

**APPENDIX J – AFTER WELFARE REFORM: THE EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE OF WELFARE-RELATED INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE THE WELL-BEING OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The 1996 welfare reform law set a goal of reducing welfare dependency among families with children. Over the 10-year period following enactment of welfare reform, there were large declines in the number of families and recipients receiving cash welfare. There were also substantial increases in work among the group most likely to head welfare families – single mothers. However, despite the significant increases in work and declines in the welfare rolls, the rate of child poverty saw a much less significant improvement, all before the 2001 recession. The share of births that were to unmarried women also increased in the decade.

There is a large body of social science research on welfare reform initiatives and other policies designed to affect poverty, disadvantage, and welfare receipt among families with children. This appendix summarizes a subset of this research that is particularly well suited to answering the questions about what policies work (that is, achieve their policy objectives) and what policies do not. These are the evaluations of demonstrations and programs that use an experimental design. These experiments “test” policy changes by randomly assigning individuals and families to either the experimental group, who are exposed to the policy change, or a control group, who continue to be under current policy. The difference in outcomes for the two groups is the impact of the policy change.

Experimental initiatives to improve the economic and social well-being of families with children have been conducted for more than four decades (Greenberg and Schroder, 2004). This appendix covers a selected group of these evaluations. First, it reviews the findings of the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (NEWWS), a major evaluation that capped decades of research on initiatives to move welfare recipients into the workforce. Second, the appendix examines a group of welfare-to-work policies that provide earnings supplements to working parents. The appendix then goes on to examine recent and current research designed to test initiatives to upgrade the skills of working welfare recipients through post-secondary education, help the “hard-to-serve,” help former welfare recipients retain jobs and advance in their careers, and affect couples’ relationships and possibly their decisions to marry. It includes preliminary results from the major, multi-site Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) evaluation funded by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and a discussion of the implementation of the Building Strong Families healthy marriage promotion demonstration.

The major findings of the evaluations summarized in this appendix include:

- Programs that require welfare recipients to engage in job preparation activities are likely to increase employment and reduce welfare receipt. These impacts can be expected from welfare-to-work initiatives that focus on rapid job attachment, mostly through mandatory job search, or from programs that provide education and training. However, those programs that focus on rapid job attachment have faster impacts.
- Neither welfare-to-work programs that are job-search focused nor education and training-focused alone increase total incomes. Gains in earnings tend to be offset by reductions in welfare receipt, making the effect on total incomes a wash. Neither type of welfare-to-work program has had systematically positive or negative impacts on indicators of well-being of children.
- Initiatives that provide earnings supplements—government transfers that augment the earnings of the working poor—have been shown to increase incomes while providing an incentive to work. Some of these initiatives also had positive impacts on the well-being of some groups of children, particularly in terms of academic performance.
- The current body of research leaves many unanswered questions. Evaluations of programs that seek to facilitate higher education for working welfare recipients have not yielded the desired impacts, but have pointed to the challenges that parents face in balancing child-rearing, work, and education. More general evidence related to the correlation between educational attainment and income illustrates the potential for improving wages by increasing educational opportunities. Evaluations of programs that provide job retention and advancement through supportive labor services have not consistently yielded positive impacts. It is too early to report on currently evaluated initiatives to help the “hard-to-serve” or to promote healthy marriages.

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INDICATORS: 1995 to 2006

Table J-1 summarizes some major social and economic indicators related to welfare receipt and the well-being of families with children from 1995 to 2006. The cash welfare rolls declined from close to 5 million families in 1995 under the pre-welfare reform program of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), to close to 2 million families in 2006 receiving cash welfare funded from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant and associated state maintenance of effort (MOE) funds. The rate of work among single mothers increased fairly sharply in the late 1990s. In 1995, 64 percent of single mothers worked in a typical month, a rate that jumped more than 12 percentage points to 76 percent in 2000. The rate of work among single mothers fell back over the 2000 to 2006 period to 72 percent, but still stood substantially higher than it did before enactment of welfare reform in 1996.

Indicators of child poverty did improve—but the decline in child poverty was far less in magnitude than the decline in cash welfare. By 2000 the child poverty rate had fallen from its 1995 level of 20.8 percent to 16.2 percent during a period of strong economic growth. In 2006, the child poverty rate was 17.4 percent—higher than the rate in 2000 but lower than it was in 1995. On the other hand, there was no improvement in the percentage of children born out of wedlock. The 2006 figure of 38.5 percent of all children born to unmarried mothers is its historical high.

TABLE J-1--SELECTED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INDICATORS, 1995, 2000, AND 2006

	1995	2000	2006
Cash welfare caseload (monthly average, millions of families)	4.8	2.3	1.9
Number of child recipients in families receiving cash welfare (monthly average, millions of children)	9.1	4.5	3.5
Child poverty rate	20.8%	16.2%	17.4%
Number of poor children (millions)	14.7	11.6	12.8
Ratio of children in families receiving cash welfare to all poor children (expressed as a percent)	61.5%	38.1%	26.7%
Employment rate for single mothers	64.0%	75.5%	72.0%
Out-of-wedlock birth ratio	32.2%	33.2%	38.5%

The trends in the selected indicators in the post-welfare reform period are consistent with the findings of welfare-to-work experiments that emphasized work requirements. Over the 1995 to 2006 period, work effort increased and welfare receipt declined. However, the magnitude of the caseload decline could not be foretold from the available research before welfare reform. Additionally, the indicators show that far fewer disadvantaged families with children received

cash welfare payments in 2006 compared with 1995. Thus, the direct impact of welfare policies on disadvantaged families has become smaller over time.

#### LIMITATIONS OF SOCIAL EXPERIMENTS

Though the random assignment research method has many advantages over other types of research, there are some limitations in interpreting the findings of these studies. First, the findings from these experiments are limited to the population that is studied. For example, findings from experimental initiatives targeted to either welfare recipients or former recipients only apply to those who actually came onto the welfare rolls. Policies such as work requirements or time limits, however, might alter decisions about whether to seek welfare or not. Thus, welfare reform policies could have an indirect impact beyond the actual welfare rolls in the broader population of disadvantaged families with children, yet those impacts would not be captured by the evaluations.

The findings of any single experimental evaluation are most valid for the particular place, time, context, and policy examined in the study. Generally, more confidence can be placed in findings that are replicated in a number of different settings. Additionally, the initiatives are often tested on a small scale—in a particular community among a relatively small number of people. The effect of policies could be quite different if the policy were conducted on a nationwide basis.

As discussed above, it would not have been possible to predict the magnitude of the post-welfare reform cash welfare caseload decline from the welfare-to-work evaluations discussed in this appendix. This is partially because: (1) the evaluations did not take into account the likely impact on individuals' decisions to enter the welfare rolls; and (2) the nationwide, well-publicized shift in policies might have resulted in behavioral changes more pronounced than those found in localized initiatives.

#### THE SUMMARY TABLES IN THIS APPENDIX

This appendix includes tables that provide summary findings from selected experimental impact evaluations. Generally, the economic outcomes and impacts from the studies are grouped into four categories: employment, earnings, welfare receipt, and total income. However, the evaluations discussed in this appendix are diverse and often measured slightly different outcomes. Therefore, the outcomes are labeled in the tables.

The “impact” of an initiative is the difference in outcomes between the program group that was exposed to the policy change and the control group that was subject to pre-existing policies. A program is said to have had an impact if there was a statistically significant difference between these two groups. For this appendix, a difference is considered statistically significant if there is at least a 90 percent chance that the difference between the program group and the

control group was not zero. Thus, the “burden of proof” is on the program—or the evaluation of the program—to show an impact.

Policymakers are also interested in whether differences are large or small. Unfortunately, there is no simple rule of thumb to determine the size of many program impacts. The summary tables in this appendix provide the reader with some information to determine whether an impact is “policy significant” in addition to statistically significant. The percentage point difference in outcomes expressed as rates (e.g. employment rates) is reported, along with the rates for the program and control groups. Dollar impacts are converted into percentage changes. To provide some added context, for outcomes expressed in rates for which the study found no impact, the control group rate is shown.

### **THE WELFARE-TO-WORK EXPERIMENTS**

Welfare-to-work evaluations dating back to the 1980s showed that requiring recipients to participate in job preparation activities increased employment and reduced welfare receipt. Among the early evaluations, such impacts were found for both low-cost programs emphasizing job search, as well as more intensive programs that offered mixed strategies of employment services such as job search with education and training (Gueron and Pauly, 1991).

To help answer the question “what works best?” among the welfare-to-work strategies, the Family Support Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-485) authorized the study that became known as the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (NEWWS). NEWWS studied the impact of 11 welfare-to-work programs, including “work-first” programs and education-focused programs that operated side-by-side in three locations: Atlanta, Georgia; Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Riverside, California. The work-first programs emphasized rapid entry to employment, essentially through mandatory job search. Education-focused programs, on the other hand, first assigned participants who were assessed as potentially benefiting from education or training to such an activity. Education or training was often followed-up with job search.

Additionally, the NEWWS program that operated in Portland, Oregon had a relatively high profile, in part because of its relatively large impacts and because of its content. The Portland program emphasized getting a job as a goal, but gave caseworkers discretion to assign participants to education or training if such activities were considered to be helpful to the recipient, and counseled recipients to wait for an offer of a “good job” with higher wages and benefits.

The evaluation findings of the NEWWS programs in Atlanta, Grand Rapids, Riverside, and Portland are summarized on Table J-2, which shows the impact of the program in the first, second, and fifth year after a participant entered the evaluation (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). Each program increased employment and earnings and reduced welfare receipt in at least one of the first two years. Both “work-first” and education-focused programs succeeded in achieving positive impacts on such measures. For many

of the programs, however, the impacts on employment or earnings faded over time. In all of the work-first programs, the cuts in welfare receipt persisted through the fifth year of the evaluation. In two of the three education-focused programs, the impact on welfare receipt had faded by year five.

Despite the increases in employment and earnings generated by the NEWS programs, these programs failed to consistently increase recipients' incomes. The income measure used in NEWS was total income: from work, including an estimated payment from the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) less estimated payroll tax payments, and from cash welfare and food stamps. Incomes were modestly increased for some years in Atlanta, but incomes were reduced in Grand Rapids and Riverside in some years. Generally, increases in earnings and the estimated EITC failed to offset the declines in benefits from cash welfare and food stamps. Even the Portland program, which generated relatively large impacts on earnings that persisted through year five, failed to increase incomes.

TABLE J-2--IMPACTS FROM SELECTED SITES OF THE NATIONAL EVALUATION OF WELFARE-TO-WORK STRATEGIES (NEWWS)

	Employment	Earnings	Welfare Receipt	Income
Atlanta Work-first	Year 1: Increased 4.7 percentage points, 49.1% v 44.4% Year 2: Increased 5.5 percentage points, 55.3% v. 49.8%. Year 5: No impact (control group 63.0%).	Year 1: Increased 24.0% Year 2: Increased 25.2% Year 5: No impact	Year 1: Decreased 4.5 percentage points, 78.2% v. 82.7% Year 2: Decreased 6.2 percentage points, 64.7% v. 70.9% Year 5: Decreased 3.9 percentage points. 32.6% v. 36.5%	Year 1: Increased 3.1% Year 2: Increased 4.7% Year 5: No impact.
Atlanta Education-focused	Year 1: No impact (control group 44.4%) Year 2: Increased 4.5 percentage points., 54.3% v. 49.8% Year 5: No impact (control group 63.0%).	Year 1: Increased 12.1% Year 2: Increased 18.6% Year 5: No impact	Year 1: No impact Year 2: Decreased 4.8 percentage points, 66.2% v. 70.9% Year 5: No impact (control group 36.5%).	Year 1: No impact. Year 2: Increased 4.0% Year 5: No impact.
Grand Rapids Work-First	Year 1: Increased 10.7 percentage points, 63.6% v. 52.9% Year 2: Increased 6.6 percentage points, 67.2% v. 60.6% Year 5: Decreased 2.9 percentage points. 70.0% v. 73.0%	Year 1: Increased 30.2% Year 2: Increased 17.8% Year 5: No impact	Year 1: Decreased 9.1 percentage points, 68.8% v. 77.8% Year 2: Decreased 7.3 percentage points, 53.5% v. 60.8% Year 5: Decreased 3.5 percentage points, 24.3% v. 27.8%.	Year 1: Decreased 3.7% Year 2: Decreased 3.3% Year 5: No impact.
Grand Rapids Education-Focused	Year 1: Increased 5.3 percentage points, 58.1% v. 52.9% Year 2: Increased 4.9 percentage points, 65.5% v. 60.6% Year 5: Decreased 2.7 percentage points, 70.3% v. 73.0%	Year 1: No impact. Year 2: Increased 16.7% Year 5: No impact.	Year 1: Decreased 4.2 percentage points, 73.7% v. 77.8% Year 2: Decreased 6.4 percentage points, 54.3% v. 60.8% Year 5: No impact (control group 27.8%)	Year 1: Decreased 3.2% Year 2: No impact. Year 5: No impact.

TABLE J-2--IMPACTS FROM SELECTED SITES OF THE NATIONAL EVALUATION OF WELFARE-TO-WORK STRATEGIES (NEWWS) – continued.

	Employment	Earnings	Welfare Receipt	Income
Riverside Work-First (All Recipients)	Year 1: Increased 16.5 percentage points, 50.6% v. 34.1% Year 2: Increased 8.4 percentage points, 45.4% v. 37.0% Year 5: Increased 4.2 percentage points, 48.7% v. 44.5%.	Year 1: Increased 41.3% Year 2: Increased 22.4% Year 5: Increased 12.7%	Year 1: Decreased 6.7 percentage points, 62.9% v. 69.6% Year 2: Decreased 6.4 percentage points, 50.1% v. 56.4 % Year 5: Decreased 4.4 percentage points, 30.2% v. 34.6%	Year 1: No impact. Year 2: Decreased 4.0% Year 5: No impact.
Riverside Work-First (Assessed in need of education or basic skills)	Year 1: Increased 16.7 percentage points, 45.8% v. 29.1% Year 2: Increased 9.0 percentage points, 40.9% v. 31.9% Year 5: Increased 5.9 percentage points, 45.8% v. 39.9%	Year 1: Increased 49.3% Year 2: Increased 20.4% Year 5: Increased 20.1%	Year 1: Decreased 6.0 percentage points, 66.4% v. 72.3% Year 2: Decreased 5.8 percentage points, 54.2% v. 60.0% Year 5: Decreased 4.5 percentage points, 34.5% v. 39.0%	Year 1: No impact. Year 2: Decreased 6.6% Year 5: No impact.
Riverside Education-Focused (Assessed in need of education or basic skills)	Year 1: Increased 6.6 percentage points, 35.7% v. 29.1% Year 2: Increased 5.8 percentage points, 37.7% v. 31.9% Year 5: Increased 5.0 percentage points 44.9% v. 39.9%	Year 1: Increased 15.7% Year 2: No impact. Year 5: No impact.	Year 1: Decreased 4.1 percentage points, 68.2% v. 72.3% Year 2: Decreased 4.1 percentage points, 55.9% v. 60.0% Year 5: Decreased 5.7 percentage points, 33.3% v. 39.0%	Year 1: Decreased 4.5% Year 2: Decreased 7.2% Year 5: Decreased 6.0%
Portland (OR) Program	Year 1: Increased 8.6 percentage points, 58.5% v. 49.8% Year 2: Increased 10.9 percentage points, 62.3% v. 51.4% Year 5: Increased 3.8 percentage points, 62.4% v. 58.6%.	Year 1: Increased 13.8% Year 2: Increased 40.4% Year 5: Increased 14.6%	Year 1: Decreased 8.3 percentage points, 59.8% v. 68.0% Year 2: Decreased 12.7 percentage points, 40.6% v. 53.3% Year 5: Decrease 4.8 percentage points, 12.3% v. 17.1%	Year 1: No impact. Year 2: No impact. Year 5: No impact.

Source: Table prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) based on U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, 2001.

The NEWWS evaluation measured some non-economic impacts of welfare-to-work programs in Atlanta, Grand Rapids, Riverside, and Portland. The programs did not have any consistent impacts on marriage rates, living arrangements or fertility.

The NEWWS evaluation also included a study of “child well-being” in Atlanta, Grand Rapids, and Riverside. It examined ratings by both parents and teachers (where applicable) of a child’s academic performance, social skills and behavior, and health and safety. The welfare-to-work programs, which on average increased work effort of parents but not incomes, had no systematic impacts—either positive or negative – on either pre-school or pre-adolescent school-aged children. However, the welfare-to-work programs appeared to unfavorably affect young adolescents, particularly in academic functioning.

### **EARNINGS SUPPLEMENTS**

While the experimental evidence shows that welfare-to-work requirements combined with either employment services or education and training achieved the policy goals of increasing work and reducing welfare, there is no evidence that such policies by themselves raise incomes. A logical follow-up question is whether other policies have proven effective in raising incomes.

In the 1990s, a set of policies were evaluated that provided help to the working poor by supplementing their earnings with government transfers. These policies sought to raise the incomes of low-income families contingent on work effort. The findings from these studies are of great interest because the experimental earnings supplement policies by and large achieved their policy goals of raising the well-being of disadvantaged families. The findings are also of interest because the 1990s saw a major shift in policies to aid low-income families with earnings, through expansions of the Earned Income Tax Credit, child care funding, and health insurance through the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). At the same time, the evaluated earnings supplement initiatives are sufficiently different from those policies, and thus could point to promising new policy directions.

This appendix summarizes the findings from four earnings supplement programs; all of which except New Hope, conducted in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, had ties to the welfare system. New Hope also was the only program that did not limit participation to families with children. The four programs are:

- New Hope, which was available to persons aged 18 or older, regardless of welfare status or family type, who came from families with incomes below 150 percent of the poverty line and who were willing to work at least 30 hours per week. New Hope provided an income supplement in two parts—the first based on the number of children in the family, and the second based on earnings. It also provided supportive benefits such as child care and health insurance. If a regular job could not be found, New Hope provided a community service job. (The findings from New Hope discussed in this appendix refer to the subsample of parents in the evaluation.)

- The Canadian Self-Sufficiency Project (SSP), which operated in two provinces, New Brunswick and British Columbia. This program offered recipients of Canada’s welfare system who would leave the rolls and work at least 30 hours per week an earnings supplement equal to half the difference between their wages and an “earnings benchmark.”
- The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), which was Minnesota’s experimental welfare reform program.<sup>1</sup> It combined cash and food assistance in a single package, increased the basic grant by 20 percent to offset work-related expenses, and generously disregarded earnings (38 percent of earnings were disregarded) in computing MFIP benefits. It also eliminated restrictions on eligibility for two-parent families.
- Texas’ Employment, Retention, and Advancement (ERA) program, which provided services both while a family was on welfare and once a family left welfare. For those who left welfare, the program provided an earnings supplement of \$200 per month for up to two years if the recipient (1) received the state’s maximum earnings disregard for four months; (2) worked 30 hours per week; and (3) participated in a post-employment “advancement” activity.

#### IMPACT OF EARNINGS SUPPLEMENT PROGRAMS ON EMPLOYMENT, EARNINGS, WELFARE RECEIPT AND TOTAL INCOME

Table J-3 summarizes the findings for economic outcomes from the earnings supplement evaluations identified above. The table shows that all of the earnings supplement programs, except the Texas ERA program, increased total incomes during the period in which supplements were paid. These programs generally did so without reducing rates of employment, with some programs stimulating extra employment. The exception was the two-parent component of MFIP, which reduced work effort.

Among parents in the evaluation, New Hope increased employment and earnings in year one, but had no impact on earnings and employment in subsequent years. It increased income and reduced poverty rates in all years in which the earnings supplement was paid, and the reduction in poverty rates was sustained even after the program had ended by year five of the evaluation. The evaluators of New Hope also noted that the community service jobs component of the program was important in helping participants remain eligible for their earnings supplement. That is, the program would have been less effective had it only paid supplements to those in regular jobs. Community service jobs

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<sup>1</sup> The experimental MFIP program was tested beginning in 1994 in selected counties in Minnesota. In 1998, Minnesota replaced its welfare program with a state-wide version of MFIP. The state-wide version of MFIP differed from the experimental version in a number of ways, including offering a less generous financial incentive, a stronger “work-first” focus, and a time limit on benefit receipt.

provided an important safety net for participants who could not find work or had irregular employment (Bos et. al, 1999).

The Canadian SSP program increased employment and earnings in the first and third (but not fifth) year after a participant entered the evaluation. SSP also increased income in the first, third (but not fifth) year and reduced welfare receipt in the first, third and fifth year after the participant entered the evaluation. It should be noted that the Canadian program operated in a different welfare environment than did the programs in the United States. Welfare receipt—and long-term welfare receipt—was far more common among both the program and control groups in the SSP evaluation than it in was the earnings supplement programs evaluated in the United States.

The MFIP program had positive impacts for single parent families. It increased employment, earnings, and income for single parent families, but also increased welfare receipt (In MFIP, welfare provided the earnings supplement for those who went to work). For the two-parent component, MFIP had little impact on the rate of employment for at least one parent, but decreased the rate at which both parents were employed as well as the combined earnings of the two parents. However, the program increased welfare (MFIP) payments, with a net result of no impact on total income for two-parent families.

The Texas program, part of the multi-site Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) evaluation, had few impacts. Two years after random assignment, only 30 percent of participants in Corpus Christi and 20 percent of those in Fort Worth and Houston had received a \$200 monthly earnings supplement. This is despite the fact that the majority of those who entered the program on welfare had left welfare by the end of the second year. ERA's evaluators noted two major barriers to receipt of the supplement: (1) lack of steady work, including failure to qualify because the individual had not exhausted the Texas four month earnings disregard; and (2) resistance to continuing to receive a government benefit and participate in a government program after leaving welfare.

TABLE J-3--ECONOMIC IMPACT FINDINGS FROM EVALUATIONS OF EARNINGS SUPPLEMENT PROGRAMS

Program	Evaluation	Employment	Earnings	Welfare Receipt	Total Income
New Hope Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Huston et. al, 2003)	Random assignment from 8/94 to 12/95.	Ever employed: Year 1: Increased 8.2 percentage points, 90.1% v. 81.9%.	Year 1: Increased by 18.4% Year 3: No impact. Year 5: No impact.	AFDC/TANF (% receiving in year):	Total Annual Income:
	Demonstration for three years.	Year 3: No impact (control group 82.0%). Year 5: No impact (control group 80.0%)	Impacts on earnings-related income, earnings, EITC, and supplement:	Year 1: No impact (control group 81.6%) Year 3: No impact (control group 36.3%). Year 5: No Impact (control group 15.0%)	Year 1: Increased by 12.1% Year 3: Increased by 8.9% Year 5: No impact.
Eligible Population: Persons aged 18 and older in households with incomes below 150 percent of poverty. Voluntary program.	Follow-up study through five years for those with a child between age one and ten at entry (sample used in this report).		Year 1: Increased 23.3% Year 3: Increased 13.4% Year 5: No impact.	Food Stamps (amount received):	Percent in poverty: Year 1: Reduced poverty rate 17.5 percentage points, 52.7% v. 70.2% Year 3: Reduced poverty rate by 14.7 percentage points, 50.9% v. 65.6% Year 5: Reduced poverty rate by 7.9 percentage points, 52.2% v. 60.1%.
	Provides earnings supplements, subsidized child care, and health insurance for persons willing to work 30 hours per week. Unemployed persons could fulfill 30 hour requirement with community service				Year 1: No impact. Year 3: No impact. Year 5: No impact.
Self-Sufficiency Project (SSP) New Brunswick, British Columbia, Canada (Michalopoulos et. al., 2002)	Random assignment: 11/92 to 3/95	Monthly employment rate: Year 1: Increased 4.3 percentage points, 29.7% v. 25.4%. Year 3: Increased 7.3 percentage points, 39.9% v. 32.6%. Year 5, Quarter 2: No impact (control group 41.9%)	Earnings: Year 1: Increased 25% Year 3: Increased 22% Year 5: No impact.	Average welfare payments: Year 1: Decreased 4% Year 3: Decreased 13% Year 5: Decreased 6%	
Eligible Population: Long-term recipients of Canada's welfare system.	Demonstration: Supplements could be received for three years; follow-up through five years				
Program: Earnings supplements were paid to those who worked 30 hours per week or more		Monthly full-time employment rate: Year 1: Increased 6.4 percentage points, 18.0% v. 11.6% Year 3: Increased 9.3 percentage points, 27.7% v. 18.4% Year 5, quarter 2: No impact (control group 26.5%).			

TABLE J-3--ECONOMIC IMPACT FINDINGS FROM EVALUATIONS OF EARNINGS SUPPLEMENT PROGRAMS  
 --continued.

Program	Evaluation	Employment	Earnings	Welfare Receipt	Total Income
Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). (Gennetian, Miller, Smith, 2006) Eligible population: Welfare recipients  Combines mandatory participation in welfare-to-work activities with earnings supplements	Random assignment: 4/94 to 3/96.  Follow-up: Six Years.	Single parent families, quarterly employment rate:  Year 1: Increased 6.9 percentage points, 49.0% v. 42.2%, Year 2: Increased 7.5 percentage points, 54.7% v. 47.2% Year 4: Increased 4.7 percentage points, 58.7% v. 54.0%. Year 6: No impact (control group 57.6% ).	Single parent families, quarterly earnings:  Year 1: No impact. Year 2: Increased 5%. Year 4: No impact. Year 6: No impact.	Single parent families, quarterly welfare receipt:  Year 1: Increased 5.7 percentage points, 82.3% v. 76.6%. Year 2: Increased 8.7 percentage points, 66.7% v. 58.0%. Year 4: Increased 5.3 percentage points, 42.8% v. 37.5%. Year 6: No impact (25.1% control group).	Single parent families, quarterly income:  Year 1: Increased 11%. Year 2: Increased 11%. Year 4: Increased 8%. Year 6: No impact.
		Two-parent families, at least one parent employed:  Year 1: Decreased 2.5 percentage points, 63.7% v. 66.2%. Year 2: No impact. Year 4: No impact. Year 6: No impact.	Two-parent families, combined quarterly earnings:  Year 1: Decreased 14% Year 2: Decreased 16% Year 4: Decreased 6% Year 6: No impact	Two-parent families, welfare receipt.  Year 1: Increased 8.9 percentage points, 76.4% v. 67.5%. Year 2: Increased 10.8 percentage points, 59.9% v. 49.1%. Year 4: Increased 6.4 percentage points, 38.2% v. 31.8%. Year 6: Increased 4.0 percentage points, 26.3% v. 22.3%.	Two-parent families, income:  Year 1: No impact. Year 2: No impact. Year 4: No impact. Year 6: No impact.
		Two-parent families, both parents employed:  Year 1: Decrease 4.6 percentage points, 22.3% v. 27.0% Year 2: Decrease 5.0 percentage points, 25.2% v. 30.2% Year 4: No impact (31.1% control group). Year 6: No impact (32.0% control group).			

TABLE J-3--ECONOMIC IMPACT FINDINGS FROM EVALUATIONS OF EARNINGS SUPPLEMENT PROGRAMS  
 --continued.

Program	Evaluation	Employment	Earnings	Welfare Receipt	Total Income
Texas ERA Program (Martinson and Hendra, 2006)	Random assignment: Corpus Christi and Fort Worth, 11/2000 to 12/2002; Houston, 3/2001 to 12/2002.	Ever-employed over two years: Corpus Christi: No impact. Fort Worth: Increased 4.4 percentage points, 80.7% v. 76.4%. Houston: No impact.	Earnings over two years: No impact in any of the three sites Stipend (earnings supplement) received over first six quarters after random assignment: Corpus Christi: \$299 Fort Worth: \$241 Houston: \$106.	Percent receiving TANF in second quarter of year 2 : Corpus Christi: Decreased 4.8 percentage points, 30.4% v. 35.2% Fort Worth: No impact. Houston: No impact.	Total measured income over first six quarters after random assignment: Corpus Christi: Increased of 5.4% Fort Worth: No impact. Houston: No impact.
Eligible Population: Applicants and Recipients of TANF. Operated in three sites: Corpus Christi, Fort Worth, and Houston. Earnings supplement of \$200 per month for up to 12 months for a family that left welfare and had used four months of Texas' earnings disregard; worked at least 30 hours per week, or combined 15 hours of education with 15 hours of work; and participated in a post-employment advancement activity.	Program ended 8/2004. Follow-up for two years for employment data; 16 months for public assistance receipt.	Employed four consecutive quarters over two years: No impact in any of the three sites.			

### IMPACT OF EARNINGS SUPPLEMENT PROGRAMS ON MARRIAGE

The earnings supplement experiments provided no conclusive evidence that work-conditioned earnings supplements affect marriage decisions one way or the other. New Hope produced no impact on marriage. The early evaluations of MFIP showed some positive impacts on family stability from the combination of policies that eliminated welfare's restrictions on eligibility for two-parent families and those that led to increases in income. However, by year six of the MFIP evaluation, the program produced no impact on marriage rates among single parents and only a small reduction in divorce among two-parent families. Likewise, the Canadian SSP evaluation did not show any significant impact on the likelihood that parents married.

### IMPACT OF EARNINGS SUPPLEMENT PROGRAMS ON CHILD WELL-BEING

The focus of programs described in this appendix is on the behavior of a family's adults, particularly regarding work. The earnings supplement programs also had a goal—met in three of the four programs discussed in this appendix—of increasing the well-being of the entire family by raising their incomes. One question addressed in the evaluations of three of the earnings supplement programs was whether the program had an impact on the well-being of the children in the family. The evaluations of these programs answered this question as yes, and, when impacts were found they were often, but not always, positive.

Of the four earnings supplement programs discussed in this appendix, three evaluations (New Hope, the Canadian SSP, and MFIP) included a component to assess the well-being of the children in the families of participants. The three evaluations all examined impacts while the family received the earnings supplement or soon after eligibility for the supplement had ended. New Hope and MFIP evaluators also studied longer-term impacts on child well-being long after the supplements ended.

Child well-being was measured in these evaluations in three general domains: (1) school and academic performance; (2) behavior and social well-being; and (3) health and safety. The measures used to assess child well-being varied among the evaluations. Therefore, the following discussion will summarize what the studies found in each of the three domains.

Table J-4 summarizes the child well-being impacts of the earnings supplement programs. The most consistent, positive impacts reported across the earnings supplement evaluations were in the school and academic performance domain, with all three evaluations reporting some positive impacts in this area.

The impacts of earnings supplement programs on behavior and social well-being were less consistent. New Hope generated some positive behavior impacts for boys. The MFIP evaluation also found positive impact on behavior, and had its largest impacts among children of those who were long-term welfare

recipients at study entry. The Canadian SSP evaluation reported negative impacts for the behavior of adolescents.

Few health and safety impacts were found. These impacts were not consistently positive or negative.

TABLE J-4--CHILD-WELL BEING FINDINGS IN EVALUATED EARNING SUPPLEMENT PROGRAMS

Evaluation	School and Academic Performance	Behavior and social well-being	Health and Safety
New Hope Follow-up at two years and five years after random assignment. (Bos et. al, 1999 and Huston et. al, 2003)	At two years: Positive impacts for boys (academic and social skills, expectations to finish high school and college, aspirations). No such impact for girls. (Negative impact for girls on the degree they view academics as important).	At two years: Teachers reported increased positive behavior and reduced problem behavior for boys, but not girls. (Girls had a few increased problem behaviors.)	Not reported at two years.
	At five years: Positive impacts for reading scores on the standardized achievement tests. Stronger effects for boys than girls. Also, greater aspirations to complete college for boys.	At five years: Few impacts. For boys, increased overall positive behavior and reduction in physical hostility.	At five years: Few impacts.
	No major differences by age of child.	No major differences by age of child.	
Canadian SSP Follow-up 36 months and 54 months after random assignment (Michalopoulos et. al, 2002)	Pre-schoolers at random assignment: Positive impacts (increase in above-average achievement in a subject and reduced participation in special education at 54 months).  Young adolescents at random assignment: Negative academic impacts (increase in below-average achievement) at 36 months. No impacts on school completion measures at 54 months.	Children of pre-school age at study entry: no impacts.  Young adolescents at random assignment: Negative impacts at 36-months (increase in delinquency and drinking more than once a week).	One positive impact on ratings of child's average health at 54 months after entering the study for children of pre-school age at study entry. No other significant impacts.

TABLE J-4--CHILD-WELL BEING FINDINGS IN EVALUATED EARNING SUPPLEMENT PROGRAMS –continued.

Evaluation	School and Academic Performance	Behavior and social well-being	Health and Safety
MFIP Follow-up at 36 months after study entry. Also, longer-term follow-up for academic achievement in the second and fifth grade. (Gennetian and Miller, 2000 and Gennetian, Miller, and Smith, 2005)	Positive impacts on measures of academic functioning (general school performance and engagement in school) at 36 months. Positive impacts were most prevalent among those who were children of long-term recipients at study entry.  Longer-term follow-ups, fifth grade assessment of children aged 2 through 5 at study entry. Positive impacts on reading and math scores and meeting grade level expectations in reading and math for those most disadvantaged at study entry (received welfare in 11 of 12 months prior to entering the study).  Fewer impacts for third grade assessment of children aged 0 to 3 at study entry. Increase in the percent meeting grade-level expectations in reading among the least disadvantaged children and increased reading scores for the most disadvantaged children at study entry.	Reduction in problem behavior among children of long-term recipients at study entry.	No overall impacts.

The earnings supplement programs, which as described earlier had the effect of raising overall incomes, also were shown to positively affect children, at least in the domain of school and academic performance. Additionally, the long-term findings from New Hope and MFIP produced evidence that the positive impacts persist – the temporary boost in income associated with the earnings supplement still produced improvements in academic performance well after the family was no longer eligible for the supplement. On the other hand, the welfare-to-work strategies in NEWWS that were effective in getting mothers off of welfare and into work but that did not raise incomes were not shown to have these positive impacts.

**UNACHIEVED GOALS; UNANSWERED QUESTIONS**

The experimental evaluations of welfare-to-work and earnings supplement initiatives provide evidence that some policy goals can be met. For example, policies can be devised to promote work and reduce the welfare rolls. Further, the earnings supplement programs have shown that policies can simultaneously

promote work and raise incomes—with the added benefit of improving the well-being of the children in participating families.

Still, there are limitations to what can be achieved by either “work-first” or education-focused welfare-to-work programs and earnings supplement programs alone. Experimental evaluations have explored, or begun to explore, policy initiatives that address some of the unachieved goals of welfare-to-work and earnings supplement policies. The remainder of this appendix discusses evaluations of policy initiatives to: (1) combine post-secondary education and work for welfare recipients; (2) provide specialized programs for the “hard-to-serve;” (3) provide post-employment services; and (4) promote healthy marriages.

### COMBINING WORK AND A COLLEGE EDUCATION

The education-focused welfare-to-work programs discussed above treated educational activities as a pre-employment service as preparation for entering the workforce. In addition to these evaluations, three evaluations of post-employment, post-secondary education programs are available. All three of these programs operated in Riverside, California, with the main educational institution for them being Riverside Community College. These programs were targeted at TANF recipients who were employed a minimum of 20 hours per week. (This threshold was based on TANF work participation standards that States must meet, see Section 7.) These three programs differ from the so-called “mixed strategy” welfare-to-work programs. For example, the NEWWS program in Portland allowed some education and training to be part of a work-focused program, but participants were generally not required to participate in both work and education simultaneously. Rather, the Portland program allowed education and training and activities such as job search to be done sequentially.

The Riverside New Visions program began operation in the late 1990s. Riverside also operated two post-employment education programs as part of the ERA evaluation. Table J-5 summarizes the evaluations of these three programs, which found that all three programs failed to produce positive impacts. In fact, New Visions increased welfare receipt. One of the ERA programs—the training-focused program—allowed recipients to reduce hours of work in order to participate in education and training; that program reduced employment.

The evaluators of these programs noted that many program participants worked more than the required 20 hours per week while on welfare. In the ERA programs, most worked full-time. The evaluators stated that participating parents had difficulty in balancing work, family life, and education. The ERA evaluators also pointed to frequent job loss among participants, often diverting attention away from education and training and toward job search.

TABLE J-5--FINDING FROM INITIATIVES TO COMBINE WORK AND POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR WELFARE RECIPIENTS

Program	Evaluation	Educational Attainment	Employment and Earnings	Welfare Receipt	Total Income
<p>New Visions – Riverside, CA (Fein, and Beecroft, 2006)</p> <p>Target Population: TANF recipients working at least 20 hours per week with a high school diploma or equivalent. Voluntary program.</p> <p>Program: 24-week program of academic instruction (college preparation courses) that seeks to move recipients to an occupational mini-program at a community college.</p>	<p>Random Assignment: 1998-2002</p> <p>Follow-up: Three years.</p>	<p>Participation in education and training activities:</p> <p>Any activity: Increased by 20.2 percentage points, 78.8% v. 58.6%.</p> <p>Taking any regular community college course (non-New Visions): Increased by 5.3 percentage points, 36.0% v. 30.7%.</p>	<p>Employment and earnings over two and one half years:</p> <p>Average quarterly employment rate: No impact (control group 68.3%).</p> <p>Average total earnings: Decreased 12%.</p>	<p>TANF payments over three years: Increased by 13.8%.</p>	<p>Not reported.</p>
<p>Two Education and Training Models in Riverside, CA (Navarro, Freedman, and Hamilton, 2007)</p> <p>Target Population: TANF recipients working at least 20 hours per week.</p>	<p>Random assignment: 1/01 to 10/03.</p> <p>Follow-up period: 2 years</p>				
<p>Work-Plus Program required at least 20 hours per week of work; additional 16 hours per week could be education and training</p>		<p>Percent engaged in any education/training: No impact (control group 32.0%).</p> <p>Percent engaged in education and training while working: increased 7.0 percentage points, 29.6% v. 22.6%.</p>	<p>Average quarterly employment (%):</p> <p>Year 1: No impact (control group 72.4%).</p> <p>Year 2: No impact (control group 61.6%).</p> <p>Total earnings:</p> <p>Year 1: No impact.</p> <p>Year 2: No impact.</p>	<p>Amount of TANF received in Year 1:</p> <p>No impact.</p>	<p>Total earnings, TANF and food stamps in Year 1: No impact.</p>

TABLE J-5--FINDING FROM INITIATIVES TO COMBINE WORK AND POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR WELFARE RECIPIENTS --continued.

Program	Evaluation	Educational Attainment	Employment and Earnings	Welfare Receipt	Total Income
Training-Focused Program allowed participants, with case manager approval, to reduce or eliminate work hours while participating in education and training.		<p>Percent engaged in any education/training:</p> <p>Increased 9.3 percentage points, 41.3% v. 32.0%.</p> <p>Percent engaged in education and training while working: No impact (control group 22.6%).</p>	<p>Average quarterly employment (%):</p> <p>Year 1: Decreased 4.9 percentage points, 67.5% v. 72.4%.</p> <p>Year 2: No impact (control group 61.6%).</p> <p>Total earnings:</p> <p>Year 1: No impact.</p> <p>Year 2: No impact.</p>	<p>Amount of TANF received in Year 1: No impact.</p>	<p>Total earnings, TANF, and food stamps in Year 1: No impact.</p>

## HELPING THE “HARD-TO-SERVE”

The two most common welfare-to-work strategies are the “work-first” approach, which generally focuses on job search as the first and primary activity for nonemployed recipients, or education and training. However, a substantial share of individuals on the welfare rolls face barriers to employment other than low educational attainment, such as physical disabilities, mental impairments, or care-giving responsibilities for a disabled child or other family member. The NEWWS welfare-to-work evaluation discussed earlier in this appendix did not specifically address whether either the “work-first” or “education-first” strategy was effective in helping recipients with such barriers to work. Further, if these barriers are sufficiently high to prevent strong attachment to the workforce, earnings supplement policies will be less effective for this group than for the population at large.

To fill the gap in our understanding of strategies that could help those with substantial barriers enter the workforce, HHS has funded the Enhanced Services for the Hard-to-Employ demonstration. This demonstration is testing four strategies in four sites to assist both welfare recipients and other disadvantaged persons with substantial barriers to employment (Bloom, Redcross, Hsueh, Rich, and Martin, 2007). Impact findings are not yet available from any of the four sites.

However, as part of the ERA evaluation, two sites tested programs to help the hard-to-serve. A program in Minnesota targeted long-term welfare recipients. Though many of the participants in this program had barriers to employment other than low education, it did not specifically target those with such barriers. On the other hand, an ERA program in New York City (called the PRIDE program) was targeted to welfare recipients who had impairments deemed too great to require them to participate in the regular welfare-to-work program, but not severe enough to qualify them for long-term disability benefits from the Supplement Security Income (SSI) program.

The findings of the two ERA evaluations focused on the hard-to-serve indicate the degree of difficulty in serving those with barriers to employment (summarized in Table J-6). The Minnesota program produced no positive employment impacts and increased welfare receipt. The New York City PRIDE program produced some positive employment impacts. However, the rate of employment produced by the program (33.7 percent ever worked over two years), while significantly greater than the employment rate in the control group, was still quite low.

TABLE J-6--FINDINGS FROM EVALUATIONS TARGETED TOWARD THE “HARD-TO-SERVE”

Program	Target Population/Services	Evaluation	Employment and Earnings	Welfare Receipt	Total Income
Employment Retention and Advancement Project--Minnesota's Tier 2 Program (LeBlanc, Miller, Martinson, Azurdia, 2007)	Target Population: Welfare recipients who were assigned to employment services for at least 12 months; were unemployed and had not worked for three months; were not participating in job preparation activities; and were not sanctioned or exempt.  Services: In-depth family assessments, smaller caseload sizes and emphasis on placement in supported work.	Random assignment: 1/2002 to 4/2003.  Follow-up: Seven calendar quarters	For quarters two through seven: Ever employed: No impact (control group 64.7%). Total earnings: No impact.  For quarter seven: Ever employed: No impact (control group 43.4%). Total earnings: No impact.	For quarters two through seven: Ever received TANF: No impact (control group 93.1%).  For quarter seven: Ever received TANF: Increased 4.3 percentage points (58.6% v. 54.2%).	For quarters two through seven: No impact.  For quarter seven: No impact.
Employment Retention and Advancement Project—New York City's PRIDE program (Bloom, Miller, and Azurdia, 2007)	Target Population: Cash welfare recipients whose medical problems were too severe to participate in the regular welfare-to-work program but not severe enough to qualify for federal disability benefits.  Services: Combined unpaid work experience and education. Job development and placement.	Random assignment: 12/2001 to 12/2002.  Follow-up: Two years.	Ever employed in years one or two: Increased 7.2 percentage points (33.7% v. 26.5%). Employed four consecutive quarters in year 1: No impact (control group 4.7%). Employed four consecutive quarters in year 2: Increased 1.9 percentage points (9.8% v. 7.9%).  Total earnings year 1 and two: Not individually measured.	Amount of cash assistance received: Decreased 7.1%.	Not consistently measured.

## POST-EMPLOYMENT LABOR SERVICES

Two major evaluations funded by HHS have looked at initiatives to provide services to former welfare recipients. The Post-Employment Services Demonstration conducted in the mid-1990s operated in four sites (Chicago, Illinois; Portland, Oregon; Riverside, California; and San Antonio, Texas). Additionally, HHS has funded the ERA evaluation.

The Post-Employment Services Demonstrations and four programs in the ERA evaluation essentially provided case management; the State welfare or employment office maintained contact with former recipients and provided a range of labor services, such as counseling, referrals to other supportive benefits and services, and job search if the participants became unemployed. ERA programs operating in Chicago and Salem, Oregon began working with participants while they were on the TANF rolls. The other ERA programs, in Riverside, California, and South Carolina, were targeted to welfare leavers.

Table J-7 shows the findings of the Post-Employment Services and ERA demonstrations that offered labor services. As shown on the table, most participants in these studies worked sometime during the follow-up period, but the share that reported steady work was relatively low. In the Post-Employment Demonstration, only the program in Chicago produced positive impacts—slightly increasing the percent of time a participant was employed and reducing welfare receipt.

In the ERA sites shown on the table, only the programs in Chicago and Riverside produced positive impacts. The program operated in Riverside was the only one to increase incomes. Its evaluators noted that the Riverside program succeeded in reemploying participants who lost jobs. Community-based organizations also delivered services in this program, and the evaluators found that the program worked best when delivered by those organizations, rather than the welfare department.

The Chicago program was run by a contractor who relied heavily on its working relationship with certain firms, connecting participants to higher paying jobs in these firms. The evaluators of the program said that it appears that the positive impacts of the program (e.g. increasing the share working for four consecutive quarters) appeared to come from moving participants from informal employment (not covered by Unemployment Insurance) to more formal work.

The evaluators of post-employment initiatives point to a number of barriers to the success of these programs. An overriding theme is the difficulty in keeping working parents engaged in programs after they no longer are required to participate because they have left welfare. Often, former recipients want to sever ties with the welfare system.

TABLE J-7--FINDINGS OF PROGRAMS PROVIDING POST-EMPLOYMENT LABOR SERVICES

Program	Evaluation	Employment	Earnings	Welfare Receipt	Total Income
<p>Postemployment services demonstration (Rangarajan and Novak, 1999)</p> <p>Services: Treatment consisted of case management to provide counseling and support, job search assistance if participants became unemployed, help with benefits, services referrals, and support payments for work-related expenses.</p>	<p>Random assignment of welfare recipients who participated in work program and found jobs between 3/94 and 12/95.</p> <p>Follow-up period: Two years.</p>	<p>Percentage of total period (two years) employed:</p>	<p>Average quarterly earnings:</p>	<p>Percentage of total period (two years) receiving cash welfare:</p>	<p>Average annual income from earnings, cash welfare, and food stamps:</p>
	Chicago, IL	Increased 3 percentage points (65.5% v. 62.5%).	No impact.	Decreased 2.9 percentage points (66.7% v. 69.6%).	No impact.
	Portland, OR	No impact (control group 68.9%).	No impact.	No impact (control group 33.3%).	No impact.
	Riverside, CA	No impact (control group 57.5%).	No impact.	No impact (control group 61.1%).	No impact.
	San Antonio, TX	No impact (control group 80.2%).	No impact.	No impact (control group 32.8%).	No impact.
<p>Employment Retention and Advancement Project--The Post-Assistance Self-Sufficiency Program in Riverside, California. (Navarro, Dok, and Hendra, 2007).</p> <p>Target Population: Employed TANF leavers.</p> <p>Services: Case management, counseling, mentoring, job preparation and search, life skills education, and supportive services and payments.</p>	<p>Random Assignment: 7/2002 to 6/2003.</p> <p>Follow-up period: Two years for employment and earnings. One year for public assistance receipt.</p>	<p>Ever Employed Year 1: Increased 3.0 percentage points, 80.1% v. 77.1%</p> <p>Employed Four Consecutive Quarters in Year 1: Increased 3.2 percentage points, 47.9% v. 44.8%.</p> <p>Ever Employed Years One and Two: Increased by 3.9 percentage points.</p> <p>Employed Four Consecutive Quarters Years One and Two: No impact (control group 56.9%).</p>	<p>Earnings in Year 1: Increased 11.1%.</p> <p>Earnings Year 1 and 2: Increased 10.8%.</p>	<p>Percent Receiving TANF in Year One: No impact (control group 43.5%).</p> <p>Amount of TANF received in Year One: No impact.</p>	<p>Total earnings, TANF, and food stamps in Year 1: Increased 8.4% .</p>

TABLE J-7--FINDINGS OF PROGRAMS PROVIDING POST-EMPLOYMENT LABOR SERVICES --continued.

Program	Evaluation	Employment	Earnings	Welfare Receipt	Total Income
<p>Employment Retention and Advancement Project—Chicago (Bloom, Hendra, and Page, 2006)</p> <p>Target Population: TANF recipients who reported at least six consecutive months of employment at 30 hours per week.</p> <p>Services: Individualized services. Commonly, staff attempted to connect participants to higher paying jobs in specific firms. Some education and training.</p>	<p>Sample for report was randomly assigned from 2/02 to 3/03.</p> <p>Follow-up period: two years.</p> <p>Program operated until 6/04.</p>	<p>Ever employed: No impact (control group 71.1%).</p> <p>Employed four consecutive quarters: Increased 3.9 percentage points, 55.0% v. 51.1%.</p>	<p>Earnings: No impact.</p>	<p>Amount of TANF received: Decreased 21%.</p> <p>Amount of food stamps received over two years: No impact.</p>	<p>Total earnings, TANF, and food stamps: No impact.</p>
<p>Employment Retention and Advancement Project—South Carolina (Scrivener, Azurdia, and Page, 2005)</p> <p>Target Population: People who left the TANF rolls between 10/97 and 12/00.</p> <p>Services: Individualized services, with core program focused on case management.</p>	<p>Sample for report was randomly assigned 9/01 to 12/02.</p> <p>Follow-up period: one year.</p>	<p>Ever employed: No impact (control group 67.8%).</p> <p>Employed four consecutive quarters: No impact (control group 40.2%).</p>	<p>Earnings: No impact.</p>	<p>Amount of TANF received: No impact.</p>	<p>Total earnings, TANF, and food stamps: No impact.</p>
<p>Employment Retention and Advancement Project—VISIONS Program in Salem, Or. (Molina, Cheng, Hendra, 2008)</p> <p>Target Population: TANF Applicants.</p> <p>Program provided both pre-employment and post-employment labor services. Main distinction from regular welfare-to-work program was message focusing on retention and advancement.</p>	<p>Sample for report was randomly assigned 5/2002 to 9/2003</p> <p>Follow-up period: One year.</p>	<p>Ever employed: No impact (control group 62.8%).</p> <p>Employed four consecutive quarters: No impact (control group 21.9%).</p>	<p>Earnings: No impact.</p>	<p>Received TANF in the last quarter of year 1: Increased 7.2 percentage points, 39.5% v. 32.3%.</p> <p>Amount of TANF received over one year: Increased 18.7%.</p>	<p>Total earnings, TANF, and food stamps: No impact.</p>

## PROMOTING HEALTHY MARRIAGES

In 2006, the percent of births that were to unwed mothers reached its all-time high, 38.9 percent. Children raised in single-parent households (mostly in single-mother households) are more likely to be poor than children raised in two-parent households.

Two major experimental evaluations related to marriage are underway. The Supporting Healthy Marriage initiative seeks to provide low-income couples who are married or plan to marry with relationship skills training to help sustain their marriage. No findings from this evaluation are available as of mid-2008.

The Building Strong Families evaluation recruited unmarried low-income expectant and recent parents who are romantically involved for training in interpersonal skills to strengthen their relationship and, if they choose to wed, help them achieve a healthy marriage. As of mid-2008, this evaluation has not produced impact findings, but a process study (Dion et al., 2008) has provided some information about how this program was implemented. The project has been underway since 2002, but at the outset of the project most relationship skills programs were developed for middle-income, typically white couples. Relationship skills curricula had to be adapted for unmarried, low-income, culturally diverse couples. The Building Strong Families program that was developed had at its centerpiece group training sessions. Additionally, each family was assigned a family coordinator whose responsibilities included assessing family members' needs, linking family members with services, and encouraging program participation.

Enrollment into Building Strong Families programs began in 2005 and 2006. Programs began operating in Atlanta, Georgia; Baltimore, Maryland; Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Broward and Orange Counties in Florida; Allen, Lake, and Marion Counties in Indiana; Oklahoma; and Houston and San Angelo in Texas. The programs recruited low-income couples, but only 6 percent of those who enrolled received TANF cash welfare.

Based on preliminary data, 61 percent of those recruited for the Building Strong Families program participated in at least one group session. The initiative's evaluators noted that this rate was lower than hoped for, but similar to the rate reported by evaluators of marriage education programs that target middle-class couples. On average, couples completed about 21 hours in group sessions (the curricula used ranged from 30 to 42 hours in length).

Focus groups were conducted to receive feed-back from program participants. The evaluators reported generally positive impressions of the group sessions from those who attended them. The focus group sessions also sought to determine why some members failed to attend or missed sessions. Scheduling issues related to work conflicts were often reported as reasons for missing sessions. However, even for those who attended, scheduling difficulties were noted.

## CONCLUSION

Within the limitations of the research methodology, experimental evaluations have taught us much about the likely impact of both current policies and prospective initiatives. Additionally, there is more to be learned. With the diminished role of TANF cash welfare, the coming years will see impact findings from a host of evaluations currently underway, that seek to improve the circumstances of disadvantaged families, most of whom have workers rather than welfare recipients. The available evidence thus far points to some challenges ahead. Low income parents, who face day-to-day economic insecurity from irregular and changing work schedules as well as family circumstances such as illness, face obstacles to participation which in turn impact the effectiveness of programs.

Research has shown that two types of policies have achieved at least some of their policy goals. The welfare-to-work experiments provided evidence that mandatory participation in work or job preparation activities is likely to increase work and reduce welfare, but such requirements alone are not likely to raise incomes. The evaluations of the earnings supplement programs have shown that these initiatives can simultaneously promote work and raise incomes. In addition, the findings that earnings supplement programs improved certain measures of child well-being, such as academic achievement, are also significant. This provides some optimistic news about the effects of current policies, initiated in the 1990s, to “make work pay” and to improve the economic circumstances of families with children beyond what they could attain through the welfare system.

However, earnings supplements cannot help those who remain outside the workforce because of unresolved employment barriers such as physical or mental impairments. To date, conclusive evidence of effective programs and strategies to overcome such barriers has yet to be found. Further, earnings supplement policies are most effective for those with strong attachment to jobs—an elusive goal for many former welfare families and for disadvantaged families in general.

Thus, the available research points to a number challenges and opportunities. To address the unachieved goals likely requires additional policy innovation and, to determine whether these new policies achieve their goals, more research. However, the existing research on welfare reform and earnings supplements provides evidence that policy can make a difference to promote work, improve the economic well-being of disadvantaged families, and perhaps improve the life-chances of their children.

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