

BIASING



**BEHAVIORAL
INTERVENTIONS
TO ADVANCE
SELF-SUFFICIENCY
*NEXT GENERATION***

**OPRE Report 2024-098
May 2024**

APPLYING BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE TO IMPROVE PARTICIPATION IN WORK-SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Monroe County, New York

Funders

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Applying Behavioral Science to Improve Participation in Work-Support Programs

Monroe County, New York

OPRE Report 2024-098

May 2024

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Executive Summary

The Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency-Next Generation (BIAS-NG) project is supported by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation within the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. BIAS-NG aims to make human services programs work better for the people receiving services by reshaping program processes using lessons from behavioral science, an interdisciplinary field that incorporates psychology, economics, and other social sciences to provide insight into how people process information, make decisions, and take action. In Monroe County, New York, the BIAS-NG team, led by MDRC, worked with county staff members to design and test two interventions that aimed to increase attendance at required meetings and activities in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and New York State's Safety Net program. These programs work in tandem to provide temporary cash assistance to qualifying individuals who have very low incomes.

While investigating patterns of engagement in these programs, the BIAS-NG team found that many participants did not attend some activities: Employment Assessment meetings, Internship Orientations, or work-based internships. Program rules require participants to attend these activities if they are to continue receiving assistance. By observing program activities, interviewing program staff members and clients, and reviewing program documents, the team identified several *behavioral bottlenecks* that might contribute to these engagement challenges (that is, practices and procedures that might be reducing participants' willingness or ability to engage in program activities). For example, the team found that the outreach letters for the Employment Assessment and the Internship Orientation were dense and focused on the consequences of not attending rather than the benefits of attending. Clients were given only one outreach letter per appointment, which placed the burden of planning to attend and following through solely on them. The team also found that aspects of the Internship Orientation might have created the expectation that it was not necessary for clients to pay attention to or participate in the orientation.

The BIAS-NG team and county staff members designed two interventions to address the behavioral bottlenecks. The first intervention redesigned the meeting outreach letters and added additional forms of outreach, including a reminder magnet and text messages. The second intervention redesigned the interaction between the participants attending the Internship Orientation and the staff members delivering the presentation. In partnership with the county staff, the team tested these interventions using randomized controlled trials.

The tests were implemented by Monroe County social service staff members alongside their usual service-delivery practices, using existing staff and resources. The BIAS-NG team collected and reviewed data on the county's experience implementing the interventions. For the meeting outreach, most letters and text messages were sent as intended, but about a quarter of participants assigned to receive reminder texts were not sent them because of missing contact information or administrative error. In 36 observations of Internship Orientations, clients responded differently to the redesigned orientation than they did to the standard one. During the redesigned orientation, staff prompting led more clients to ask

or answer questions than in the standard orientation. On average, about half of the clients spoke during the redesigned orientation, compared with fewer than one in three speaking during the standard orientation.

To determine the additional cost of materials and staff time associated with both interventions, the BIAS-NG team interviewed county staff members. The additional cost associated with implementing the full outreach package was about \$1.69 per participant, and the added cost of the redesigned orientation was \$1.85 per participant.

Findings from the first randomized controlled trial showed that participants who received the new outreach were 5 percentage points more likely than those who received the standard outreach to attend their Employment Assessment meetings on the initially scheduled dates. However, participants who received the new outreach were not more likely to attend an Employment Assessment meeting, nor did they attend the meeting faster on average than those who received the standard outreach. The difference only relates to attendance at that initially scheduled Employment Assessment, in part because clients who did not attend that initial meeting were rescheduled for a later one. The story is slightly more straightforward for the next required meeting, the Internship Orientation. For that meeting, 5 percentage points more attended of those who received the new outreach relative to those who received the standard outreach.

Findings from the second randomized controlled trial showed that those who attended the redesigned orientation were almost 4 percentage points more likely to participate in their assigned internship within one week than those who attended the standard orientation.

The findings show that programs can adopt new approaches informed by behavioral science and increase participation in some required meetings and activities. The county found the sizes of these effects to be meaningful. Moreover, though their reactions were not measured directly in the study, staff members and participants might prefer the approaches informed by behavioral science, even though the new materials do not change the overall context of service relationships and service delivery. As both sets of changes—to communication and to structures of interaction—are tested in new contexts, research and monitoring will be needed to gauge these interventions' effects and to determine whether they can be refined.

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The Authors

In Monroe County, New York, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and New York State’s Safety Net program work in tandem to provide temporary cash assistance to qualifying individuals who have very low incomes.¹ To maintain access to that cash assistance, those enrolled in these programs are required to attend a series of meetings and activities intended to assess program applicants’ needs and connect them to services the county believes help people move toward economic self-sufficiency. Several of these meetings are mandated by federal and state policy, and these meetings serve a vital purpose for the county. Without the information gathered through these meetings, the county cannot connect people to available services best aligned with their needs and circumstances. If participants do not attend these meetings and subsequent activities, they risk losing access to benefits and having to restart the application process. Program data suggest, however, that fewer than half of those who are required to attend these meetings and activities do so.²

The Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency-Next Generation (BIAS-NG) project is supported by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. BIAS-NG aims to make human services programs work better for the people receiving services by reshaping program processes using lessons from behavioral science, an interdisciplinary field that incorporates psychology, economics, and other social sciences to provide insight into how people process information, make decisions, and take action. BIAS-NG partners with state and local agencies to identify a challenge to address, investigate its possible causes, design an intervention informed by behavioral science to address the causes, and test the efficacy and cost efficiency of the intervention relative to status-quo service delivery. Monroe County worked with BIAS-NG to use insights from behavioral science to design and test interventions to improve attendance at meetings and activities in its cash assistance programs. This report describes the experiences of participants before the interventions, the steps of developing interventions informed by behavioral science, and the implementation and evaluation of those interventions.

The TANF and Safety Net Experience Before BIAS-NG

To gain and maintain access to Monroe County’s TANF and Safety Net programs—or, together, Monroe’s cash assistance programs—participants must complete a sequence of steps aligned with federal and state guidelines and administered by the county.³ While this report documents the specific experiences of participants and staff members in Monroe

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1. During the study period, New York generally applied two gross-income tests to determine eligibility for both TANF and Safety Net assistance. Household gross income could be up to 185 percent of the applicable “standard of need” set by the state, and most households had to also be at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty guideline. For more details see Schantz et al. (2020).
 2. This estimate is based on 2016 data from the Monroe County Waiting Room Appointment Tracking System, New York State Welfare to Work Caseload Management System.
 3. New York State operates the Safety Net Assistance program, which provides cash assistance for eligible needy individuals and families who are not eligible for TANF. Like TANF, Safety Net recipients must establish eligibility and participate in qualifying work activities. See New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (n.d.) for more information.

County, those experiences are similar to ones found in other TANF and public programs across the country. In particular, the county’s expectation that program participants attend required meetings and orientations is common, as are the processes and practices the county uses to address absences at those required meetings and orientations.

Working with the BIAS-NG team, the county mapped how the program intends for participants to move through its required steps and paired the mapped process with data to reveal the points in the process where participants stopped attending. The steps in Monroe County’s cash assistance programs and the percentage of applicants originally approved for cash assistance who completed each step are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Phases of Participation in Cash Assistance Programs Before BIAS-NG (2016)



SOURCES: Monroe County Waiting Room Appointment Tracking System, New York State Welfare to Work Caseload Management System.

A person’s direct interaction with the program begins with an **application for cash assistance**. A person can submit a paper form, apply through an online portal, or apply over the phone. The initial application may trigger interactions with staff members to prove eligibility, and the applicant may be asked to provide documentation including proof of identity (state-issued identification), age (birth certificate), assets (bank records), residence (copy of a lease), and more. The worker responsible for a case has some flexibility to accept alternative documentation on a case-by-case basis.

Once a person applies for cash assistance, subsequent steps are required to obtain and retain full benefits. Though staff members report that cash benefits are not always stopped because of initial nonparticipation, sanctions and interruptions in benefit receipt are still possible.

While Monroe County processes the application, the applicant is **required to search for jobs independently** and provide evidence of job search activities. When the person has submitted

all materials and the county has approved the application, the county mails an approval letter explaining that person's benefits and describing a series of activities, including meetings, the person must engage in to avoid having the cash assistance sanctioned. The letter, reproduced as Appendix Figure A.1, is dense and printed in a small font.

After approving an applicant for cash assistance, the county **requires the participant to attend an Employment Assessment meeting**. Without consulting the participant, the county schedules the meeting for the first available appointment and notifies the participant of the meeting details in a mailed letter. The meeting date is set 10 or more days from when the letter is created. While the letter contains critical information such as the time and location of the meeting, the BIAS-NG team observed and heard from participants that, even after reading the letter, the purpose and necessity of the meeting was often not clear to them. The letter discusses the consequences of failing to comply but does not say how compliance might benefit the participant. For this initial Employment Assessment meeting appointment, the participant receives only the original, mailed letter, without additional outreach or reminders from the county. In a typical month in 2016 (when the BIAS-NG team examined program data), only about half of newly approved program participants required to attend this meeting attended within 30 days of when it was initially scheduled, as shown in the first blue box in Figure 1.

In the Employment Assessment meeting, the participant discusses goals with a staff member who identifies what program services the person must participate in to continue to receive benefits. County staff members **assign many participants to an unpaid internship** intended to build work skills, while some participants are assigned to other activities. Participants assigned to the internship continue to receive benefits while participating in it. Before beginning the internship, the participant is **required to attend an Internship Orientation**. The county notifies participants of the Internship Orientation meeting only by a letter that is handed to them at the end of the Employment Assessment.

As in the letter notifying participants of their scheduled Employment Assessments, the Internship Orientation letter emphasizes the consequence of not attending but does not explain what will happen in the orientation nor how it might benefit participants. The letter makes it clear that children are not allowed at the meeting, which introduces a challenge for the many participants who have children and limited access to reliable childcare. As before, the county sends no outreach or reminder after the initial Internship Orientation letter. In a typical month in 2016, about a third of applicants originally approved for cash assistance programs attended the Internship Orientation, as shown in the second blue box in Figure 1.

At the Internship Orientation, a presenter from the county stands at the front of the room and shares a slide presentation that emphasizes compliance with program rules and the consequences of noncompliance. Most of the slides refer to general job-seeking advice. Very few slides directly provide information about the internship to which the participant is being oriented. One slide lays out seven steps to successful participation, but the presentation shares few tools for achieving these steps and the presenter frequently did not follow the presentation as assigned. There are few opportunities for participants to interact with the presenter or ask questions, and when the study team observed this orientation,

many participants in the room looked disengaged; county staff members agreed with this assessment. During or after the presentation, each participant meets individually with a staff member to select an internship; for some participants, this meeting interrupted their experience of the presentation. Attendance at the internship is mandatory. Internship assignments begin soon after the orientation, often within one week, leaving participants little time to arrange childcare and meet other life obligations that might interfere with participation. Overall, about a fifth of approved applicants attended their assigned internships in a typical 2016 month, as shown in the third blue box in Figure 1.

The BIAS-NG team identified the following three main points in Monroe County's process where large numbers of participants stopped engaging: the Employment Assessment meeting, the Internship Orientation, and the work-based internship. Monroe County communicated that low participation in these activities was both challenging and frustrating for program staff members and prevented clients from receiving the work experience that the county believes is a pathway to paid employment and economic self-sufficiency. The county also recognized that its standard outreach practices created barriers to participation for clients who wanted to engage in the cash assistance program services. This recognition motivated the county's participation in BIAS-NG and focused its work with the project team.

Behavioral Bottlenecks

The county's practices related to engaging with clients, presenting information to them, and helping them follow through on their intentions shape participants' perceptions of the services and influence whether they engage and if so, how. The BIAS-NG team investigated the county's practices from participants' perspectives by observing participant-staff interactions, reviewing program materials such as the letters sent to participants, and interviewing staff members and participants to assess what barriers participants might face to moving through the program steps. Through these activities (collectively called **diagnosis research**) the BIAS-NG team developed evidence-grounded hypotheses about what practices and procedures might be reducing participants' willingness or ability to engage in program activities, particularly the required meetings and the internship.⁴ In behavioral science, these factors are known as **behavioral bottlenecks**. The remainder of this section describes the behavioral bottlenecks the BIAS-NG team hypothesized were associated with both the required meetings and the internship.

Meeting Outreach

Bottleneck 1: Information Overload

The BIAS-NG team observed that informational letters contained dense blocks of text. Multiple participants expressed in interviews that they found the letters difficult to understand. For example, participants found the presentation of requirements vague, and

4. An overview of the behavioral diagnosis and design process can be found in Richburg-Hayes, Anzelone, Dechausay, and Landers (2017).

one described the letter as “not written in English.” Several participants, thinking back to the letter, reported not understanding what it required of them.

Bottleneck 2: Confirmation Bias, Negative Affect, and Priming

Many participants in Monroe’s cash assistance programs had previously received cash assistance or used other public programs. Cash assistance participants, like anyone, may experience **confirmation bias**—the tendency to believe information that confirms prior perceptions and to challenge or disbelieve evidence that contradicts prior perceptions. In interviews, some participants stated that they did not receive support or did not feel respected in their previous experiences with the county. Additionally, many participants had not successfully navigated the cash assistance requirements previously. Such experiences may result in **negative affect**—feelings of emotional distress. Then, early in their current experience with the county, they received an outreach letter containing vague language. This language could evoke past experiences of feeling unsupported or disrespected or having not complied with requirements. In addition to confirming their expectations about the program, communications that alienate recipients may also lead participants to think of themselves in the context of negative past experiences. Participants who see themselves in a negative way may lose motivation or no longer believe they can engage with the program successfully and benefit from it. **Priming** is the idea that exposure to one stimulus can later alter behavior or thoughts. In this case, priming negative feelings by threatening sanctions without describing how attendance might help the participant could make participants reluctant to invest the effort needed to navigate the program.

Bottleneck 3: Intention-Action Gap

When people take the initiative to apply for the program, it is likely they do so with the intention to comply with program requirements in order to be approved for and continue to receive benefits. But under the status quo, many participants are not engaging with the program and taking required actions. This gap between participants’ intentions and actions may have several root causes. Participants may lack necessary information to take action. Some participants reported they did not receive letters mailed by the county; a participant wondered whether the letters were lost or were stolen because county mailings can contain bus passes. Without the information in the letter, a participant who wants to attend lacks the information to follow through. And participants who did receive the letter and understand the requirements might still experience challenges acting. Participants, like all people, sometimes forget obligations without reminders. Also, participants may have encountered practical barriers such as childcare and transportation issues, resulting in missed meetings.

Table 1 summarizes the findings of the initial investigation into reasons why participants did not engage with meetings required by Monroe County’s cash assistance programs as fully as the county would like. Each challenge observed during the diagnosis research is associated with a hypothesis about the behavioral roots of the challenge. Then, for each challenge, the table notes mechanisms hypothesized to change behavior and the elements of the intervention intended to activate those mechanisms.

Table 1. Barriers and Solutions | Initial Meetings

<p>For outreach related to the Employment Assessment and Internship Orientation meetings, the team observed these challenges...</p>	<p>And interpreted the behavioral bottleneck as...</p>	<p>And wondered whether the county might address the bottleneck with...</p>	<p>So the BIAS-NG team tested changing the outreach by...</p>
<p>The letters are dense, cite legal language, and include a lot of information in the same small font.</p>	<p>INFORMATION OVERLOAD Too many details can be overwhelming to process and make it difficult to identify and rank the most important decisions being presented.</p>	<p>Saliency</p>	<p>Highlighting important details for the client such as <i>when</i>, <i>why</i>, and <i>where</i> by prominently displaying the appointment purpose, date, time, and location.</p>
		<p>Simplification</p>	<p>Using plain language to make the content as easy as possible to understand, including a high-level overview of the full process.</p>
<p>The letters focus on consequences of not attending the meeting without detailing the appointment’s purpose, triggering people to see themselves in a category of people who do not succeed in programs.</p>	<p>CONFIRMATION BIAS, NEGATIVE AFFECT, AND PRIMING Feelings of emotional distress from previous experiences with the county and services may cause participants to focus on information that confirms prior perceptions of the agency. That information may also condition participants to think negatively about themselves and expect treatment consistent with that negative self-image.</p>	<p>Personalization</p>	<p>Adding a friendly introduction from a staff person, even if that staff member will not be the case manager, to humanize the process and signal the interaction will be respectful and positive.</p>
		<p>Reciprocity</p>	<p>Sending a magnet with the county’s logo and a space to put the appointment date and time, as a gift from the county and an indication that the county expects the person to attend. Giving a gift tends to incline people to respond as a result.</p>
		<p>Positive identity priming and emphasis on gains</p>	<p>Explaining potential benefits of the meetings and associate meetings with positive future states.</p>
		<p>Positive social influence</p>	<p>Noting positive experiences of other people in similar circumstances.</p>

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

For outreach related to the Employment Assessment and Internship Orientation meetings, the team observed these challenges...	And interpreted the behavioral bottleneck as...	And wondered whether the county might address the bottleneck with...	So the BIAS-NG team tested changing the outreach by...
<p>Clients were sent only one letter to advise them of an important appointment. All the burden of planning to attend and following through on that intention fell on the participant. Participants, like all people, sometimes forget obligations without reminders.</p>	<p>INTENTION-ACTION GAP People can plan to do something and then not actually follow through with their plan.</p>	Multiple modalities	<p>Presenting information in different ways, for example, text messages and letters and magnets.</p>
		Reminders	<p>Providing timely reminders such as text messages and accessible cues such as the magnets.</p>
		Planning prompts	<p>Outlining steps to prompt clients to anticipate appointment needs—such as determining how they will handle transportation and childcare—that many clients cited as hurdles to attendance.</p>

Internship Orientation

Bottleneck 1: Negative Identity Priming

The Internship Orientation presentation contained many implicit and explicit signals that the county expected participants to struggle getting through both the orientation and the internship. An initial orientation slide presented seven agenda items, the first three of which could be construed as increasingly disheartening: “*Why Am I Here?*,” “*How Long Will I Be Here?*,” and “*Do I Have To Stay Here The Entire Time?*” Overall, the orientation spent significant time focused on program requirements and compliance. Presenters gave several examples of what participants should *not* do, such as missing the first day or being absent later in the process, communicating that the county had low expectations for participants’ engagement. Together, these slides could prime participants to think about their negatively stereotyped identities, leading them to lower their own expectations of success in line with the stereotype and making them less motivated to take the required actions.

Bottleneck 2: Negative Social Influence

Aspects of the orientation environment made it feel like client inattention to and low engagement in the orientation were common and acceptable. The staff member conducting the orientation generally spoke at participants without inviting consistent dialogue. During the presentation, other staff members led participants out of the orientation for one-on-one

interviews, leaving the impression that the content being covered was not important. Some clients were observed putting their heads down during much of the orientation. Seeing that others in the room were not engaged and participating can create an environment where a participant—having a tendency, as most people do, toward conformity with the perceived actions of peers—might feel more license, or even an expectation, to do the same.

Bottleneck 3: Information Overload

The orientation presented a great deal of information. It began with nine steps related to completing paperwork, listening to a presentation, and selecting an internship to attend. Very few slides focused on the internship. The orientation presentation also devoted time to discussing job skills and longer-term personal goals. When presented with many ideas, it can be overwhelming for people to identify actions they need to take in the short term.

Table 2 summarizes the findings of the initial investigation into reasons why participants did not engage with the Internship Orientation fully.

These behavioral bottlenecks underscore the role Monroe County’s processes and procedures play in defining the environment in which participants experience the program and make decisions about whether to engage with it, and if so, how.

Two Interventions to Promote Attendance

To address the bottlenecks detailed in Tables 1 and 2 and promote greater participant engagement, the BIAS-NG team worked with the county to reimagine the early-stage processes and materials it used to interact with cash assistance program participants. The team designed two interventions. In both interventions, the new approach operates within existing policies and rules and can be implemented with the same staff and systems used before BIAS-NG. Yet even with the relative “light lift” these interventions require, the interventions present participants with notably different experiences at several steps in the process than they would receive under the status quo.

Intervention One: Outreach Informed by Behavioral Science

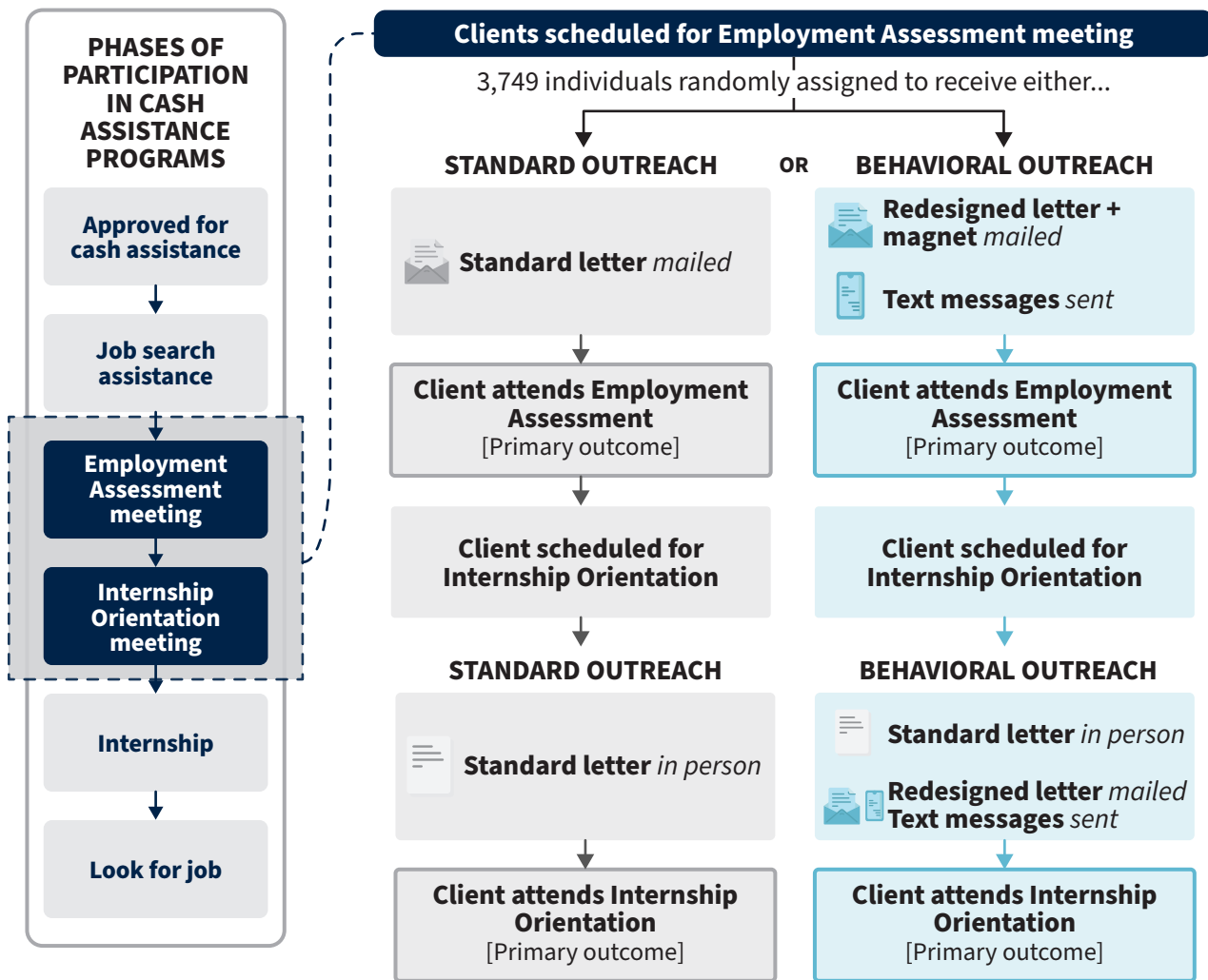
The first intervention aims to boost attendance at the Employment Assessment and Internship Orientation meetings and applies a variety of evidence-informed approaches to increase a participant’s information about the meetings, foster motivation to attend, and support intention to follow through. Figure 2 shows how the Behavioral Outreach (the outreach informed by behavioral science) differed from the Standard Outreach.

Under the Standard Outreach process, when a person is scheduled for an Employment Assessment, the only notification that person receives is a dense letter. The first intervention redesigned that letter and added additional forms of outreach, including a reminder magnet

Table 2. Barriers and Solutions | Internship Orientation

During the standard Internship Orientation, the team observed these challenges...	And interpreted the behavioral bottleneck as...	And wondered whether the county might address the bottleneck with...	So the BIAS-NG team tested changing the orientation by...
<p>The orientation had environmental cues that the orientation was not an important or positive experience.</p>	<p>NEGATIVE IDENTITY PRIMING When people are induced to think about their negatively stereotyped identities, it leads them to lower their own expectations of success in line with the stereotype and makes them less motivated to take the required actions.</p>	<p>Peer support</p>	<p>Having staff members ask clients to share experiences and strategies in order to engage participants, especially ones who have been in similar activities before.</p>
	<p>NEGATIVE SOCIAL INFLUENCE People assume the actions of others in an attempt to reflect correct behavior for a given situation.</p>	<p>Personalization</p>	<p>Having staff members tailor the orientation to the needs and interests of the participants in the room. The revised orientation created a space for participants to share their past experiences with this and similar programs, and to identify challenges they faced in the past. Staff members and participants then brainstormed approaches to successful participation.</p>
<p>The orientation focused on compliance and general career advice, with very few slides centering on the internship.</p>		<p>INFORMATION OVERLOAD Too many details can be overwhelming to process and make it difficult to focus on the major decisions being presented or actions being requested.</p>	<p>Positive social influence</p>
	<p>Planning prompts</p>		<p>Highlighting important information related to the immediate next step, using prompts to anticipate and troubleshoot challenges from childcare and transportation to illness and workplace conflict.</p>

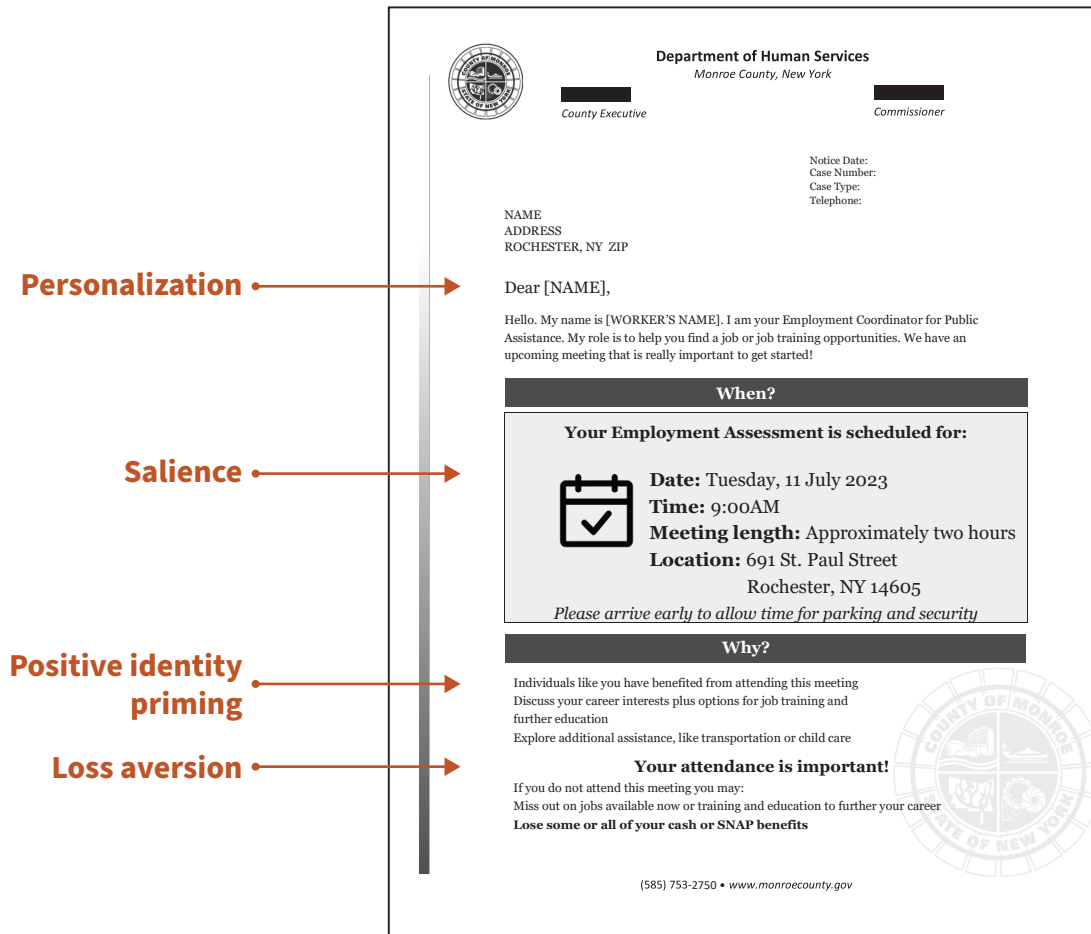
Figure 2. Behavioral Outreach Design and Test



and text messages. A portion of the revised letter is shown in Figure 3.⁵ The revised letter aimed to personalize and humanize the experience of initiating benefit receipt and engaging with program activities. It also emphasized important information participants might need to support their decision to attend the meeting. Specifically, the letter highlighted that other program participants benefited from attending, along with the possible positive outcomes of attendance and the negative consequences of nonattendance. The letter included a planning tool to help prompt the person to take important steps toward attendance, such as arranging transportation.

5. See Appendix A for the full revised and standard letters, text message, and magnet materials.

Figure 3. Redesigned Employment Assessment Letter



NOTE: During the 2018-2019 study period, clients randomly assigned to the Behavioral Outreach group received this redesigned letter.

Along with the letter, the county mailed participants a magnet with the friendly phrase, “We’re expecting you,” which included a space to record the appointment dates and times. A magnet made it possible for participants to put the appointment letter in a visible place, such as the refrigerator, to help them remember it. Finally, each participant with a cell phone number on file was sent two text message reminders for the Employment Assessment. The first text message was sent one week before the meeting and the second text was sent two days before the meeting.⁶ The materials and texts were intended to shift some of the cognitive burden of recalling the meeting from participants to the program.

About half of program participants who attend their Employment Assessment are assigned to the unpaid internship and scheduled for an Internship Orientation meeting. In both

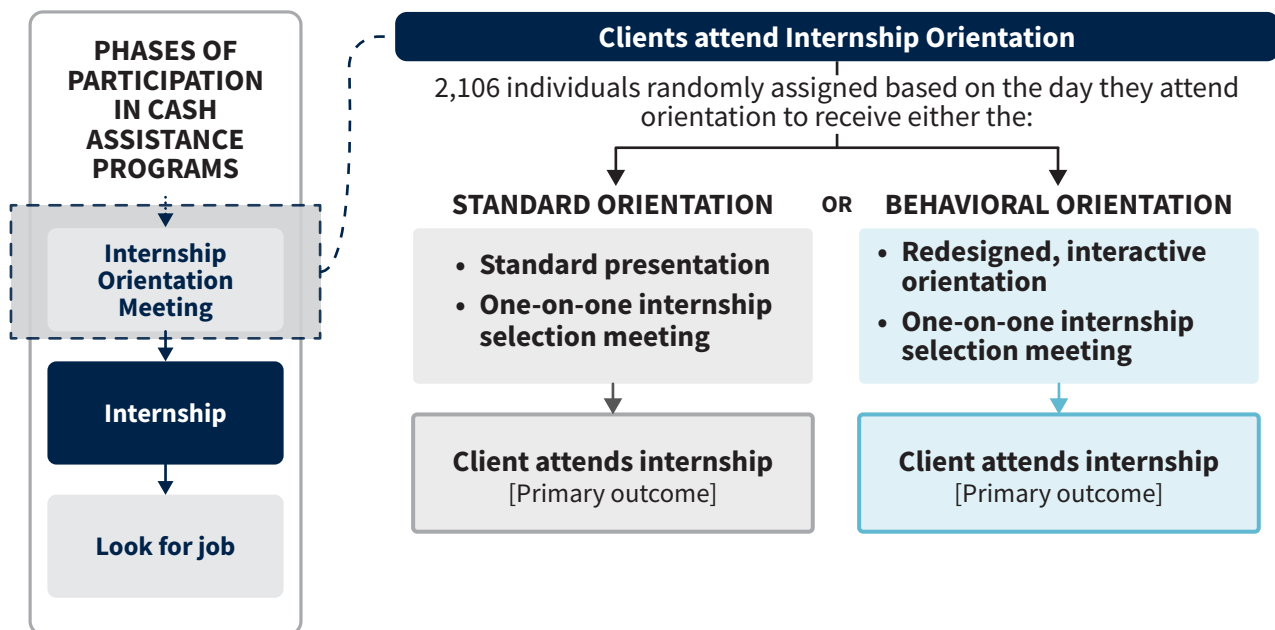
6. When appointments were scheduled or rescheduled to occur within one week, one or both of those text messages were skipped. This situation arose for a minority of clients.

the Standard and Behavioral Outreach for the Internship Orientation, the county notified participants of that required meeting verbally and by handing them an appointment letter during the Employment Assessment meeting. In the Behavioral Outreach for the Internship Orientation, participants were mailed an additional, redesigned appointment letter and reminded of their scheduled Internship Orientation with two text messages sent one week and two days before the Internship Orientation, respectively.⁷

Intervention 2: Internship Orientation Informed by Behavioral Science

The second intervention redesigned the interaction between clients attending the Internship Orientation and the staff member delivering the presentation. This intervention sought to shift the context in which participants chose to engage in subsequent program activities by changing staff behavior during the orientation. The revised orientation sought to evoke positive identity associations and positive social influence for participants while also showing that peers in the room had both practical knowledge derived from lived experience and strategies for success when engaging with services. Whereas before BIAS-NG, the orientation was largely staff members talking at participants, the Behavioral Orientation (the revised orientation experience informed by behavioral science) was intended to spark conversation among participants and between participants and staff members. Figure 4 shows the contrast between the Standard Orientation and Behavioral Orientation.

Figure 4. Behavioral Orientation Design



7. Again, when appointments were scheduled or rescheduled to occur within one week, one or both of those text messages were skipped. This situation arose for a minority of clients.

Where the Standard Orientation started with a focus on program rules and the consequences of nonattendance, the Behavioral Orientation began by creating space for participants to share their past experiences with this and similar programs, to identify challenges they faced in the past, and to brainstorm approaches to successful participation. Presenters solicited client experiences at the beginning of the session and throughout the presentation. In addressing common challenges, the facilitator highlighted the resources available to help. The group reviewed specific, common scenarios, including finding childcare or transportation and problems with coworkers or supervisors, and then shared tips and collectively planned how to succeed when faced with each challenge. The presentation ended with quotes and photos sharing the successes past clients realized after successfully engaging with their unpaid internships. Throughout the orientation, staff members encouraged participants to engage.

Implementing the Interventions

These two interventions were designed to be used consistently and accurately by staff members. These tests were not done in a lab; they were led by busy Monroe County social service staff members with real clients for over a year. The BIAS-NG team conducted implementation research, including interviewing clients and staff members, conducting observations, and reviewing administrative data. Overall, county staff members said that they found the materials easy to use and that they worked well within existing systems, policies, and practices.

A central component of implementing the interventions was ensuring that only those randomly assigned to receive the intervention did receive it, while the remaining participants received standard services. As planned, county staff members only sent text messages and redesigned mailings to the clients randomly assigned to the Behavioral Outreach group. However—as expected based on information shared by the staff before the intervention—about 13 percent of participants did not have a phone number on file with the county and could not be sent texts. Another 12 percent of participants in the Behavioral Outreach group were not sent text messages due to administrative error. In total, a quarter of the clients assigned to receive text messages were not sent them. This fact might limit the potential impact of the intervention, because many in the Behavioral Outreach group did not receive all the intervention’s components.

To test the Behavioral Orientation, the BIAS-NG team randomized the days when staff members would present the Standard Orientation or the Behavioral Orientation and developed a calendar for them to follow (see Box 1). Staff members adhered to the calendar, but generally chose to have the same two people cofacilitate the orientation on Behavioral Orientation days. A third staff member usually delivered the Standard Orientation alone on Standard Orientation days. Having two presenters on Behavioral Orientation days created a different dynamic from the solo presenter on Standard Orientation days—a difference that this test did not isolate. Staff members felt that a benefit of having two people facilitate orientations was that one presenter could address an individual client issue while the other presenter could continue the orientation with the rest of the group.

Box 1. Randomization for Test 2

Although Test 1 and Test 2 were conducted in the same program, the two tests assess overlapping, but analytically separate populations. The people who participated in Test 2 include a mix of those in the Standard and Behavioral Outreach groups in Test 1 and some people who were not in Test 1. The study rerandomized participants at the start of Test 2 based on the day they attended the Internship Orientation. A person in the Behavioral Outreach group in Test 1 had an equal probability of attending on a Behavioral Orientation day or a Standard Orientation day, making Test 2 independent of Test 1.

The people randomly assigned in Test 2 differ from those randomized in Test 1 with respect to both observed and unobserved characteristics. One can reasonably infer, for instance, that because all Test 2 participants successfully attended both meetings assessed in Test 1, they may be more motivated and engaged, on average, than the typical Test 1 participant. Crucially, though, this motivation and other unobservable characteristics of participants, along with all measured observable characteristics, are balanced between the two groups in Test 2, as a result of random assignment.

Future research could explore systematically how the number of facilitators affects participants' experience in the orientation.

Implementation research found that orientation presentations varied over time, and some of the Standard Orientations ultimately incorporated elements designed specifically for the Behavioral Orientation, such as asking clients about past experiences. Staff members expressed that they incorporated these elements into the Standard Orientation because they preferred them. The incorporation of elements of the Behavioral Orientation into the Standard Orientation reduces the contrast between what the Standard Orientation and Behavioral Orientation groups experienced and could reduce the observed effect of the Behavioral Orientation.

Project staff observations are consistent with the Behavioral Orientation stimulating more engagement among clients than the Standard Orientation. In 36 observations of orientations, clients were observed responding differently to the Behavioral Orientation than they did to the Standard Orientation. During the Behavioral Orientation, staff prompting led more clients to ask or answer questions than was the case during the Standard Orientation. On average, about one in two clients spoke during the Behavioral Orientation, compared with fewer than one in three speaking during the Standard Orientation.

Intervention Costs

The BIAS-NG team interviewed county staff members to determine the additional cost of materials and staff time associated with both interventions. As detailed below, the costs of the interventions were relatively modest compared with standard practice. Because the county already mailed outreach letters notifying clients of their upcoming Employment Assessments, the additional cost associated with implementing the full Behavioral Outreach package was minimal, at an estimated \$1.69 per participant. Figure 5 shows the per-client cost of the components of the Behavioral Outreach. The added cost of the Behavioral Orientation was \$1.85 per client, including the second presenter’s time. Estimated costs do not include one-time start-up costs that organizations might incur, such as materials design and approval or setting up the contract with a text message vendor. Any costs incurred by participants in receiving text messages were not assessed and are not included in the estimated program costs.

Figure 5. Components of the Behavioral Outreach and Cost Per Client



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on information provided by Monroe County staff members.

Testing the New Designs

The BIAS-NG team and Monroe County designed and conducted two randomized controlled trials to assess the effects of the interventions on participants’ behaviors and outcomes. Though the tests operated in the same program and at the same time, they were designed to be independent of one another.

Test 1: Behavioral Outreach for the Employment Assessment and Internship Orientation

The first intervention focused on attendance at the first meetings in the program sequence and, in particular, on the initially scheduled Employment Assessment and Internship Orientation. Participants were randomly assigned to receive either Standard or Behavioral Outreach when they were scheduled for an initial Employment Assessment meeting. From September 2018 to November 2019, 3,749 cash assistance clients were randomly assigned to

one of the two groups. Analysis of demographic data collected before random assignment showed that the groups were similar, indicating the random assignment process worked as intended. Thus, the only systematic difference between the groups was exposure to the Behavioral Outreach, and any difference in outcomes between the groups was caused by the intervention.⁸ As noted earlier, Figure 2 highlights the contrast between the Standard and Behavioral Outreach materials and strategies and highlights the differences in outcomes one might expect if the intervention worked as intended.

Importantly, the design for Test 1 cannot estimate the unique contribution of each outreach element of the intervention to the observed impact. As Figure 2 illustrates, the outreach for the Employment Assessment and for the Internship Orientation was delivered as one, continuous experience. Participants assigned to the Behavioral Outreach group received Behavioral Outreach for both the Employment Assessment and the Internship Orientation (if they were assigned to an internship during the Employment Assessment), while participants assigned to the Standard Outreach group received Standard Outreach for both the Employment Assessment and the Internship Orientation (if they were assigned to an internship). Once a participant attended (or did not attend) the Internship Orientation, the first test was complete.

The analysis for Test 1 takes into account all participants who applied for cash assistance and were randomly assigned, which occurred at the point their Employment Assessment was scheduled. Some participants—about 40 percent in both the Behavioral and Standard Outreach groups—attended the Employment Assessment (and received outreach about the Employment Assessment) but were subsequently assigned to activities other than the unpaid internship (and therefore did not need to attend the Internship Orientation and did not receive any outreach about the Internship Orientation).⁹ These participants remained in the analysis for all outcomes of the first intervention (attendance at both the Employment Assessment and Internship Orientation) and are recorded as not attending the Internship Orientation. Retaining all randomly assigned participants is methodologically correct but suppresses the observed impact of the outreach on attendance, since 40 percent of the sample did not receive that component of the intervention and are automatically recorded as not participating in the Internship Orientation.

Although retaining all randomly assigned participants (even those who are not assigned to the activity of interest) may suppress the observed impact of the intervention, *excluding* participants who were not assigned internships from the analysis might pose the opposite problem—it might overestimate the effects of the intervention. By only assessing outcomes on the individuals who are progressing through a set of requirements in the desired way and excluding those who are not progressing through those same requirements for any reason,

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8. The intake period for the study was extended from the anticipated 8 months to 13 months because the TANF caseloads in Monroe County in 2018 and 2019 were lower than predicted based on previous periods. The longer test period and lower caseloads did not affect the delivery of the intervention to clients. The low rate of intake also prompted the research team to include Safety Net program participants in the main sample for the study, rather than analyzing them separately.
 9. All randomly assigned participants were included in the analysis for the Internship Orientation attendance measures, even if they did not attend the Employment Assessment or were not assigned to the internship.

the analysis may wind up conflating the effect of the intervention with characteristics of participants who, on their own, may be more motivated to participate, or who may have fewer barriers to doing so.

Test 2: Behavioral Internship Orientation

The second intervention was evaluated using a separate and independent test. When participants attended the Internship Orientation, they were rerandomized to receive either the Behavioral Orientation or the Standard Orientation, to assess the effect of the Behavioral Orientation on subsequent internship attendance.

Because participants attended the meeting in groups, it was not possible to randomly assign each individual to an orientation experience. Instead, as discussed above, the BIAS-NG team developed a calendar with each day randomly assigned to host either the Standard or Behavioral Orientation. The BIAS-NG team determined that this random assignment strategy was sound because there is little risk that the type of orientation planned for a given day could have affected whether a person showed up to the orientation and became a participant in Test 2. The county did not schedule participants to attend the Internship Orientation based on any participant characteristics, and the staff members scheduling the meetings were not aware of the random assignment calendar. Additionally, participants did not know before the orientation whether attending on their assigned day would result in them receiving the Standard or Behavioral Orientation.

In total, 2,106 individuals attended orientations on the days that were randomly assigned from September 2018 to November 2019.¹⁰ An analysis of participant characteristics collected before random assignment showed that the random assignment scheme for Test 2 was successful in creating similar groups, indicating that random assignment worked as intended. Importantly, those assigned to the Standard and Behavioral Outreach in Test 1 were equally represented in the Standard and Behavioral Orientation groups in Test 2.¹¹

For both tests, the research team developed and published all plans for handling and analyzing data before examining the data.¹² Publishing study plans helps ensure that researchers do not make choices during their analyses that might increase or reduce the likelihood of finding an impact. The findings below include all participants randomly assigned in the two tests and result from analyses that employ methods specified before the start of the impact analysis.

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10. As above, fewer people were assigned orientations in this period than in previous years. This reduction reflects declining TANF caseloads in the county, consistent with national trends in the period.
 11. Some Test 2 participants had attended the Employment Assessment meeting before the start of Test 1 and, as a result, were not part of the group randomly assigned for Test 1. This fact did not affect the findings for Test 2, as the two tests are independent.
 12. The study registry can be found at American Economic Association (2020). The direct link to the registry is <https://www.socialscienceregistry.org/trials/5451>.

Results

Each intervention increased participation in some required meeting or activities, as explained in more detail below.¹³

Test 1 Results: Behavioral Outreach for the Employment Assessment and Internship Orientation

The primary goal of the Behavioral Outreach intervention was to improve attendance at the Employment Assessment and Internship Orientation.

Effect of Behavioral Outreach on Attending the Initially Scheduled Employment Assessment

As shown in Figure 6, participants in the Behavioral Outreach group were 5 percentage points more likely than those in the Standard Outreach group to attend their Employment Assessment meeting at the time they were initially scheduled to attend it (that is, their “initially scheduled Employment Assessment”).

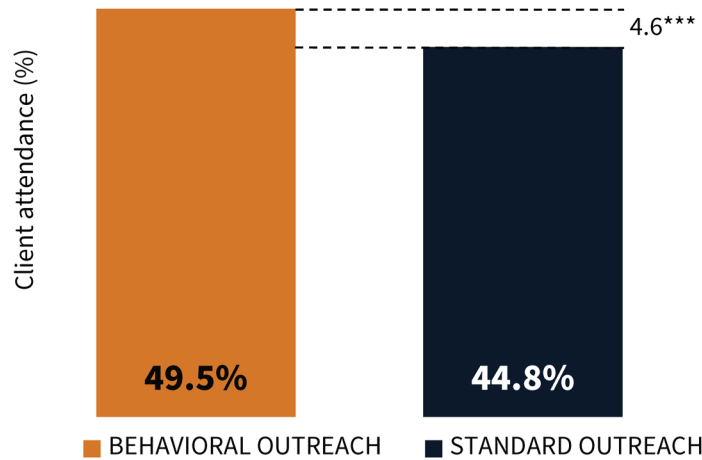
The figure shows that the outreach strategies informed by behavioral science had their intended effect of boosting attendance at the initially scheduled Employment Assessment meeting. There are several benefits of participants attending their initially scheduled meetings. Staff members save time they would otherwise use to locate and reschedule nonattendees. For participants, attending the initially scheduled avoids negative consequences of noncompliance with program requirements. Additionally, attending the meeting might give participants a feeling of *endowed progress* for having successfully navigated this first program requirement, which could strengthen their connection to the program and boost their confidence in their own abilities.¹⁴

Effect of Behavioral Outreach on Attending Any Employment Assessment

Attendance at the initially scheduled Employment Assessment meeting is not the end of the story for participants, as clients who did not attend that initial meeting were rescheduled for a later one. It would be tempting to infer that attending the initially scheduled Employment Assessment at a higher rate translates into more of the Behavioral Outreach Group attending that meeting at any time, or at least translates into attending an Employment Assessment

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13. See Appendix B for the complete results of preregistered primary and secondary outcomes. In addition to these outcomes, the BIAS-NG team also conducted sensitivity analyses. Sensitivity analyses for Test 1 compared the results from the full Test 1 sample with outcomes among the subset of individuals who (1) had a phone number in the system so that text messages could be sent to them; (2) were randomly assigned to the Test 2 sample before their random assignment into Test 1; (3) were in the TANF program; and (4) were in the Safety Net program. Sensitivity analyses for Test 2 compared the results from the full Test 2 sample with outcomes among the subset of individuals who (1) were also in the Test 1 sample; (2) were in the TANF program; and (3) were in the Safety Net program. The results of all the sensitivity analyses were consistent with the main outcomes shown in Appendix B.
 14. Endowed progress refers to the phenomenon wherein a person who perceives progress toward a goal is stimulated toward feeling greater commitment and attachment to that goal, thereby stimulating continued effort.

Figure 6. Attendance at the Initially Scheduled Employment Assessment



SOURCES: Monroe County Waiting Room Appointment Tracking System, New York State Welfare to Work Caseload Management System.

NOTES: Estimates are adjusted by the following characteristics: female, number of children in the household, language preference, whether the person owns a phone, race, applicant/recipient status, whether the person had repeated WEP in the past year, case type (TANF or Safety Net), EA meeting location, and age group (19-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45 and older). (EA refers to the Employment Assessment and WEP refers to the Internship Orientation in the report.)

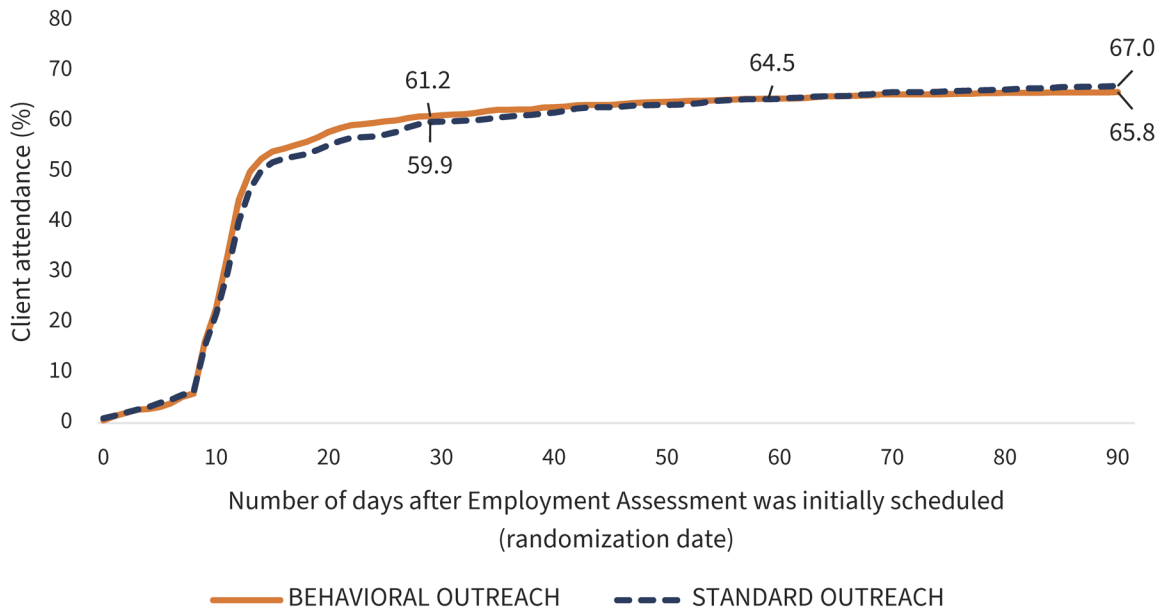
Total sample size = 3,749, Behavioral Outreach group = 1,866, Standard Outreach group = 1,883.

Statistical significance levels for differences are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

faster on average, but that is not the case. As shown in Figure 7, when one looks at each day after random assignment, one observes that similar proportions of the Behavioral Outreach group and the Standard Outreach group have successfully attended a meeting by that day.

There are several reasons why attending the initially scheduled meeting does not, on average, decrease the time elapsed before people attend an Employment Assessment. If participants do not attend the initially scheduled Employment Assessment, county staff members undertake personalized outreach to reschedule or participants may call on their own to reschedule. In addition, the time from the day the Employment Assessment is scheduled to the date of the initially scheduled Employment Assessment can vary by participant. For example, participant A may be scheduled to attend an Employment Assessment one month later and participant B may be scheduled to attend an Employment Assessment one week later. As a result, participant A, who successfully attends the initially scheduled Employment Assessment, may actually attend the assessment *later* than participant B, who missed the initially scheduled assessment and instead attended a make-up assessment, because participant A's initially scheduled Employment Assessment was set for a later date than participant B's make-up assessment.

Figure 7. Cumulative Attendance Rate at Any Employment Assessment Over Time



SOURCES: Monroe County Waiting Room Appointment Tracking System, New York State Welfare to Work Caseload Management System.

NOTES: Estimates are adjusted by the following characteristics: female, number of children in the household, language preference, whether the person owns a phone, race, applicant/recipient status, whether the person had repeated WEP in the past year, case type (TANF or Safety Net), EA meeting location, and age group (19-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45 and older). (EA refers to the Employment Assessment and WEP refers to the Internship Orientation in the report.)

Total sample size = 3,749, Behavioral Outreach group = 1,866, Standard Outreach group = 1,883.

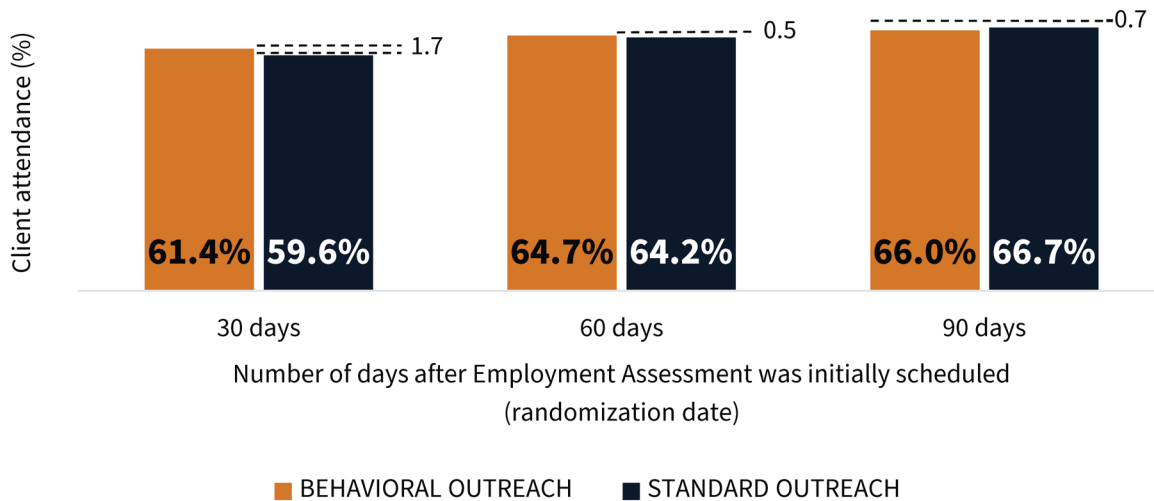
Statistical significance levels for differences are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Results indicate that while the Behavioral Outreach got more people to attend their initially scheduled meetings, there was no impact on meeting attendance within the time frames the BIAS-NG team and Monroe County jointly defined as being programmatically relevant (30, 60, and 90 days after the initially scheduled meeting date). Figure 8 shows the proportion of clients in each group who had attended the Employment Assessment within 30, 60, and 90 days after it was initially scheduled. At those milestones, there are minimal differences in attendance between the Behavioral and Standard Outreach groups.

These findings suggest that the success of the intervention in increasing attendance at the initially scheduled Employment Assessment does not translate into either faster completion of this required step or a greater overall rate of participation in the Employment Assessment over a longer time horizon.¹⁵

15. As mentioned above, if clients do not attend a required meeting, they may incur sanctions such as a loss of cash assistance. Overall, no significant effect on incurring program sanctions was observed in Test 1. Among those in the Safety Net program and those scheduled for the Employment Assessment for the second time in a year, clients in the Behavioral Outreach group were significantly less likely to incur sanctions than those randomly assigned to the Standard Outreach group. Because sanctions are generally rare for participants in these programs (occurring in about 2 percent of cases during the study period), the results are of minimal practical significance.

Figure 8. Client Attendance Rates at the Employment Assessment



SOURCES: Monroe County Waiting Room Appointment Tracking System, New York State Welfare to Work Caseload Management System.

NOTES: Estimates are adjusted by the following characteristics: female, number of children in the household, language preference, whether the person owns a phone, race, applicant/recipient status, whether the person had repeated WEP in the past year, case type (TANF or Safety Net), EA meeting location, and age group (19-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45 and older). (EA refers to the Employment Assessment and WEP refers to the Internship Orientation in the report.)

Total sample size = 3,749, Behavioral Outreach group = 1,866, Standard Outreach group = 1,883.

Statistical significance levels for differences are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

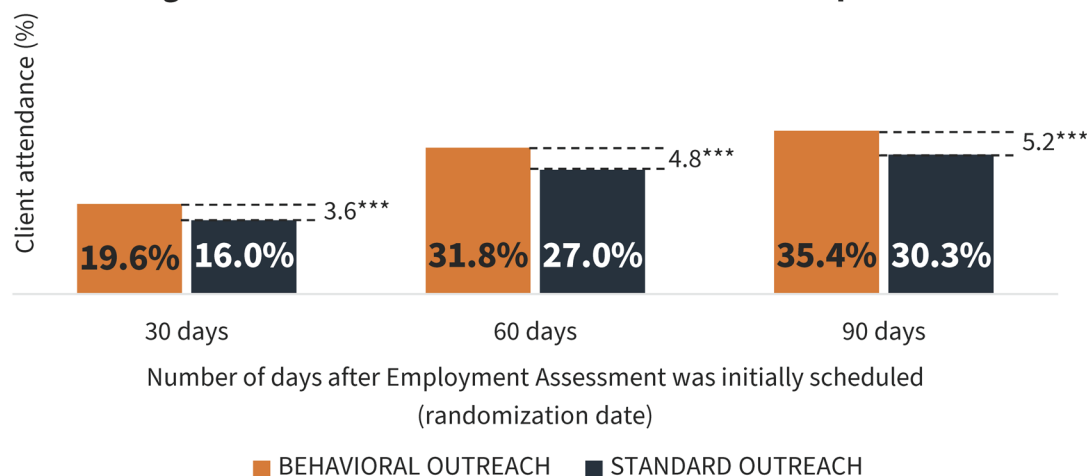
Effect of Behavioral Outreach on Internship Orientation Attendance

During the study period, after the initial Employment Assessment meeting, roughly 60 percent of participants who attended that meeting were assigned to an Internship Orientation meeting. Figure 2 shows the contrast between the experiences of those in the Behavioral and Standard Outreach groups. As Figure 2 indicates, each participant in the Behavioral Outreach group assigned to an Internship Orientation received letters and text message reminders informed by behavioral science in addition to the standard letter, while participants in the Standard Outreach group received only the standard letter.

As shown in Figure 9, those assigned to receive Behavioral Outreach attended the Internship Orientation at a higher rate relative to the Standard Outreach group at 30, 60, and 90 days after their initial meeting (the Employment Assessment) was scheduled. Unlike at the Employment Assessment, differences between the groups do not diminish over longer time horizons. At 90 days after random assignment, about 5 percentage points more of those in the Behavioral Outreach group attended the Internship Orientation than those in the Standard Outreach group (35 percent compared with 30 percent).

As noted above, many Behavioral and Standard Outreach group members were not sent outreach for the Internship Orientation (either because they did not attend the Employment Assessment, or they did attend the Employment Assessment but were not assigned to an internship) but are nonetheless included in the analysis and counted as not attending an Internship Orientation. This fact is important because these participants were not exposed

Figure 9. Client Attendance Rates at the Internship Orientation



SOURCES: Monroe County Waiting Room Appointment Tracking System, New York State Welfare to Work Caseload Management System.

NOTES: Estimates are adjusted by the following characteristics: female, number of children in the household, language preference, whether the person owns a phone, race, applicant/recipient status, whether the person had repeated WEP in the past year, case type (TANF or Safety Net), EA meeting location, and age group (19-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45 and older). (EA refers to the Employment Assessment and WEP refers to the Internship Orientation in the report.)

Total sample size = 3,749, Behavioral Outreach group = 1,866, Standard Outreach group = 1,883.

Statistical significance levels for differences are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

to the second phase of the intervention. The overall effect observed on attendance at the Internship Orientation, then, reflects an effect only among the subgroup of participants who attended an Employment Assessment and were assigned to participate in an Internship Orientation. The positive and statistically significant overall finding suggests that those exposed to the intervention were quite affected by it.

Sometimes in interventions, differences observed in an early phase of the process are also observed later and are overinterpreted as a unique effect on the later period; that is not the case in this study. Because the Behavioral Outreach and Standard Outreach groups attended the Employment Assessment at similar rates as of 30, 60, and 90 days, differences in attendance at the Internship Orientation are unlikely to reflect an earlier gap from attendance at the first meeting persisting over time.

Because those assigned to Behavioral Outreach were encouraged to attend both meetings, it cannot be determined whether the Behavioral Outreach for the Internship Orientation was more effective than the Behavioral Outreach for the Employment Assessment. Rather, the appropriate interpretation of these findings is that the full complement of Behavioral Outreach materials focused on both meetings produced higher participation in the Internship Orientation than did the Standard Outreach materials. Further research could explore the relative contribution of each strategy.¹⁶

16. This future work could rerandomize after the Employment Assessment to better assess the impact of Behavioral Outreach for the Internship Orientation.

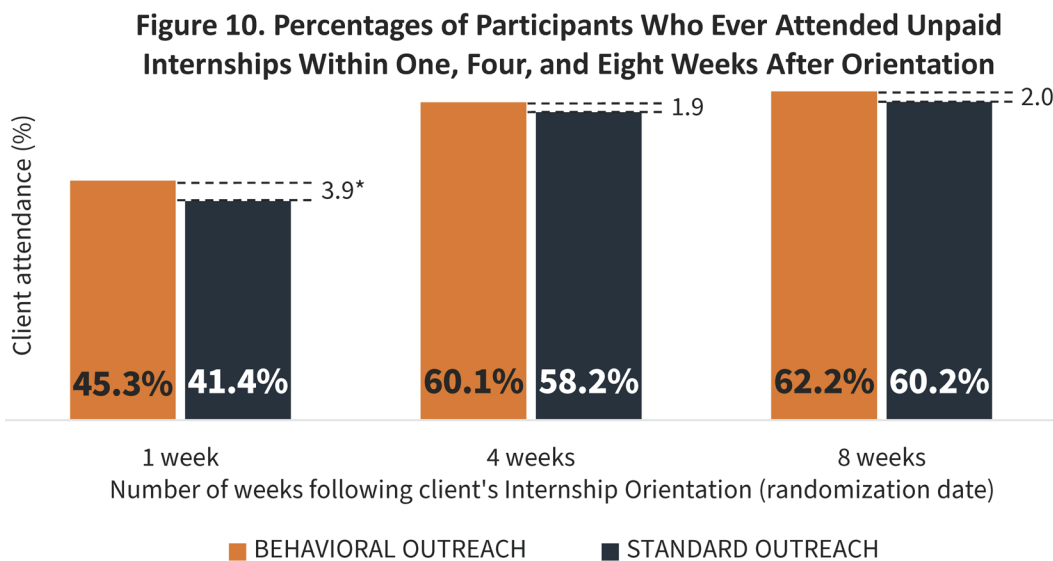
Monroe County believes that the services that TANF recipients unlock by attending the Employment Assessment and Internship Orientation, such as the skills and employer connections that accrue from the internship, are valuable to them. The Behavioral Outreach materials helped more participants stay on track to receive those services than did the Standard Outreach materials.

Test 2 Results: Behavioral Orientation

When participants attended the Internship Orientation, the day of their attendance determined whether they experienced the Standard Orientation or the Behavioral Orientation. Then, following the orientation under both conditions, each participant met individually with a staff member and received an unpaid internship assignment. Internships typically begin within one week of the orientation, but start times vary.

Effects of Behavioral Orientation on Internship Attendance

The results in Figure 10 show the proportion of Internship Orientation attendees who ever attended their internships within one, four, and eight weeks of the orientation. Those who attended Behavioral Orientation days were almost 4 percentage points more likely to attend their assigned internships within one week than those who attended Standard Orientation days.



SOURCES: Monroe County Waiting Room Appointment Tracking System, New York State Welfare to Work Caseload Management System.

NOTES: Estimates are adjusted by the following characteristics: female, number of children in the household, race, case type (TANF or Safety Net), age group (19-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45 and older), and whether the person had repeated WEP in the past year. (WEP refers to the Internship Orientation in the report.)

Total sample size = 2,106, Behavioral Orientation group = 1,043, Standard Orientation group = 1,063.

Statistical significance levels for differences are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

However, group differences in ever attending the internship diminished over time, and no difference in attendance was observed four or eight weeks after orientation. The diminishing difference in attendance rates between the groups may be partially explained by the fact that participants in both groups who did not initially attend their assigned internships received additional outreach from the county to emphasize the consequences of not attending, including the potential loss of benefits.

The study did not investigate the effect of the intervention on the duration of participants' engagement in the unpaid internship. After they first attend their internships, participants leave for a variety of reasons, including finding paying employment. As a result, both short and long tenures in the internship could indicate that engagement led to successful outcomes.

Lessons

The interventions tested in Monroe County address problems that exist broadly in the human services: requirements and benefits that are unclear to participants, dense and legalistic communications, and meetings not centered on client needs. The fact that these low-cost interventions informed by behavioral science delivered measurable improvements in client engagement suggests that challenges like those diagnosed in Monroe County—which probably exist in jurisdictions around the country that follow a similar approach—can be addressed even without changing program rules or staffing models, or expending substantial additional resources. The effects of the two interventions on participation in required meetings and activities are similar in magnitude and direction to those typically reported in tests of interventions informed by behavioral science.¹⁷

The results confirm the continuing need to identify and reduce barriers participants face to engaging in services for which they are eligible. People applying for TANF and navigating its program requirements are often in very financially strained situations and experiencing a myriad of stresses associated with that strain that limit their time, attention, and resources.¹⁸ Densely worded communications and appointments that are scheduled without consulting participants are a high barrier for participants (or anyone) to overcome. Participants must invest time and effort into simply understanding what is required of them. They must also then rearrange their schedules and other obligations to meet at the assigned time, since it is unlikely they would be available at the scheduled time of an appointment they have not helped select. Many participants do meet program requirements, but at a cost of time and attention that might be spent elsewhere. It is notable that while the Behavioral Outreach group achieved higher attendance rates than the Standard Outreach group at the initially scheduled Employment Assessment, when those in both groups who did not attend the initial meeting received personal outreach and had some say in scheduling, the attendance rate of the Standard Outreach group came to match that of the Behavioral

17. DellaVigna and Linos (2022).

18. Derr, Hill, and Pavetti (2000); Dugan et al. (2020); Hendrix, Vogel-Ferguson, and Gringeri (2023); Perkins (2008).

Outreach group across the observation period. These results suggest that an agency that assumes an active role in helping participants to align actions with intentions might make it easier for participants to engage.

The pattern of findings in Test 1—where the intervention yielded improvement in some but not all outcomes—makes it difficult to precisely identify the mechanisms responsible for the results. That pattern may reflect the fact that a complex interplay of structural and behavioral factors ultimately affects meeting attendance. It is noteworthy that Test 1 resulted in a larger effect on attendance at the second meeting (the Internship Orientation), when participants are deeper into the program. This finding might suggest—though the test does not confirm—that interventions informed by behavioral science (such as reminders) are more effective for participants who already have some investment in and connection to program participation. In addition, it may also be that people who are able to progress to the Internship Orientation face fewer structural barriers to participation and can act more readily on the reminders and communication in the intervention. For example, the Employment Assessment is scheduled without consulting participants, and some participants may face structural barriers to attendance (for example, a lack of childcare) that limit their ability to attend, even with clear information. It is also difficult to untangle whether receiving a higher total number of reminders (encouraging attendance at the Employment Assessment and then the Internship Orientation) means that any one of the messages connected with the participant, or whether all of the reminders have a cumulative effect. Finally, while a participant may lose access to benefits as a result of missing either the Employment Assessment or the Internship Orientation, missing the second meeting also negates the time and effort that the participant spent in attending the first meeting. While this feeling probably comes up for participants in both groups, it is possible the additional outreach received in the Behavioral Outreach group helped people to act to avert that loss.

These interventions operate in the context of the relationship (or expected relationship) between participant and agency. While it may be possible to change participants' perspectives on the program, it may be challenging to do so. If these relationships (or expected relationships) are negative, low-intensity interventions like the ones tested in Monroe County may be insufficient to affect participants' behavior. Offering reminders of upcoming appointments might signal to participants that the program wants their engagement and will treat them and their time respectfully. However, the intervention's communications are a fraction of the experiences participants have had with government programs. Moreover, while the intervention was in progress, participants probably have other interactions and communications with cash assistance program staff members or staff members of other programs that were not shaped by behavioral science. Participants reported having formed a view of the program, often a negative one, before their first contact with it, based on past experiences with the same program or related programs as well as experiences they saw in the media. Cash assistance participants, like most people, experience confirmation bias. Changing entrenched perceptions of a program is an uphill effort, but the results of Test 1 suggest it may be possible to make some headway.

Reminders and communications such as those used in these interventions are designed to support participants who already intend to engage with the program rather than to

persuade participants to attend. Some applicants—because they attained employment independently or changed their mind about participation after applying—will not attend a meeting, no matter how much outreach or clear communication they receive. For those in between, who are inclined to engage but need encouragement and support, additional outreach and relationship building that improves participants’ perception of the program and the benefit of its services could help them follow through on the intention embodied by their initial application for services. As a result, modest impacts of the magnitude found in these tests are expected and typical.

Interventions such as the Behavioral Orientation that shift staff behavior to reshape a participant’s experience in and perception of the program have promise. Standard interactions between TANF staff members and clients tend to be focused on compliance, with staff members directing and monitoring participants and participants presenting evidence of compliance. The staff-focused intervention in Test 2 shifted that dynamic and encouraged both questions from participants and collaborative interaction between staff members and participants. The Behavioral Orientation also shifted the core focus of the communication from participant compliance to tools for and examples of participant success. Staff members who delivered the Behavioral Orientation reported that they preferred it to the Standard Orientation, and the intervention had positive effects on participants’ internship attendance within one week of the orientation. At the same time, because the orientation is one experience and its components are not separable, it is unknown what aspect of the Behavioral Orientation’s contrast with the Standard Orientation contributed to the observed effect.

Interventions that have any positive effects on program participation are notable given the seriousness of the barriers to economic self-sufficiency that many people receiving TANF experience—barriers that persist regardless of local economic conditions. During the period of the study, 2018 to 2019, the economy was experiencing employment growth, low unemployment, and rising median weekly earnings.¹⁹ But many program participants in Monroe County and throughout the country faced a number of challenges to engaging in required program activities that tend to persist regardless of economic conditions. While attempting to comply with program requirements, many participants navigate housing insecurity, food insecurity, difficulty obtaining and maintaining reliable transportation, challenges finding and affording safe childcare, medical issues, and a host of other challenges. These issues are applicable in strong and weak economies. Continuing to find interventions that make it easier for participants to gain access to resources, even in the face of those barriers, is an important endeavor.

19. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023a, 2023b, 2023c).

Appendix A

Program and Intervention Materials

Appendix Figure A.1. Example Standard Letter

Monroe County Department of Social Services
111 Westfall Rd
Rochester, NY 14620
Employment Coordinator [REDACTED]
(585) 753-2750

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Notice Date: 07/13/2023

CIN: [REDACTED]

Case Number: [REDACTED]

Case Type: NPA-SNAP

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Provider/Site: MCDHS Emp Unit Westfall - "Emp Use Only"
111 Westfall Road
Rochester, NY 14620

Referring Worker: [REDACTED]
Telephone: (585) 753-6024
Fax:

You are required to report:

For: Complete Employment Assessment

On: 06/25/2023 12:30 AM

At: Test MCDHS for BIAS
111 Westfall Road
Rochester, NY 14620

Offering Name: Employment Unit - Westfall **Offering Contact:** see above

Telephone: (000) 000-0000

Directions: For this appointment you will need to bring the following items that will verify your current situation: Identification * Current Medical verification if you have any medical limitations, * Attendance Verification for any program you attend such as: Physical Therapy; Rehab- to include attendance schedule; Mental Health Therapy - to include attendance schedule; Follow-up Medical Appointments; Court/Legal related appointments - to include attendance schedule; Training/School Program - to include attendance schedule and verification of any financial aid ; Work Experience Program(WEP); Job Search Program * Wages stubs if you are employed * If past military service - DD214 ***PLEASE BRING THIS LETTER WITH YOU TO YOUR APPOINTMENT*** ***CHILDCARE IS NOT NEEDED TO ATTEND THIS APPOINTMENT, CHILDREN ARE WELCOME TO COME WITH YOU, BUT YOU MUST STILL BE ABLE TO COMPLETE THE ASSESSMENT WITHOUT MAJOR INTERRUPTIONS***

You are expected to appear as scheduled. You are expected to immediately contact the referring worker if unable to appear as scheduled. If you are an applicant, failure to comply with the above requirement without good cause may result in denial of Public Assistance and reduction or denial of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - SNAP benefits. If you are a recipient, failure to comply willfully and without good cause may result in loss or reduction of Public Assistance and SNAP benefits. These actions are in accordance with Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Regulations 385.6, 385.7, and 385.12.

Provider Expectations: Please contact referring worker immediately if client does not appear as scheduled. Please contact referring worker if a new appearance date or time must be arranged.

[REDACTED]

Notice Date: 07/13/2023

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Mailed Hand-Delivered

Appendix Figure A.2. Redesigned Employment Assessment Letter



Department of Human Services

Monroe County, New York

██████████
County Executive

██████████
Commissioner

Notice Date:
Case Number:
Case Type:
Telephone:

NAME
ADDRESS
ROCHESTER, NY ZIP

Dear [NAME],

Hello. My name is [WORKER'S NAME]. I am your Employment Coordinator for Public Assistance. My role is to help you find a job or job training opportunities. We have an upcoming meeting that is really important to get started!

When?

Your Employment Assessment is scheduled for:



Date: Tuesday, 11 July 2023

Time: 9:00AM

Meeting length: Approximately two hours

Location: 691 St. Paul Street

Rochester, NY 14605

Please arrive early to allow time for parking and security

Why?

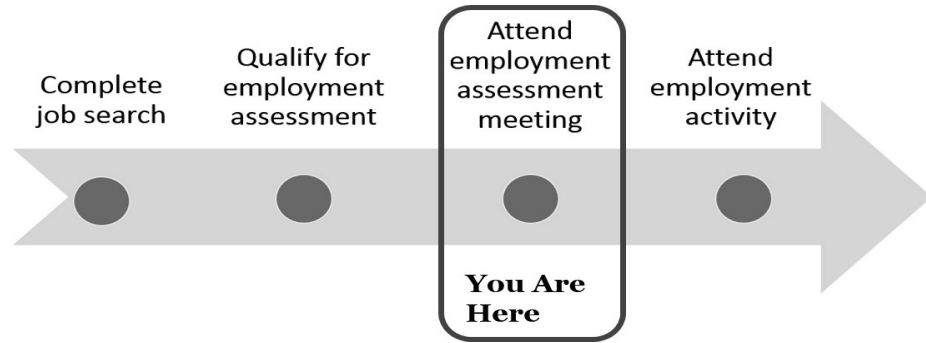
- Individuals like you have benefited from attending this meeting
- Discuss your career interests plus options for job training and further education
- Explore additional assistance, like transportation or child care

Your attendance is important!

If you do not attend this meeting you may:

- Miss out on jobs available now or training and education to further your career
- **Lose some or all of your cash or SNAP benefits**

It only takes four steps to keep your benefits and get help finding employment. You are already on Step 3!



How?

1. Mark the date on your calendar.



Date: Tuesday, 11 July 2023

Time: 9:00AM

Location: 691 St. Paul Street, Rochester, NY 14605

I will attend the meeting.

2. Plan for this appointment!

How will I get to this meeting?

Drive

Get a ride from _____

Take the bus. *Unless you were previously issued one, use the bus pass included here for this appointment only.*

3. Come to our office.

- You can bring your child to this appointment. Childcare is not needed for this appointment but will be needed for later employment activities. Do you have ongoing child care?
 - YES. Please complete the included form and bring to your appointment.
 - NO. Please contact the Western New York Child Care Council at 1-800-743-5437 for assistance.
- You are expected to appear as scheduled. **You may lose benefits if you do not attend.** These actions are in accordance with NYS Social Service Law 385.6, 385.7, and 385.12.

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Mailed Hand-Delivered

Appendix Figure A.3. Redesigned Work-Experience Program Letter



Department of Human Services
Monroe County, New York

██████████
County Executive

██████████
Commissioner

Notice Date:
Case Number:
Case Type:
Telephone:

Client Name
Client Address Line 1
Client Address Line 2

Dear [NAME],

Hello. My name is [WORKER'S NAME]. I am your Employment Coordinator for Public Assistance. My role is to help you find a job or job training opportunities. This is a reminder about our important upcoming meeting.

When?

Your Work Experience Program meeting is scheduled for:



Date: Wednesday August 23, 2018

Time: 9:00am – 12:00pm

Location: Rochester Works!

691 St Paul St
Rochester, NY 14605

Please arrive early to allow time for parking and security

Why?

- Individuals like you have benefited from attending this meeting
- Look for a job that prepares you for a better career

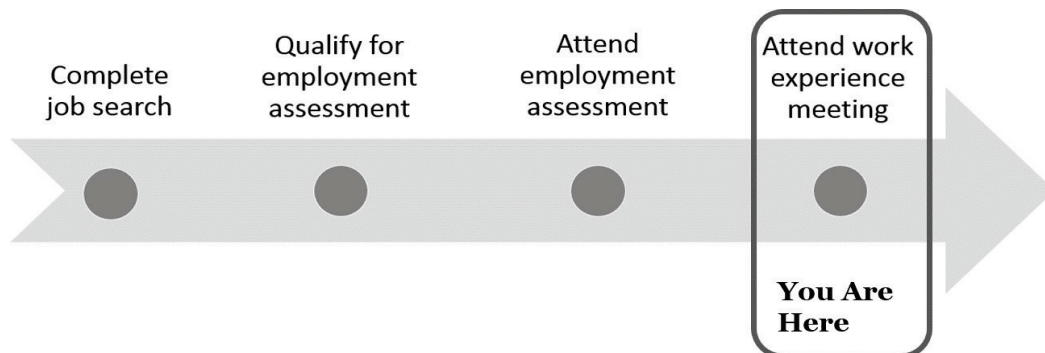
Your attendance is important!

If you do not attend this meeting you may:

- Miss out on jobs available now or training and education to further your career
- **Lose some or all of your cash or SNAP benefits**



It only takes four steps to keep your benefits and get help finding employment. You have reached Step 4!



How?

1. Mark the date on your calendar.



Date: Wednesday August 23, 2018

Time: 9:00am – 12:00pm

I will attend the meeting.

2. Plan for this appointment!

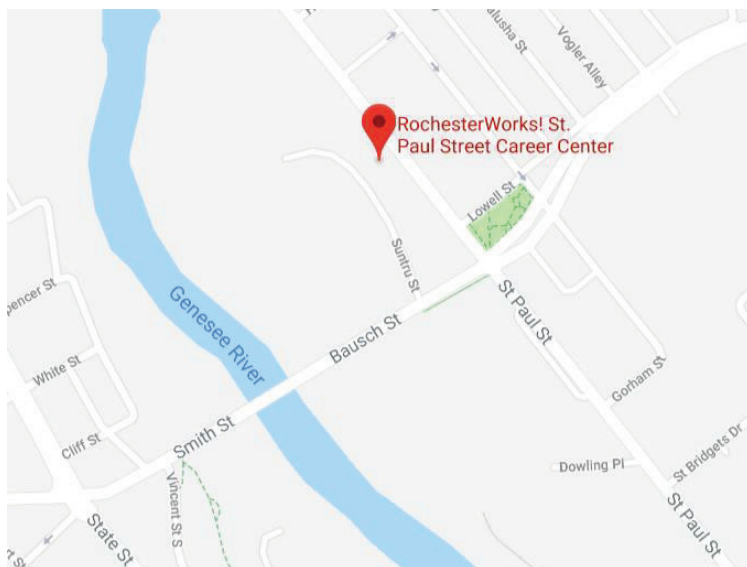
How will I get to this meeting?

- Drive
- Get a ride from _____
- Take a bus

What are my child care plans?

- Use a day care
 - Get a babysitter
- We cannot permit children at this meeting*

3. Come to our office!



(585) 753-2750 • www.monroecounty.gov

Appendix Figure A.4. Text Messages

Monroe DSS text messages

Employment Assessment

One Week Before the Employment Assessment Meeting:

Hello [NAME]. This is a message from DSS. Don't forget your Employment Assessment appointment on [DATE] at [TIME] at [PLACE] Rochester, NY. We'll review your job plans and training options. Remember, if you don't attend you may lose some of your benefits. Make a plan now to get here. Questions? Call 585-753-2750. We cannot read any responses to this text.

Two Business Days Before the Employment Assessment Meeting:

Hi [NAME]. This is a message from DSS. See you at your Employment Assessment appointment on [DATE] at [TIME] at [PLACE] Rochester, NY. Remember that missing this meeting may risk your public assistance benefits. See you then. Questions? Call 585-753-2750. We cannot read any responses to this text.

Work-Experience Program

One Week Before the Work-Experience Program:

Hello [NAME]. This is a message from DSS. Don't forget your Work Experience meeting on [DATE] at [TIME] at [PLACE] Rochester, NY. We'll review your career interests and training options. Remember, if you don't attend you may lose some of your benefits. Make a plan now to get here. Questions? Call 585-753-2750. We cannot read any responses to this text.

Two Business Days Before the Work-Experience Program:

Hi [NAME]. This is a message from DSS. See you at your Work Experience Program appointment on [DATE] at [TIME] at [PLACE] Rochester, NY. Remember that missing this meeting may risk your public assistance benefits. See you then. Questions? Call 585-753-2750. We cannot read any responses to this text.

Appendix Figure A.5. Magnet

We're
expecting
you!



Date:

Time:

Appendix B

Preregistered Primary and Secondary Outcomes

Appendix Table B.1. Outcome Measures, Test 1

Outcome	Behavioral Outreach Group	Standard Outreach Group	Difference	Standard Error
Confirmatory outcomes				
Attendance at the initially scheduled EA meeting	49.5	44.8	4.6 ***	1.6
Attendance at any EA meeting within 30 days of random assignment	61.4	59.6	1.7	1.6
Attendance at any EA meeting within 30 days of the initially scheduled EA meeting	63.0	61.5	1.5	1.6
Attendance at the initially scheduled WEP meeting	32.5	27.2	5.4 ***	1.5
Attendance at any WEP meeting within 30 days of random assignment	19.6	16.0	3.6 ***	1.2
Attendance at any WEP meeting within 30 days of the scheduled WEP meeting	39.3	33.9	5.4 ***	1.5
Exploratory outcomes				
Attendance at any EA meeting within 60 days of random assignment	64.7	64.2	0.5	1.5
Attendance at any EA meeting within 90 days of random assignment	66.0	66.7	-0.7	1.5
Attendance at any WEP meeting within 60 days of random assignment	31.8	27.0	4.8 ***	1.4
Attendance at any WEP meeting within 90 days of random assignment	35.4	30.3	5.2 ***	1.5
Sanctioned or referred to sanction within 30 days of random assignment	0.4	0.4	-0.1	0.2
Sanctioned or referred to sanction within 60 days of random assignment	1.4	1.9	-0.5	0.4
Sample size (total = 3,749)	1,866	1,883		

SOURCES: Monroe County Waiting Room Appointment Tracking System, New York State Welfare to Work Caseload Management System.

NOTES: EA refers to the Employment Assessment and WEP refers to the Internship Orientation in the report. Estimates are adjusted by the following characteristics: female, number of children in the household, language preference, whether the person owns a phone, race, applicant/recipient status, whether the person had repeated WEP in the past year, case type (TANF or Safety Net), EA meeting location, and age group (19-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45 and older).

Statistical significance levels for differences are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Appendix Table B.2. Test 1 Outcome Measures by Case Type

Outcome	TANF				Safety Net			
	Behavioral Outreach Group	Standard Outreach Group	Difference	Standard Error	Behavioral Outreach Group	Standard Outreach Group	Difference	Standard Error
Confirmatory outcomes								
Attendance at the initially scheduled EA meeting	52.3	45.8	6.4 ***	2.2	46.3	43.6	2.8	2.4
Attendance at any EA meeting within 30 days of random assignment	64.0	61.0	3.1	2.1	58.3	58.0	0.3	2.4
Attendance at any EA meeting within 30 days of the initially scheduled EA meeting	65.6	63.1	2.5	2.1	59.9	59.6	0.3	2.3
Attendance at the initially scheduled WEP meeting	30.6	25.8	4.8 **	2.0	35.0	28.6	6.4 ***	2.2
Attendance at any WEP meeting within 30 days of random assignment	16.3	13.2	3.1 **	1.6	23.6	19.4	4.3 **	1.9
Attendance at any WEP meeting within 30 days of the scheduled WEP meeting	39.0	33.2	5.8 ***	2.1	39.9	34.5	5.4 **	2.2
Exploratory outcomes								
Attendance at any EA meeting within 60 days of random assignment	67.5	66.2	1.2	2.1	61.5	61.8	-0.3	2.3
Attendance at any EA meeting within 90 days of random assignment	69.0	69.1	-0.1	2.0	62.4	63.8	-1.4	2.3
Attendance at any WEP meeting within 60 days of random assignment	29.4	24.4	5.1 ***	1.9	34.8	29.9	4.8 **	2.2

(continued)

Appendix Table B.2 (continued)

Outcome	TANF				Safety Net			
	Behavioral Outreach Group	Standard Outreach Group	Difference	Standard Error	Behavioral Outreach Group	Standard Outreach Group	Difference	Standard Error
Attendance at any WEP meeting within 90 days of random assignment	33.4	28.3	5.1 **	2.0	38.1	32.5	5.6 **	2.2
Sanctioned or referred to sanction within 30 days of random assignment	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.6	-0.5 *	0.3 ††
Sanctioned or referred to sanction within 60 days of random assignment	1.7	1.6	0.1	0.6	1.1	2.2	-1.1 *	0.6
Sample size (total = 3,749)	1,018	1,011			848	872		

SOURCES: Monroe County Waiting Room Appointment Tracking System, New York State Welfare to Work Caseload Management System.

NOTES: EA refers to the Employment Assessment and WEP refers to the Internship Orientation in the report. Estimates are adjusted by the following characteristics: female, number of children in the household, language preference, whether the person owns a phone, race, applicant/recipient status, whether the person had repeated WEP in the past year, case type (TANF or Safety Net), EA meeting location, and age group (19-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45 and older).

Statistical significance levels for differences are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Differences across subgroup impacts were tested for statistical significance. Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

Appendix Table B.3. Test 1 Outcome Measures Among Those Who Did and Did Not Repeat WEP in the Past Year

Outcome	No				Yes			
	Behavioral Outreach Group	Standard Outreach Group	Difference	Standard Error	Behavioral Outreach Group	Standard Outreach Group	Difference	Standard Error
Confirmatory outcomes								
Attendance at the initially scheduled EA meeting	48.4	44.5	3.9 **	1.7	56.0	46.6	9.4 **	4.2
Attendance at any EA meeting within 30 days of random assignment	59.9	58.7	1.3	1.7	69.9	65.5	4.4	4.0
Attendance at any EA meeting within 30 days of the initially scheduled EA meeting	61.7	60.6	1.1	1.7	70.2	67.3	2.9	4.0
Attendance at the initially scheduled WEP meeting	29.7	24.3	5.4 ***	1.5	49.9	44.1	5.8	4.3
Attendance at any WEP meeting within 30 days of random assignment	17.7	14.7	3.0 **	1.3	31.2	23.8	7.4 *	3.8
Attendance at any WEP meeting within 30 days of the scheduled WEP meeting	36.3	30.7	5.6 ***	1.6	57.2	52.9	4.3	4.2
Exploratory outcomes								
Attendance at any EA meeting within 60 days of random assignment	63.6	63.1	0.4	1.7	71.5	70.5	1.0	3.9
Attendance at any EA meeting within 90 days of Attendance at any EA meeting within 90 days of random assignment	64.7	65.7	-1.0	1.7	73.3	72.8	0.5	3.8
Attendance at any WEP meeting within 60 days of random assignment	29.3	24.6	4.7 ***	1.5	46.9	41.6	5.3	4.2
Attendance at any WEP meeting within 90 days of random assignment	33.0	27.7	5.3 ***	1.6	50.2	46.0	4.2	4.2

(continued)

Appendix Table B.3 (continued)

Outcome	No				Yes			
	Behavioral Outreach Group	Standard Outreach Group	Difference	Standard Error	Behavioral Outreach Group	Standard Outreach Group	Difference	Standard Error
Sanctioned or referred to sanction within 30 days of random assignment	0.4	0.4	-0.1	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.5
Sanctioned or referred to sanction within 60 days of random assignment	1.6	1.7	-0.1	0.5	0.2	2.7	-2.5**	1.1 ††
Sample size (total = 3,749)	1,597	1,614			269	269		

SOURCES: Monroe County Waiting Room Appointment Tracking System, New York State Welfare to Work Caseload Management System.

NOTES: EA refers to the Employment Assessment and WEP refers to the Internship Orientation in the report. Estimates are adjusted by the following characteristics: female, number of children in the household, language preference, whether the person owns a phone, race, applicant/recipient status, whether the person had repeated WEP in the past year, case type (TANF or Safety Net), EA meeting location, and age group (19-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45 and older).

Statistical significance levels for differences are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Differences across subgroup impacts were tested for statistical significance. Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

Appendix Table B.4. Outcome Measures, Test 2

Outcome	Behavioral Orientation Group	Standard Orientation Group	Difference	Standard Error
Confirmatory outcomes				
Attended WEP assignment within 1 week of WEP orientation	45.3	41.4	3.9 *	2.3
Attended WEP assignment within 4 weeks of WEP orientation	60.1	58.2	1.9	2.1
Exploratory outcomes				
Attended WEP assignment within 8 weeks of WEP orientation	62.2	60.2	2.0	2.1
Sanctioned or referred to sanction within 30 days of WEP orientation	1.0	1.3	-0.3	0.5
Sanctioned or referred to sanction within 60 days of WEP orientation	4.5	4.0	0.5	0.9
Sample size (total = 2,106)	1,043	1,063		

SOURCES: Monroe County Waiting Room Appointment Tracking System, New York State Welfare to Work Caseload Management System.

NOTES: WEP refers to the Internship Orientation in the report. Estimates are adjusted by the following characteristics: female, number of children in the household, language preference, race, case type (TANF or Safety Net), age group (19-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45 and older), and whether the person had repeated WEP in the past year.

Statistical significance levels for differences are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Appendix Table B.5. Test 2 Outcome Measures by Case Type

Outcome	TANF				Safety Net			
	Behavioral Orientation Group	Standard Orientation Group	Difference	Standard Error	Behavioral Orientation Group	Standard Orientation Group	Difference	Standard Error
Confirmatory outcomes								
Attended WEP assignment within 1 week of WEP orientation	42.0	38.1	3.9	3.5	49.6	45.8	3.8	3.0
Attended WEP assignment within 4 weeks of WEP orientation	58.5	55.9	2.6	3.5	64.0	63.3	0.8	2.8
Exploratory outcomes								
Attended WEP assignment within 8 weeks of WEP orientation	60.5	57.5	3.0	3.5	66.3	65.5	0.8	2.8
Sanctioned or referred to sanction within 30 days of WEP orientation	1.6	1.8	-0.2	0.9	0.5	1.1	-0.6	0.5
Sanctioned or referred to sanction within 60 days of WEP orientation	5.7	3.5	2.1	1.6	3.6	4.2	-0.6	1.2
Sample size (total = 2,011)	400	376			601	634		

SOURCES: Monroe County Waiting Room Appointment Tracking System, New York State Welfare to Work Caseload Management System.

NOTES: WEP refers to the Internship Orientation in the report. Estimates are adjusted by the following characteristics: female, number of children in the household, race, case type (TANF or Safety Net), age group (19-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45 and older), and whether the person had repeated WEP in the past year.

Statistical significance levels for differences are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Differences across subgroup impacts were tested for statistical significance. Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

Appendix Table B.6. Test 2 Outcome Measures Among Those Who Did and Did Not Repeat WEP in the Past Year

Outcome	No				Yes			
	Behavioral Orientation Group	Standard Orientation Group	Difference	Standard Error	Behavioral Orientation Group	Standard Orientation Group	Difference	Standard Error
Confirmatory outcomes								
Attended WEP assignment within 1 week of WEP orientation	43.5	39.5	4.0	2.6	52.5	48.0	4.5	4.9
Attended WEP assignment within 4 weeks of WEP orientation	57.8	55.3	2.5	2.4	69.1	69.0	0.1	4.5
Exploratory outcomes								
Attended WEP assignment within 8 weeks of WEP orientation	59.6	57.5	2.1	2.4	72.0	70.0	1.9	4.5
Sanctioned or referred to sanction within 30 days of WEP orientation	1.1	1.1	0.0	0.5	1.0	2.3	-1.3	1.3
Sanctioned or referred to sanction within 60 days of WEP orientation	4.8	4.4	0.4	1.1	3.5	2.8	0.7	1.7
Sample size (total = 2,106)	802	858			241	205		

SOURCES: Monroe County Waiting Room Appointment Tracking System, New York State Welfare to Work Caseload Management System.

NOTES: WEP refers to the Internship Orientation in the report. Estimates are adjusted by the following characteristics: female, number of children in the household, race, case type (TANF or Safety Net), age group (19-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45 and older), and whether the person had repeated WEP in the past year.

Statistical significance levels for differences are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Differences across subgroup impacts were tested for statistical significance. Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

Appendix Table B.7. Test 2 Outcome Measures by Test 1 Group Status

Outcome	Behavioral Outreach Group				Standard Outreach Group			
	Behavioral Orientation Group	Standard Orientation Group	Difference	Standard Error	Behavioral Orientation Group	Standard Orientation Group	Difference	Standard Error
Confirmatory outcomes								
Attended WEP assignment within 1 week of WEP orientation	42.4	36.8	5.6	3.9	43.4	41.4	2.0	4.5
Attended WEP assignment within 4 weeks of WEP orientation	54.3	53.3	1.1	3.7	63.1	59.9	3.2	4.2
Exploratory outcomes								
Attended WEP assignment within 8 weeks of WEP orientation	56.5	54.7	1.8	3.7	66.4	62.9	3.5	4.2
Sanctioned or referred to sanction within 30 days of WEP orientation	1.2	1.1	0.2	0.9	0.7	1.0	-0.3	0.7
Sanctioned or referred to sanction within 60 days of WEP orientation	5.3	3.8	1.5	1.7	3.4	2.2	1.2	1.4
Sample size (total = 1,191)	313	302			278	298		

SOURCES: Monroe County Waiting Room Appointment Tracking System, New York State Welfare to Work Caseload Management System.

NOTES: WEP refers to the Internship Orientation in the report. Estimates are adjusted by the following characteristics: female, number of children in the household, race, case type (TANF or Safety Net), age group (19-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45 and older), and whether the person had repeated WEP in the past year.

Statistical significance levels for differences are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Differences across subgroup impacts were tested for statistical significance. Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

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