, so if a career consultant calls you

# TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY!



**Appendix C**

**ERA Program Interview Guides  
and Assessment Tools**

# CHILD CARE IMPROVEMENT PLAN



No one can feel okay at work if they have problems with their child care. It is important to take care of your childcare problems as quickly as possible, to help you keep your job.

1. Can you depend on your childcare provider? .....  Yes  No
2. Are you happy with your childcare provider?.....  Yes  No
3. Does your child(ren) get along with your childcare provider? .....  Yes  No
4. Has your childcare provider been approved by the State?.....  Yes  No
5. Do you have back-up care if your provider cannot watch your children?.....  Yes  No  
 If yes... **Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you have a back-up plan for childcare if your child(ren) is ill? .....  Yes  No
7. Do you have a plan for childcare when their school is closed? .....  Yes  No
8. Are there any other problems with your childcare? .....  Yes  No

- 
9. Would you like information about parenting resources in the community?  Yes  No
  10. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

## PROGRESS ACTION PLAN

Step #	Action to Resolve Concern/Issue	Who?	Referrals	Start Date	End Date
1					
2					
3					
4					

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Income Improvement Specialist or  
Career Development Specialist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Plan Completed**  
 **Certificate Received**



# EMPLOYMENT ISSUES IMPROVEMENT PLAN



Progress wants to give you the help you need to do well at your job. Answering the questions below will help us work with you to make your job a success. If you are ever having a hard time at work, please call us right away.

1. Do you like your job?.....  Yes  No  
If no, why? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you get along with your employer or supervisor?.....  Yes  No  
If no, why? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you get along with your co-workers?.....  Yes  No  
If no, why? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is there a part of your job that you are having problems with?.....  Yes  No  
If yes, what? \_\_\_\_\_  
What can you do about these problems? \_\_\_\_\_  
How do you think we can help you with these problems? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you need training to help you do better or get ahead at your job? .....  Yes  No  
If yes, what? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Are there items such as equipment, special clothing, etc. that you need for your job?  Yes  No  
If yes, what? \_\_\_\_\_

## PROGRESS ACTION PLAN

Step #	Action to Resolve Concern/Issue	Who?	Referrals	Start Date	End Date
1					
2					
3					
4					

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Income Improvement Specialist or  
Career Development Specialist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Plan Completed</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Certificate Received</b>
--

## BASIC THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR JOB



- Deductions on your pay stub
- Does your employer have a probation or trial service period for new employees? If so, how long is the probationary period?
- (Probation or trial service is usually a 3-6 month period during which your employer decides if you are a good employee. If you are, they will usually hire you permanently. If they feel you are not performing as you should (late to work, miss work, poor quality of work, etc.) they can “let you go” or fire you easily during this period.)
- If yes, what?

---

- Does your employer provide time off for vacation and/or illness?  Yes  No
- If yes how many days?

---

- What does your employer feel is an acceptable reason to miss work?

---

- How does your employer handle tardiness (being late) to work?

---

Know the do's and don'ts for your job. These are great things to ask about when you are new to a job or position! Find out what the employer's rules or expectations are about:

- Taking morning or afternoon breaks (how long, when, where, being late, etc.)
- If you are ill or will be late, what should you do?
- Lunch hour: (how long, where, when, etc.)
- Use of the phone for personal or business reasons
- Computer use for personal and/or business reasons
- Personal use of company equipment (copy machine, fax, etc.)
- If you have Internet or email access at work, what are the rules?
- Playing the radio at work
- Eating or drinking at your work station
- Smoking at work
- Friends or family visiting at work
- Who would be a good person to be your mentor at work?
- What else should you know that will help you be an exceptional worker?

# FINANCE/BUDGET IMPROVEMENT PLAN



Now that you are working, it is important to plan how to use your money. Sometimes when people return to work and they have a hard time making a skilled choice of how to spend their money and how to stretch their paychecks. We have a service that will help you decide the best way to budget your money so it will go further for you and your family. **One of the most important thing to remember is, pay your rent and utilities first!!** Even in an emergency, we cannot help pay these items, if you have received enough income during the month to meet these needs. We can help you budget the rest of the income to meet other needs such as, phone bills, car payments, insurance, clothing, childcare, etc.

**1. Do you know about?**

A. Earned income tax credit? .....  Yes  No

B. Have you applied for it at work? .....  Yes  No  
 (This program will give you more money in your pocket each month!)

**2. Do know you how to:**

A. Read your pay stub? .....  Yes  No  
 (Gross income vs. net, year to date, withholding, etc.)

**3. Do you:**

A. Have a retirement plan at work? .....  Yes  No

B. Have a savings/checking account? .....  Yes  No

C. Have credit cards? .....  Yes  No

D. Have overdue accounts or collections? .....  Yes  No

E. Have accounts in collections? .....  Yes  No

**4. Do you have other money matters you are concerned about or would like to learn about?**

---

## PROGRESS ACTION PLAN

Step #	Action to Resolve Concern/Issue	Who?	Referrals	Start Date	End Date
1					
2					
3					
4					

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Income Improvement Specialist or  
Career Development Specialist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Plan Completed</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Certificate Received</b>
--

# HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN



1. Do you or a member of your family have emotional problems? .....  Yes  No
- Depression? .....  Yes  No
- Anxiety? .....  Yes  No
- Parenting? .....  Yes  No
- Anger management? .....  Yes  No
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you or a member of your family have problems with addiction? ....  Yes  No
- Alcohol? .....  Yes  No
- Drugs? .....  Yes  No
- Smoking? .....  Yes  No
- Gambling? .....  Yes  No
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Are you or a family member seeing a counselor or in treatment? .....  Yes  No

## PROGRESS ACTION PLAN

Step #	Action to Resolve Concern/Issue	Who?	Referrals	Start Date	End Date
1					
2					
3					
4					

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Income Improvement Specialist or  
Career Development Specialist \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Plan Completed**  
 **Certificate Received**

# HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PLAN



Having stable housing is a key factor in being able to retain your job and to improve your position in employment. The following questionnaire will allow us to gain information in order to help you evaluate your housing needs and concerns.

1. How much are your rent/house payments? ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are you in any kind of subsidized housing program?.....  Yes  No  
(HACSA, HUD, St. Vincent de Paul, etc.)
3. Are you satisfied with your current housing situation? .....  Yes  No
4. How much is your average winter utility bill?..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_
5. Is your home weatherized?.....  Yes  No
6. Have you applied for LIEAP or Reach programs in the past? .....  Yes  No
- 7 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## PROGRESS ACTION PLAN

Step #	Action to Resolve Concern/Issue	Who?	Referrals	Start Date	End Date
1					
2					
3					
4					

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Income Improvement Specialist or  
Career Development Specialist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Plan Completed</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Certificate Received</b>
--

Program	Branch	Case Name	Case Number	Worker
---------	--------	-----------	-------------	--------



## INCOME IMPROVEMENT PLAN

<b><u>Name:</u></b>	<b>Social Security No.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	<b><u>Home Phone:</u></b>
<b><u>Address:</u></b>	<b><u>City:</u></b>	<b><u>Zip Code:</u></b>	<b>Work Phone:</b>

**Job/Life Goals:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>ACTIVITIES: WHAT, WHEN, AND WHERE</b>		<b>Begin Date</b>	<b>End Date</b>
1	Childcare (reg., back-up, and sick childcare)		
2	Transportation (establish reliable transportation)		
3	Medical		
4	Safety/DV		
5	Family/Mental Health/Drug and Alcohol		
6	Finance/Budget/ W-5		
7	Housing		
8	Legal		
<b>RETENTION</b>			
9	Employment Improvement Issues Basic Things to Know About Your Job		
10	Work Attitude, Ethics and Habits		
11	Job Retention Questionnaire		
12	Other <input type="checkbox"/> WFN Classes <input type="checkbox"/> Better Employee Classes <input type="checkbox"/>		

ADVANCEMENT			
13	CAREER ASSESSMENT: <input type="checkbox"/> OLMIS <input type="checkbox"/> OED/LCC orientation <input type="checkbox"/> Informational Interview <input type="checkbox"/> CIS <input type="checkbox"/> _____		
14	WORK ADVANCEMENT PLAN <input type="checkbox"/> WorkNet <input type="checkbox"/> Career Ladders <input type="checkbox"/> Promotion <input type="checkbox"/> Workforce Network Classes		
15	TRAINING PLAN: <input type="checkbox"/> College Classes <input type="checkbox"/> Summer <input type="checkbox"/> Fall <input type="checkbox"/> Winter Spring Hours attended each week: _____ Major/Program: _____ Other: _____		
16	JOBS: <input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Job Search <input type="checkbox"/> GED <input type="checkbox"/> Resume <input type="checkbox"/> Employer Visits Other: <input type="checkbox"/> _____		
RAPID RE-EMPLOYMENT		BEGI DATE	END Date
17	Re-employment Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Job loss analysis <input type="checkbox"/> Quitting Triggers <input type="checkbox"/> Current barriers <input type="checkbox"/> Job matching		
18	Work In Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Class #1 <input type="checkbox"/> Class #2 <input type="checkbox"/> Class #3 <input type="checkbox"/> Class #4 Classes		
Support Services	TYPE	Amounts	
Transportation	Support Service Payment for bus pass, gas or other transportation		
Other: SSP Specify type and amount			

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

- If problems (like illness, childcare or other problems on the job) make it hard for you to keep working or follow this Plan, contact your Income Improvement Specialist or Career Development Specialist promptly. Do your best to take care of problems quickly.
- I understand that I may not be eligible to receive JOBS support service payments if I quit my job or am fired, and have not contacted my Income Improvement Specialist ahead of time.

I helped develop this plan. I understand the activities and services listed. I agree to complete the activities listed. This plan may be changed if my Income Improvement Specialist and I agree.

Participant Signature _____	Income Improvement Specialist Signature _____	Date
	Career Development Specialist Signature _____	Date

# WORK PERFORMANCE PLAN



PROGRESS wants to help you be the best employee you can be. We can teach you how to be an excellent employee. Use this worksheet to see how much you know about your current employer and what they think is a great employee.

## DO YOU:

1. Know what your boss or supervisor expects of you?.....  Yes  No
2. Who would they say is a great employee and why? .....  Yes  No
3. Do you meet your boss' expectations of you? .....  Yes  No
4. Do you understand the job duties and assignments?.....  Yes  No
5. Dress appropriately?.....  Yes  No  
If not, have you asked for clarification, help or coaching
6. Have the skills and knowledge for the job or are there things you still need to learn?  
 Yes  No If yes, what are they? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Would taking a short-term training help? .....  Yes  No
8. Know if you will get a performance appraisal or is there another way you can get feedback about your performance?.....  Yes  No
9. Do you need our assistance working with your supervisor/boss? Getting a mentor?  
Other help? .....  Yes  No

## PROGRESS ACTION PLAN

Step #	Action to Resolve Concern/Issue	Who?	Referrals	Start Date	End Date
1					
2					
3					
4					

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Income Improvement Specialist or  
Career Development Specialist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

- Plan Completed
- Certificate Received



## WORK PLAN: ATTITUDE, ETHIC, AND HABITS



A great attitude can make all the difference! What you think, how you feel, and what you believe effects your job. So...what does going to work every day and following orders have to do with making money? EVERYTHING!

For example, if you are late for work twice in 30 days you may lose your job.

### DO YOU:

1. Get to work every day you are scheduled? .....  Yes  No
2. Leave at the scheduled time and not before? .....  Yes  No
3. Arrive at work 10 minutes early? .....  Yes  No
4. Take standard breaks? .....  Yes  No
5. Dress appropriately? .....  Yes  No
6. Follow direction? .....  Yes  No
7. Use appropriate language? .....  Yes  No  
(Not use street language or swear words at work.)
8. Know to not make personal phone calls on company time? .....  Yes  No
9. Complete your work as expected by your boss? .....  Yes  No
10. Ask or look for more work if you are done or have nothing to do? .....  Yes  No

### PROGRESS ACTION PLAN

Step #	Action to Resolve Concern/Issue	Who?	Referrals	Start Date	End Date
1					
2					
3					
4					

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Income Improvement Specialist or  
Career Development Specialist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Plan Completed  
 Certificate Received

# TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN



1. What type of transportation do you use?

**Bus:** .....  Yes  No

Do you live near a bus line? .....  Yes  No

Is your work near a bus line? .....  Yes  No

Does your work schedule match your bus schedule?.....  Yes  No

**Car:** .....  Yes  No

Do you have a valid drivers license .....  Yes  No

Do you have car insurance? .....  Yes  No

**Other:**

2. Can you depend on your transportation? .....  Yes  No

3. Do you have back-up transportation? .....  Yes  No

4. Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## PROGRESS ACTION PLAN

Step #	Action to Resolve Concern/Issue	Who?	Referrals	Start Date	End Date
1					
2					
3					
4					

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Income Improvement Specialist or

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Plan Completed</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Certificate Received</b>
--

# MEDICAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN



1. Do you have health problems? .....  Yes  No

If yes, what are they? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Who is your doctor? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do other family members have health problems? .....  Yes  No

If yes, list who and what the problems are: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Who is their doctor?**

5. Do health problems make it hard for you to do your job or cause you to miss work?  Yes  No

6. Can you get health insurance through work? .....  Yes  No

7. Do you know about State programs to help with health insurance costs? ..  Yes  No

8. Are your children's shots up to date? .....  Yes  No

9. Do you need family planning services? .....  Yes  No

10. Other health concerns? .....  Yes  No

Name them: \_\_\_\_\_

**PROGRESS ACTION PLAN**

Step #	Action to Resolve Concern/Issue	Who?	Referrals	Start Date	End Date
1					
2					
3					
4					

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Income Improvement Specialist or  
Career Development Specialist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Plan Completed**  
 **Certificate Received**

# SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PLAN



There are many kinds of domestic violence. Domestic violence in your life makes it very hard to work and keep your job. Does your partner act like this with you? Do you sometimes feel unsafe?

1. Controlling you.  Yes.....  No
2. Insulting or putting you down.  Yes.....  No
3. Questioning you, like a police officer or lawyer.  Yes.....  No
4. Calling you a liar.  Yes.....  No
5. Calling you names or yelling at you.  Yes.....  No
6. Threatening to hurt you.  Yes.....  No
7. Pushing or hitting you.  Yes.....  No
8. Threatening to kill you.  Yes.....  No
9. Does any of this happen in front of your children?  Yes.....  No
10. Does your partner do these things to your children?  Yes.....  No
11. Have you contacted anyone for help or support?  Yes.....  No
12. Do you have other safety concerns?  Yes.....  No

What are they? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## PROGRESS ACTION PLAN

Step #	Action to Resolve Concern/Issue	Who?	Referrals	Start Date	End Date
1					
2					
3					
4					

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Income Improvement Specialist or  
Career Development Specialist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Plan Completed</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Certificate Received</b>
--

# TRAINING — EMPLOYMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN



As part of the Progress Program, we know that to get a better job, you may need to have some training. Progress can help pay for short-term training. If you know about a training that would help you to stay at your job, or get a better job, fill out this worksheet. Do you want ideas on training that could help you get better in your job? Set a time to meet with your Income Improvement or Career Development Specialist to talk about your training needs.

Name of training: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of school or organization offering training: \_\_\_\_\_

Cost of tuition: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ and fees: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Other Costs: transportation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ childcare: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ books: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ licenses: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 equipment: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ tools: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ other: \_\_\_\_\_ \$

Is there another resource that might help with training costs? .....  Yes  No

Name Resource: (For example, Financial Aid, Voc Rehab, or Dislocated Workers Program): \_\_\_\_\_

How long is the training? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the training schedule? \_\_\_\_\_

How would this training help in current job or new job? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there testing required to get into the training? .....  Yes  No

Are there other classes you must take first to be get into the training? .....  Yes  No

Name them: \_\_\_\_\_

What will it take for you to be successful in this training? \_\_\_\_\_

## PROGRESS ACTION PLAN

Step #	Action to Resolve Concern/Issue	Who?	Referrals	Start Date	End Date
1					
2					
3					
4					

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Income Improvement Specialist or  
Career Development Specialist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Plan Completed**  
 **Certificate Received**

# TRANSFERABLE SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN



People have many employment skills (some you may not even realize) and are learning new skills with each new job. PROGRESS may help you identify and list your employment skills and those skills you wish to learn over time. This worksheet will help you to develop a great resume that will showcase you to a potential employer. You can use these skills to apply for and compete for a promotion or better job.

**List your skills you think you have at this time:**

(Customer service, multi-line phone skills, landscaping, typing, working in a team environment, attention to details, group facilitation, writing and/or speaking effectively, report writing, data entry, problem solving, coaching, time management, etc.)


**List the skills you would like to develop or learn in the next 6-12 months:**


### PROGRESS ACTION PLAN

Step #	Action to Resolve Concern/Issue	Who?	Referrals	Start Date	End Date
1					
2					
3					
4					

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Plan Completed</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Certificate Received</b>
--

\_\_\_\_\_  
Income Improvement Specialist or  
Career Development Specialist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Los Angeles County “Reach For Success” Stabilization Tool

Participant Name:

Case Number:

Plan Start Date:

Three Month Plan Review Date:

x \_\_\_\_\_ will meet with Career Counselor on \_\_\_\_\_.

x \_\_\_\_\_ has agreed to be contacted by phone by Career Counselor

## Purpose of the Stabilization Tool and Instructions

The stabilization tool provides an outline of the areas the newly employed participant may need help, guidance or advice to be successful on the job.

The plan can be broken down into sections such as Child Care and Basic Needs. This allows the Career Counselor and Achiever to define and prioritize the areas in the Achiever's life/job that need to be addressed in order to be successful. All areas can be addressed at once or the Achiever and Career Counselor can decide it is best to only work on one or two areas at a time.

It is important to help the employed participant identify the problem, figure out what actions need to be taken to solve the problem, and set a goal for when the actions will be taken and the problem will be solved.

The questions listed in the stabilization tool should be used as guides only. You do not have to ask the questions verbatim, in fact you are encouraged to discuss the employed participant's situation and needs in a conversational manner.

### **This plan includes:**

#### Career Counselor Guides

##### Areas to Cover

- Child Care
- Basic Needs
- Job Stabilization
- Work Habits
- Work Performance
- Personal Relationships on the Job

#### Work Sheets for Employed Participants

- Personal Finances
- Things you need to know about your job
- Work Habits Self-Assessment Tool

## AREAS TO COVER

### Child Care

**No one can feel O.K. at work if they feel there is a problem with child care. It is important to help the employed participant resolve any child care problems as quickly as possible if they are to remain employed.**

Is child care stable? \_\_\_\_\_ If it is not clear you need to inquire about the issues listed below.

#### If no:

Does the participant/child care provider understand how to complete the child care forms and invoices?  
Do they know where to send them?

Has the child care provider been approved?

Has the child adjusted to child care?

Are they satisfied that their child is receiving quality child care?

Is the child care provider reliable?

Is the participant able to pick-up their child up on time?

Are they picking the child-up on time? \_\_\_\_\_ (If they are not picking the child-up on time they may be having to pay late fees and/or may have problems with the provider.)

Do they have a back-up plan in case their child care provider gets sick or goes on vacation?

Do they have a child care provider for when their children are on vacation from school?

Do they have any other problems with child care? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, What are they?

What actions can be taken to resolve problem(s) ? Who needs to take action?

★ One month goal \_\_\_\_\_ Date

★ Three month goal \_\_\_\_\_ Date



**Basic Needs**

**Basic needs are fundamental requirements for survival as a working person. This area covers food, medical coverage, etc.**

Has the employed participant reported their earnings to their E.W.?

Is the employed participant currently receiving Food Stamps?

Does the employed participant know if they still qualify for Food Stamps now that they are working?

Have they contacted the eligibility worker if they do not know?\_\_\_\_\_ Do they need help contacting the eligibility worker?

Is the employed participant having housing related problems?

Does the employed participant:

Know if they qualify for transitional Medi-Cal? Or Healthy Families?

Need a uniform, special shoes or tools for their job?

Need help with parenting problems?

Is the Participant:

Receiving transportation money?

Having problems with transportation?

Are there any other basic needs they need help with?\_\_\_\_\_If yes, what are they?

What actions need to be taken to solve the problem(s)?

What areas do they need help with?

★ One month goal \_\_\_\_\_ Date

★ Three month goal \_\_\_\_\_ Date

**Job Stabilization**

**A newly employed participant may have problems adjusting to the structure of a working environment. The following areas may be covered without asking directly. You can also use the Work Habits Self-Assessment Tool if the employed participant is open to taking a look at their behavior in order to make a positive change. It is important to cover the issues listed in a non-judgmental, non-threatening, non-parental manner.**

Work Habits

Does the newly employed participant:

Go to work everyday they are scheduled?

Leave at their scheduled time and not before?

Arrive to work on time everyday ?

Take standard breaks?

Dress appropriately?

Follow orders?

Use appropriate language?

**Not** make personal phone calls on company time?

Complete their work as expected by their boss?

Ask/Look for more work if they have nothing to do?

Meet deadlines?

Does the participant have areas they need to improve in?

What actions do they need to take in order to improve?

★ One month goal \_\_\_\_\_ Date

★ Three month goal \_\_\_\_\_ Date

**Work Performance**

**Once the participant is meeting the basic work habits, they can focus their attention on what it takes to be an excellent employee which will help them retain their job or promote.**

Does the employed participant:

Know what their employer/boss/supervisor expects of them?

Meet their employer/boss/supervisors' expectations?

Understand their duties/job assignments?

Have the knowledge/skills to do their job?

If no to the question above: What kind of skills do they need to learn? \_\_\_\_\_ Would taking a short term class help?

What can they do to find out what is expected of them? What their job duties are?

What can they do to meet and/or exceed their employers expectations?

What actions do they need to take in order for this to happen?

Do they need help? Who/How do they need help?

★ One month goal \_\_\_\_\_ Date

★ Three month goal \_\_\_\_\_ Date

**Personal Relationships on the Job**

**Personal relationships on the job can make or break *any* employee. It is important to help the employed participant take a look at how they get along with others to see if this is an area that is/will hold them back from promoting or getting a better job.**

Does the employed participant:

Get along with their boss/supervisor?

Get along with their co-workers?

Treat their boss/co-workers/customers with respect?

Treat their boss/co-workers/customers politely?

Maintain composure on the job (control anger/hostility/emotional outbursts)?

If they are having problems getting along with their boss or co-workers, what is the problem?

Why do they think they are having problems?

Are there any other areas they are having problems?

What can they do to improve?

Do they need help? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, How do they need help?

★ One month goal \_\_\_\_\_ Date

★ Three month goal \_\_\_\_\_ Date

## Personal Finance

**This worksheet deals with your money and personal finances. Your money and finances are completely your business. Only complete the questions you want to complete. If you do not want help, information or referral to an agency that can help you, do not complete this worksheet.**

### Money Matters/Budgeting

#### Do You:

Know how to budget your money/pay check?

Do you know the dates you receive your bills?

Can you estimate how much each of your bills will be?

Pay your bills on time?

Have credit problems?

Have a savings account and/or checking account?

Have a credit card?

If you have a credit card, are you able to pay the minimum monthly balance?

Do you need/want help in any of the money matters listed?

Do you have any other money matters you need help with? \_\_\_\_\_ What are they?

Are there any money matters you want to learn about? Such as car, renters and or life insurance?

★ One month goal \_\_\_\_\_ Date

★ Three month goal \_\_\_\_\_ Date

★ Six month goal \_\_\_\_\_ Date

## Worksheet

Every Company has rules and regulations. Sometimes employers forget to tell new employees what they are, but not knowing may get you in trouble and leave you with less money in your pay check!! This worksheet outlines some work place issues you need to know. Your company may have additional rules and regulations.

Answer the following questions the best you can. Your Career Counselor will help you learn who to ask and where to look to find out.

### **Basic Things to Know Related to Your Job/Employer**

#### Do You Know:

What the deductions are on your pay stub?

If your employer has a probationary period for new hires?

(Probation is usually a three to six month period in which your employer decides if you are a good employee and if you are, will hire you permanently. If they feel that you are not performing as you should (too many absences etc.) they can “let you go.” (Easily fire you.)

If you are on probation?

How long the probationary period is?

If your employer offers benefits?\_\_\_\_\_ When and who qualifies for benefits?

What the benefits are?

If your employer provides paid vacation time?\_\_\_\_\_ Sick Time?

How many days if offered?\_\_\_\_\_ When are you eligible for the vacation and/or sick time?  
( Many companies require one year of company service before vacation time can be used and many companies require that an employee pass probation before qualifying for sick time.)

Acceptable number of absences (usually none if on probation)?

What an acceptable reason for being absent is to your employer?

How your employer handles tardiness ( being late to work)?\_\_\_\_\_ (Many employers will fire an employee because of being late too many times.)

Know the do's and don'ts with regards to:

- Taking morning/afternoon breaks?
- Lunch hour (How long)?
- Using the phone ( Making and taking personal calls)
- Personal Use of Company Equipment?
- If you have internet access/e-mail: Do you know the rules and regulations?
- Playing the radio?
- Eating and Drinking at your work site/desk?
- Smoking?
- Where you are expected to take your morning/afternoon break or lunch?
- What do you need to find out?

## Work Habits Self-Assessment Tool

**What does going to work everyday and following orders have to do with making more money? EVERYTHING! If you are absent your pay check will be “docked.” This means your employer will reduce your pay check by the hours you are absent. This means less money! Who will your boss promote? Someone that follows orders and is never late or absent. This means more money!**

The questions below are for your to answer by yourself. This is a personal assessment of your work habits. You know which ones you do and which ones you don't. You don't have to share the answers with anyone, so be honest with yourself. Then if you want to earn more money decide on how you can improve. Your Career Counselor can give you suggestions and ideas on what to do.

### Work Habits

#### Do You:

Go to work everyday you are scheduled?

Leave at your scheduled time and not before?

Arrive to work on time everyday ?

Take standard breaks?

Dress appropriately? (Dress the way you are suppose to for your job?)

Follow orders?

Use appropriate language? (Not use street language or swear/curse.)

**Not** make personal phone calls on company time?

**Not** bring your personal problems to work?

Complete your work as expected by your boss?

Ask/Look for more work if you have nothing to do?

Meet deadlines?

Are there any areas that need improvement ? \_\_\_\_\_ What are they?

What actions do you need to take in order to improve?

★ One month goal \_\_\_\_\_ Date

★ Three month goal \_\_\_\_\_ Date



Last Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 First Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 SSN: \_\_\_\_\_

Continuum "Matrix" of Retention

Case #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Retention Measurement	1 (Low)	2	3	4 (high)
<b>1. Employment Stability</b>				
<b>% Of Living Wage Earned</b>	Under 100% <input type="checkbox"/>	100-133% <input type="checkbox"/>	133-185% <input type="checkbox"/>	185% or more <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Hrs/Wk</b>	1-19 <input type="checkbox"/>	20-29 <input type="checkbox"/>	30-39 <input type="checkbox"/>	40 or more <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Length of time on last job (most recent)</b>	Less than 3 mos <input type="checkbox"/>	3 - 6 mos <input type="checkbox"/>	6 - 12 mos <input type="checkbox"/>	1 yr or more <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Health Insurance</b>	None <input type="checkbox"/>	OHP <input type="checkbox"/>	3rd Party <input type="checkbox"/>	Empl Benefits <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Benefits</b>	None <input type="checkbox"/>	Paid Holidays <input type="checkbox"/>	Vac./Sick Leave <input type="checkbox"/>	Full Retirement <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Employment Status</b>	P-T/Seas/Temp <input type="checkbox"/>	Job Changing/Cont Empl <input type="checkbox"/>	F-T <input type="checkbox"/>	F-T Stable Room for Growth <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>2. Household Stability</b>				
<b>Financial Management</b>	Behind on Bills/Credit Iss. <input type="checkbox"/>	Payment Plan on Exis. Debt. <input type="checkbox"/>	Paying Bills/Manag. Exp. <input type="checkbox"/>	Accruing Sav./Ret./Assets <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Level of Public Assistance</b>	Eligible/Not Part. DJ out <input type="checkbox"/>	Receiving AFS Cash Grant <input type="checkbox"/>	OHP/FS/HUD/ERDC <input type="checkbox"/>	None <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Housing</b>	Unstable/Unsafe <input type="checkbox"/>	Friend/Family/Resid. Pgm <input type="checkbox"/>	Subsidized/Substd Rntd. <input type="checkbox"/>	Adequate/Rent/Own <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Child Support</b>	None <input type="checkbox"/>	Emotional/No Financial <input type="checkbox"/>	Financial/No Emotional <input type="checkbox"/>	Financial/Emotional or NA <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Transportation Issues</b>	No Vehicle/No VLD <input type="checkbox"/>	Unreliable Car/No Ins. <input type="checkbox"/>	OK Car/VDL/No Ins. <input type="checkbox"/>	VDL/Insurance/Rel. Car <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Child-Care</b>	Frequent CC issues <input type="checkbox"/>	Some missed work <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic CC needs met <input type="checkbox"/>	Stable CC with back-up <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>3. Family Stability</b>				
<b>Child/Parent Relationship</b>	Neglect/Abuse or Poor <input type="checkbox"/>	Needs some Improvement <input type="checkbox"/>	Adequate Interaction <input type="checkbox"/>	Healthy Relationship <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Child Participation/Risk</b>	High/Mult Prob./No School <input type="checkbox"/>	Mod/Sm. Prob/Sporadic Att. <input type="checkbox"/>	Low/Few Iss./Mod Att. <input type="checkbox"/>	Succ. Youth Dev./Reg. Att. <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Mental Health</b>	Know/Suspected No TX <input type="checkbox"/>	Conf. Iss./Little Part. in TX <input type="checkbox"/>	In TX Making Progress <input type="checkbox"/>	Ongoing TX/Func. <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Substance Abuse</b>	Susp./Conf. No TX <input type="checkbox"/>	Admitted/Conf. No TX <input type="checkbox"/>	TX/No Progress <input type="checkbox"/>	Ongoing Recovery/Func. <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Criminal Justice</b>	Supervised Probation <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsupervised Probation <input type="checkbox"/>	Finished Prob. Paying Fines <input type="checkbox"/>	No iss./Debts paid/No Rec. <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>DV/Relationship Issues</b>	Big Iss./Recent Div./Sep. <input type="checkbox"/>	Recent Div. Known/Susp. <input type="checkbox"/>	Adjusting Single <input type="checkbox"/>	Healthy Rel./Self-Suff Sgl. <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>5. Education Training Stability</b>				
<b>Educational Level</b>	Did not attain/compl <input type="checkbox"/>	In Prog. No tests complete <input type="checkbox"/>	< 1 test comple <input type="checkbox"/>	Already possess/graduated <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Educational Level</b>	None <input type="checkbox"/>	Attending STST <input type="checkbox"/>	OJT/STST Complete <input type="checkbox"/>	6 mos + exp In Career Opt. <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Educational Level</b>	0- 1 year <input type="checkbox"/>	1-2 yrs <input type="checkbox"/>	2-3 yrs <input type="checkbox"/>	3 + yrs. <input type="checkbox"/>

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Completed By: \_\_\_\_\_

## VISION Self-Sufficiency Scale

Family Area				
Car	None	Not Running	Needs Repairs	Runs OK
License	None	Suspended	Occupational	Have One
Car Insurance	None	Can't Get	Can't Afford	Have
Longest Job	<6 Months	6 mos. To 1 Year	1 Year To 3 Years	3 Years +
Work Absences	3+/Month	Varied	1-2/Month	<1/Month
Late to Work	3+/Month	Varied	1/2/Month	<1/Month
Job Goals	None	Confused	Undecided	Training
Child Care	None	Unreliable	No Back-up	Excellent
Depression	Serious	Moderate	Mild or Past	None
Anxiety	Serious	Moderate	Mild or Past	None
Criminal History	Recent offenses	On parole/probation	Off parole/probation	None
Legal Problems	Possible	Pending Court Dates	Fines to Pay	None
A&D Issues	Current Use	Recovery <1 year	Recovery 1+ Years	None
Health/Medical	Serious	Moderate	Mild or Past	None
Domestic Violence	Current	Lots in Past	Some In Past	None
Financial Issues	Crisis	Severe	Some	None
Issues with Children	Crisis	Severe	Some	None

Schedule: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up Date & Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Start date of employment: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

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