

**Exceptions to the Rule:  
The Implementation  
of 24-Month Time-Limit Extensions  
in W-2**

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The Authors



# Report

## I. Introduction

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) stipulates that federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds cannot be used to provide assistance to a family for more than 60 months. However, states may exempt up to 20 percent of the TANF caseload from this time limit, based on hardship or if a family member has been battered or subjected to extreme cruelty.<sup>1</sup>

Most states (28) chose to follow the 60-month federal time limit, and families in most of these states began to reach it in October 2001.<sup>2</sup> PRWORA also allows states to set a different time limit on welfare receipt; for example, Connecticut has the shortest time limit (21 months), while Michigan and Vermont have no time limit.<sup>3</sup> In general, states try to send a strong message about time limits as a way to promote individual responsibility and workforce attachment.

Recent research on time limits focuses on how states design time-limited programs,<sup>4</sup> how agencies and caseworkers implement them,<sup>5</sup> and the experiences of welfare leavers who reach their time limits.<sup>6</sup> This report moves into a new area by examining the implementation of time-limit extensions. It examines the process by which welfare recipients are considered for and may receive extended time on their state welfare clock, based on the experience of agencies administering Wisconsin's welfare reform program, Wisconsin Works (W-2), in Milwaukee County.

There are two time limits associated with W-2: Besides the 60-month federal lifetime limit for eligibility, participation in any W-2 program component is limited to 24 cumulative months within those 60 months.<sup>7</sup> This report examines the implementation of time-limit extensions in cases that approach the 24-month limit. Using data from W-2 in Milwaukee County, it addresses the following questions about the 24-month time limit:

1. How are 24-month time-limit extensions designed under W-2?
2. What happens to cases as they approach the time limit?
3. What is the step-by-step time-limit extension process?
4. Who has received a time-limit extension under W-2 and for what reasons?

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<sup>1</sup>42 U.S.C. §608(a)(7)(C); 45 CFR §264.1.

<sup>2</sup>Schott, 2000.

<sup>3</sup>States may use their own funds to provide assistance after 60 months.

<sup>4</sup>Bloom, 1999; Bloom and Butler, 1995.

<sup>5</sup>Brown, Bloom, and Butler, 1997.

<sup>6</sup>Bloom et al., 2000; Bloom, Hendra, Hunter-Manns, and Walter, 1999; Gordon, Agodini, Kuhns, and Loeffler, 1999.

<sup>7</sup>*Wisconsin Works Manual*, 1999a, Section 2.3.2, p. 11.

## II. The Findings in Brief

- Few W-2 participants in Milwaukee County apply for a W-2 time-limit extension. The majority of cases never reach the 24-month time limit, either because they are closed before reaching that limit or because they are switched to a different tier<sup>8</sup> before reaching it. The W-2 agencies' experiences with the extension process may lead caseworkers to conclude that it is easier to switch a case that is nearing the 24-month time limit into another tier, rather than going through the time-intensive extension process.
- Most W-2 time-limit extension requests are approved. Between October 1999 and September 2000, all W-2 agencies in Milwaukee County submitted 285 extension requests. Of these, 80 percent were approved, 24 percent were withdrawn, fewer than 1 percent were pending, and none was denied.
- Most cases that receive an extension are in the lowest-level tier of W-2, which is designed for individuals who have significant barriers to employment. Nearly all the requests for time-limit extensions involve serious medical issues.
- The time-limit extension process takes significant staff time as cases are reviewed extensively at the agency, regional, and state levels. On the one hand, deciding whether to allow an extension is an important action that bears careful, in-depth consideration; on the other hand, staff spend considerable time on a relatively small number of cases.
- Both client participation in assigned activities and W-2 agency case management practices are key factors in determining whether a case will be considered for a time-limit extension. Assessing client participation is complex, because a medical barrier may preclude participation. Thus, performance in W-2 is evaluated against the services that clients are offered and receive during their time in the program. W-2 agency case management practices are routinely monitored by the Private Industry Council of Milwaukee County and the Regional Administrators' Office. Primary case management recommendations from this monitoring process include (1) seeking additional client assessment, (2) resolving conflicting or incomplete case data, (3) making suggestions to improve the client's skills or employability, and (4) examining the case from a broad perspective.
- Since most time-limit extensions are requested for medical reasons, obtaining medical documentation is a key component of client assessment. However, there are varying degrees of cooperation from the medical community. Some physicians are slow to complete the W-2 forms that are needed to process an extension, and some do not provide complete information.

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<sup>8</sup>As explained in Section III, W-2 has four different "tiers," or levels of employment options to which participants are assigned; the 24-month time limit applies for *each* tier.



This report is organized in the following manner: Section III introduces Wisconsin's W-2 program and its approach to time-limit extensions, and Section IV describes the data used in the analysis for this report. After this, Section V provides an overview of the subsequent status of W-2 cases reaching 18 months in the tiers for community service jobs and W-2 transition as they approach the 24-month time limit, and Section VI describes the process by which W-2 cases are selected for possible extension and are reviewed and decided. Then Section VII presents information on an early sample of cases that were formally considered for an extension. Section VIII concludes by summarizing trends and lessons from the administration of time-limit extensions in Milwaukee County.

### **III. Time Limits and W-2**

Wisconsin's welfare reform program, Wisconsin Works (W-2), began operating in October 1997. W-2 includes a 60-month lifetime limit for eligibility,<sup>9</sup> and its philosophy concerning time limits stresses mutual responsibility: Government provides support and services designed to promote employment, while participants, in return, are expected to prepare for and enter employment.<sup>10</sup>

Conceptually, W-2 can be seen as an employment ladder with four different levels of employment options, commonly referred to as "rungs" or "tiers" (see Figure 1). These tiers are important because, under W-2, participation in any single employment position (trial job, CSJ, or W-2T) is limited to 24 cumulative months. If a client participates in a W-2 employment position at any time during a month, that month counts toward the 24-month time limit, even if the individual receives a payment reduction.<sup>11</sup>

The topmost rung of the W-2 employment ladder is unsubsidized employment, the tier that is designed for individuals who are capable of working. The second-highest tier, trial jobs, is designed for individuals who seem job-ready but are unable to locate unsubsidized employment due to a weak work history. Though rarely used in W-2, trial jobs are subsidized employment positions contracted between the W-2 service provider and an employer. Participants in the trial job tier receive at least the minimum wage for every hour of work, and trial jobs are expected to result in permanent positions.

In Milwaukee County, most W-2 clients are assigned to the community service job (CSJ) tier, which is designed for participants who are not ready for immediate employment. This third-level tier is intended to provide participants with an opportunity to practice work habits and develop skills that are needed to succeed in an unsubsidized job environment. CSJ participants are generally expected to participate up to 40 hours per week, with up to 10 hours per week being allowed for education and training activities. CSJ participants may receive a monthly payment of

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<sup>9</sup>1995 Wisconsin Act 289.

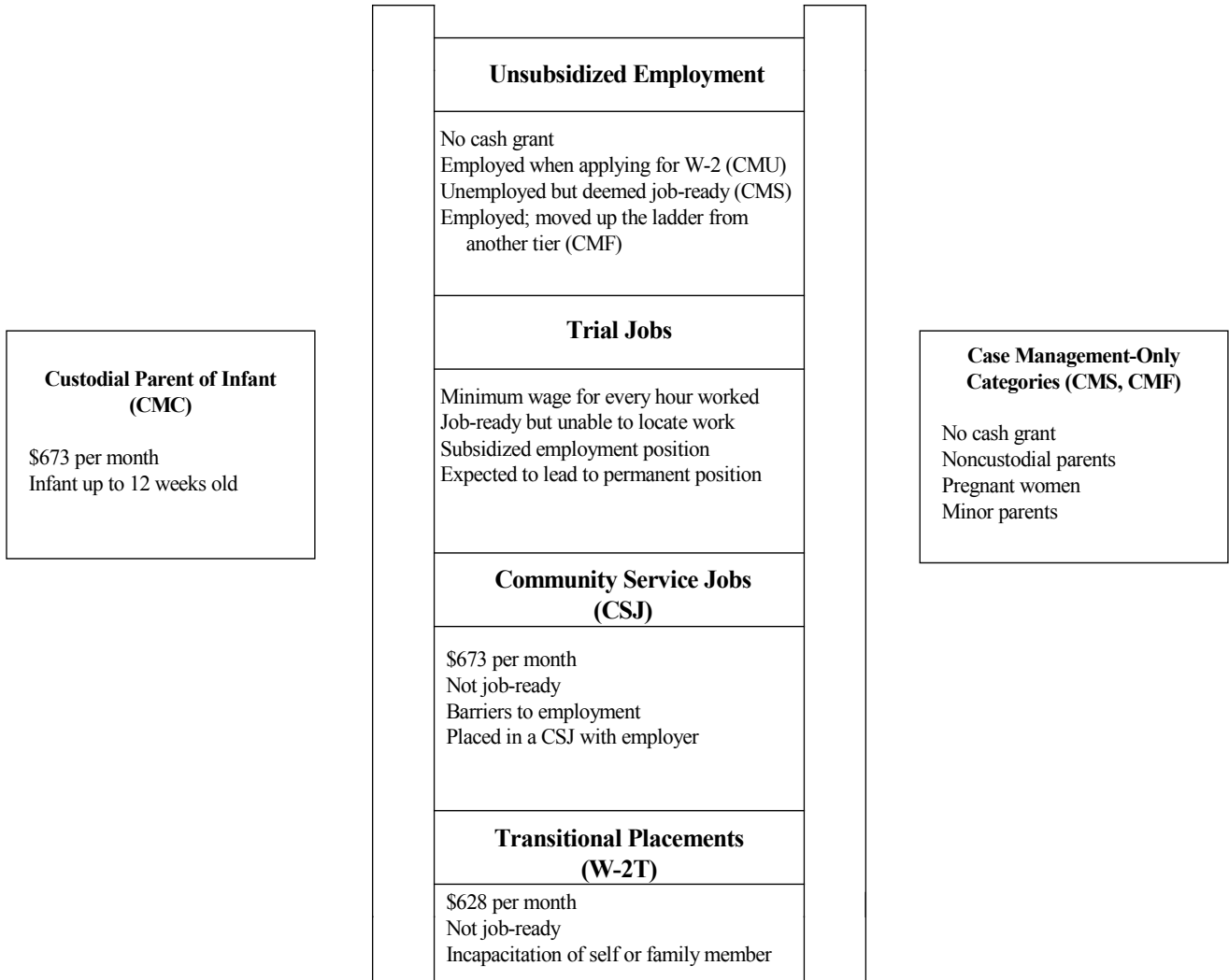
<sup>10</sup>*Wisconsin Works Manual*, 1999a, Section 2.3.0, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup>*Wisconsin Works Manual*, 1999a, Section 2.3.2, p. 11. However, only one placement counts against the time limits in any month. For example, if a client transferred among three placements in a single month, only the last placement would count against the time limit.

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## Figure 1

### The W-2 Employment Ladder



\$673, but this payment is reduced by \$5.15 per hour for each hour that a client fails to participate without good cause.

The lowest rung on the employment ladder is the second most common assignment: The W-2 transition (W-2T) tier is designed for participants who have been deemed not ready for unsubsidized employment and are thus unable to participate successfully in one of the other tiers for reasons such as incapacitation of self or a family member. Clients in the W-2T tier are required to participate in specific activities, such as providing care for a family member. They may be assigned up to 28 hours per week of such activities and 12 hours per week of education and training. W-2T participants receive \$628 per month in financial assistance, but this payment is reduced by \$5.15 per hour for each hour that they fail to participate without good cause.

Extensions to the 24-month time limit may be made for each of the three W-2 employment positions if the participant meets the extension criteria. Extensions may be granted for up to six months,<sup>12</sup> and subsequent extension requests are permitted. The criteria for granting extensions in the three W-2 employment position are:<sup>13</sup>

- *Trial Job*: The participant has made all appropriate efforts to find and accept unsubsidized employment and has been unable to do so because the local labor market conditions preclude a reasonable unsubsidized employment opportunity for the participant.
- *Community Service Job (CSJ)*: The participant has made all appropriate efforts to find and accept unsubsidized employment and has been unable to do so because the local labor market conditions preclude a reasonable unsubsidized employment opportunity and, for the same reason, there are no Trial Jobs available.
- *W-2 Transition (W-2T)*: The participant has made all appropriate efforts to find unsubsidized employment by participating in all assigned activities and significant barriers prevent advancement to a higher W-2 employment position.

According to W-2 policy, W-2 agencies may extend eligibility only in unusual circumstances, on a case-by-case basis. Thus, as W-2 is designed, there is no expectation or guarantee of a time-limit extension for any participant. In determining whether to recommend extended eligibility, the W-2 agency may consider the following unusual circumstances:<sup>14</sup>

1. The adult W-2 group member is unable to work because of personal disability or incapacitation;
2. The adult W-2 group member is needed in the home as determined by the W-2 agency to care for another member of the W-2 group who has an incapacity of

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<sup>12</sup>Wisconsin Works Manual, 1999a, Section 2.3.2.1.1, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup>State of Wisconsin, 2000c.

<sup>14</sup>Wisconsin Works Manual, 2000a, Section 2.3.1.3, pp. 10-11.

such severity that without in-home care provided by the W-2 participant, the incapacitated member's health and well-being would be significantly affected;

3. The adult W-2 group member has significant limitations to employment such as: Low achievement ability, learning disability, emotional problems of such severity that they prevent the participant from obtaining or retaining unsubsidized employment, but are not sufficient to meet SSDI or SSI requirements; or family problems of such severity that they prevent the W-2 group member from obtaining or retaining unsubsidized employment.
4. The adult group member has made all appropriate efforts to find work and is unable to find unsubsidized employment because labor market conditions preclude a reasonable job opportunity. A reasonable job opportunity means a job that pays at least the minimum wage, and conforms to all applicable federal and state laws.

#### **IV. Examining the Implementation of Time-Limit Extensions**

This report examines the implementation of time-limit extensions in Milwaukee County, which has about 75 percent of Wisconsin's caseload. The State of Wisconsin has contracted with five nongovernment agencies to administer the W-2 program in Milwaukee County.<sup>15</sup> These five agencies are YW Works, United Migrant Opportunity Services, Inc. (UMOS), Opportunities Industrialization Center of Greater Milwaukee, Inc. (OIC), Employment Solutions of Milwaukee, Inc., and Maximus, Inc. Each agency is responsible for administering W-2 in a specific geographic region in Milwaukee County and, as the program is designed, has considerable discretion in implementing W-2.

We used the following data sources to examine the administration and implementation of time-limit extensions in Milwaukee County:

1. Time-limit policies as detailed in the *Wisconsin Works Manual*.<sup>16</sup>
2. Operations Memos issued by the State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) regarding time limits.<sup>17</sup>
3. Interviews during October 2000 with the staff most directly involved in the administration of time limits. Included were staff at each of the Milwaukee County W-2 agencies, the Milwaukee County regional DWD, the state DWD, and the Private Industry Council (PIC) of Milwaukee County. In each case, we conducted semistructured interviews that focused on the implementation of the W-2 time-limit extension process.

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<sup>15</sup>See State of Wisconsin, 1999d. This topic will also be covered in detail in another report in this series (Doolittle and Wiseman, forthcoming, 2002).

<sup>16</sup>Wisconsin Works Manual, 2000a, Section 2.3.0.

<sup>17</sup>We reviewed the Operations Memos in use during the data collection period: numbers 99-21, 99-48, 99-49, 99-89, 00-27, and 00-28.

4. Administrative aggregate data provided by the PIC and the DWD. The time-limit data are based on early entrants to the program, most of whom had converted from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).<sup>18</sup>

## **V. An Overview of the Subsequent Status of Cases Approaching the Time Limits**

As part of its role as W-2 administrator for Milwaukee County, the PIC routinely collected data on the subsequent status of W-2 cases that reached month 18.<sup>19</sup> This facilitates the examination of participants who approached their 24-month time limit in either a CSJ or a W-2T placement.<sup>20</sup>

Based on administrative data from May 5, 1999, through July 11, 2000, Table 1 provides an overview of such cases. In general, most CSJ and W-2T cases that reached 18 months' duration never reached the 24-month tier time limit. Of the CSJ cases, 42.1 percent closed prior to reaching the 24-month tier time limit. An additional 37.6 percent did not reach the 24-month tier time limit but were still enrolled in W-2 at 24 months. This could occur if the participant was moved into another tier in which the participant had not already reached the 24-month limit<sup>21</sup> or if the participant left W-2 and reentered during this time frame. Among the W-2T cases that never reached the 24-month tier time limit, 28.4 percent closed prior to reaching the 24-month time limit, and 33.9 percent were switched to another tier prior to reaching 24 months.

Although a large percentage of W-2 cases closed prior to reaching the 24-month time limit, it is important to note that — prior to TANF, under AFDC — many cases closed even before 24 months. The extensive research on welfare caseload dynamics<sup>22</sup> highlights the fact that most people on AFDC received public assistance for only a short time and that a smaller group received public assistance for an extended period.

Of the CSJ cases that did reach the 24-month tier time limit, most did not receive an extension. Ten percent of these cases were closed; essentially, their W-2 clock “ticked out.” Another 8.6 percent reached the 24-month tier time limit and switched to another W-2 tier, and 1.0 percent of the cases closed but were later reopened in another tier — suggesting that participants moved into the “unsubsidized” tier to receive case management services only, with no cash grant.

Of W-2T cases that reached the 24-month time limit but did not receive an extension, 6.8 percent closed or “ticked out”; 6.2 percent switched to another tier; and 2.1 percent closed but were later reopened in another tier.

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<sup>18</sup>For a description of changes in W-2 program entrants over time, see Gooden, Doolittle, and Glispie, 2001.

<sup>19</sup>Specifically, the data report on the status of each case 8 to 17 months *after* the case reaches month 18 in W-2.

<sup>20</sup>Private Industry Council of Milwaukee County, 2000.

<sup>21</sup>The 24-month time limit applies for *each* tier. For example, if a participant reaches 23 months in the CSJ tier and is then moved to the W-2T tier, the participant has an additional 24 months before facing time limits in the W-2T tier. There is a lifetime limit of 60 months.

<sup>22</sup>See Bane and Ellwood, 1983.

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**Table 1**

**Outcomes of W-2 Cases at 14 Months<sup>a</sup>**

Outcome (%)	CSJ Tier	W-2T Tier
Did not reach 24-month limit	79.7	62.3
Case closed before reaching 24-month limit	42.1	28.4
Case switched to another tier upon reaching 24 months <sup>b</sup>	37.6	33.9
Reached 24-month limit; no extension received	19.6	15.1
Case closed	10.0	6.8
Case switched to another tier upon reaching 24 months <sup>b,c</sup>	8.6	6.2
Case closed; case later reopened in another tier	1.0	2.1
Extension received	1.0	22.6
Received extension and placed in another W-2 placement	0.4	2.9
Continuing to receive an extension in same tier placement	0.2	16.1
Received extension and case subsequently closed	0.2	3.6
Sample size	1,854	384

SOURCES: Based on data provided by the Private Industry Council of Milwaukee County and on state administrative data from May 5, 1999, to July 11, 2000.

NOTES: <sup>a</sup>Includes cases at 18 months and longer.

<sup>b</sup>Switching tiers is the most common reason. Other, less common reasons were that the participant left W-2 and reentered during the data reporting time frame or that there was an interruption in the W-2 clock.

<sup>c</sup>Includes cases that subsequently closed.

Among CSJ cases, only 1 percent — or 18 cases that were examined during this period — received an extension. Of these, eight cases received an extension and then moved into another W-2 tier; three were actively receiving an extension at the conclusion of the data collection period; and three received a time-limit extension but the case subsequently closed.

W-2T cases were much more likely to receive an extension after the 24-month period: 22.6 percent of the W-2T cases received an extension, and most of these (16.1 percent) were still receiving an extension at the conclusion of the data collection period.

## **VI. How W-2 Cases Are Reviewed, Selected for Time-Limit Extensions, and Decided**

### **A. Steps in the W-2 Time-Limit Extension Review Process**

W-2 time-limit extension cases receive considerable review (see Box 1). Much activity in the case occurs prior to formal action on an extension request, as shown in steps 1 through 4 in the exhibit. Given the high-stakes decision regarding the 24-month clock, the process of receiving an extension actually begins much earlier. According to W-2 policy, financial and employment planners (FEPs), who operate as case managers, must discuss W-2 time-limit policy at application,<sup>23</sup> eligibility reviews, and each W-2 tier change.<sup>24</sup> FEPs are also required to discuss time-limit extensions by the time the participant reaches month 18 of eligibility in a W-2 employment position: “The time limit discussion *must* include a discussion regarding extensions because participants have a right to know what an extension is and the criteria under which an extension is granted.”<sup>25</sup> FEPs are also instructed to notify participants that extensions are not automatic and are available only for those who meet the extension criteria. As a beginning point, if the participant does not want an extension, the W-2 agency does not apply for one.<sup>26</sup> As discussed in the next section, there is some variety in how agencies in Milwaukee County have determined which cases to put forward for an extension.

There are three key decision points on a W-2 extension case’s route to approval. First, the W-2 agency must submit the DWD 24-Month W-2 Employment Position Extension Request form (step 5 in Box 1). W-2 policy requires that all extension applications be reviewed by and signed by the FEP supervisor and the W-2 agency’s chief executive officer.<sup>27</sup> Second, when the agency submits the extension request to the state’s Regional Administrators’ Office, the supporting material is reviewed to determine its completeness before passing it on to the state-level review. Third, the extension request is reviewed by a team at the State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD), which also includes regional administrators. The following three sections examine W-2 extension cases at each of these points.

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<sup>23</sup>Milwaukee County W-2 agencies discussed time limits in 51 percent of the intake interviews that MDRC observed. See Gooden, Doolittle, and Glispie, 2001.

<sup>24</sup>State of Wisconsin, 1999b.

<sup>25</sup>State of Wisconsin, 1999b.

<sup>26</sup>State of Wisconsin, 1999c.

<sup>27</sup>*Wisconsin Works Manual*, Section 2.3.2.1.1, p. 12.

## **Box 1**

### **Overview of W-2 Time-Limit Extension Review Process**

**1. Case managers discuss time limits regularly with clients from the point of application.**

- FEPs review and applicants sign the W-2 Participation Agreement, which explains time limits.
- The amount of time a participant has used is included on each Eligibility Review notice (issued every three to six months).
- Time limits are discussed at each review.
- Participants receive notices at months 20 and 23 informing them of when month 24 will expire.

**2. The regional office tracks cases at risk of expiring their time limits.**

- Staff create summary tracking documents using case clock reports, and they stay in regular contact with W-2 agencies to get updates on the status of cases.

**3. The regional office conducts intensive case reviews.**

- Staff must perform intensive reviews of any cases that have reached 18 months.
- Reviews consist of CARES\* comments, other pertinent screens in the computerized CARES sequence, supporting documentation not found in CARES, and face-to-face visits with the caseworker.
- Staff visits with the W-2 agencies focus on what services have been offered thus far, what barriers remain, and the anticipated outcomes for the case.
- After an intensive review, staff continue to track the monthly status of the case.

**4. W-2 agencies initiate an extension discussion with the client no later than month 18.**

- Agencies must initiate a discussion regarding an extension no later than month 18.
- Agencies must explain the criteria and process for granting extensions, but participants do not have the “right” to apply for an extension.
- Agencies begin determining whether or not a participant meets statutory extension criteria.

**5. W-2 agencies finalize the extension decision in month 21.**

- Agencies must finalize an extension decision no later than two business days into month 21.
- “Finalize” involves entering the information into CARES and completing an Extension Record.
- Participants are notified of agencies’ decisions via CARES notices.
- Participants can initiate a dispute process at any juncture in the review.
- Agencies must complete an extension request if needed and submit it to the regional office by the end of month 21.

(continued)

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\*CARES (Client Assistance for Re-Employment and Economic Support) is the statewide automated record system used in W-2 and other assistance program administration. In W-2, this system is used to establish eligibility and to record case management activities.



## Box 1

### Overview of W-2 Time-Limit Extension Review Process (continued)

#### 6. *The regional office reviews extension requests.*

- Staff determine the completeness of extension request materials.
- If materials are not complete, two types of additional information may be requested:
  - Information needed to determine if the agency had sufficient facts and a reasonable basis to arrive at its decision
  - Information needed to understand the case management plan

#### 7. *Cases are reviewed by the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) internal review team.*

- The internal review team consists of the division administrator, two W-2 policy analysts, one Bureau of Field Support staff person, and one appropriate regional staff member.
- The internal review team reviews extension requests to ensure an understanding of the cases and to offer suggested case management steps.
- The internal review allows DWD to:
  - Ensure that extensions are being reasonably approved
  - Look closely at the types of services that an agency has been providing for two years
  - Ensure that W-2 principles are being practiced
  - Understand the types of cases that require extensions in order to inform policy
  - Review successful case management practices and suggest these as case management steps
- The DWD internal review serves the dual purposes of making extension decisions and monitoring case management issues.
- The internal review results in a decision letter, the Internal Review Document (IRD).
- The IRD must be issued no later than 30 days after the regional office receives a completed application.

#### 8. *The W-2 agency acts on the disposition of an extension.*

- The FEP must enter DWD's decision into CARES prior to the participant's reaching month 24.
- The CARES entry generates a notice of the decision to the participant.
- If the extension is approved:
  - The agency must maintain contact with the participant throughout the extension period.
  - The agency tracks the participant's eligibility for subsequent extensions.
  - The regional office also tracks extensions.
- If the extension is denied:
  - The agency must work with the participant in the remaining months to ensure that the participant is aware of available services after W-2 eligibility ends.

#### 9. *If necessary, the W-2 agency initiates a subsequent extension.*

- The subsequent extension review process is similar to the initial extension review process.
- The W-2 agency submits subsequent extension materials to the regional office one month before the extension period ends.

SOURCE: Based on data provided by the State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.

## **B. How W-2 Agencies Determine Who Meets the Extension Criteria**

Administratively, some of the W-2 agencies in Milwaukee County use a centralized process, in which an extension coordinator assists FEPs in making extension applications. Other agencies operate in a decentralized manner, with the FEP being responsible for all aspects of completing the extension application. Although none of the five agencies we interviewed use the exact same approach in administering time-limit extensions, two general approaches are used to determine which cases meet the extension criteria: the participant-initiated approach and the agency-initiated approach.

**1. The participant-initiated approach.** Two agencies use the participant-initiated approach. At one of these agencies, the FEP reviews each case in month 14, which may entail, for example, conducting a home visit to identify potential barriers to employment, checking to determine whether the participant receives unreported income or child support, and reassessing whether the participant is in the most appropriate tier assignment. During month 21, the FEP discusses the extension process with the participant and reviews the case for an extension. At this point, the participant decides whether to apply for an extension, and no one who wishes to go forward with the extension process is denied. If the participant wants to proceed, the 24-month coordinator completes the time-limit extension application packet, in consultation with the FEP. In completing this application, the coordinator conducts an extensive background review to build the extension case, including examining Wisconsin Circuit Court records to ascertain whether there are any issues that may have affected the participant's program performance.

At the other agency, the FEPs determine which cases have reached month 18 and then meet with those clients to explain the extension criteria. At this point, the client decides whether or not to apply for an extension. If the client wants to apply, the FEP prepares the application packet and submits it to management for a content review.

**2. The agency-initiated approach.** In the remaining three agencies, internal review teams play a larger role in determining which extension cases go forward. At one agency, a time-limits coordinator identifies and distributes to each FEP a list of clients who are at month 16 or later. The FEP, the FEP supervisor, and the 24-month coordinator decide which cases should be considered for an extension. The FEP completes the application packet and forwards the information to the 24-month coordinator for review. Then the agency convenes a panel to decide which cases will be submitted to the state for an extension request. The other two agencies use a similar model, except that the process does not begin until month 18. In all three agencies, cases are brought forward based on the review team's determination of whether the case meets the time-limit eligibility criteria as defined by state policy (outlined at the end of Section III in this report).

## **C. Extension Case Review at the Regional Administrators' Office**

Located in Milwaukee, the Regional Administrators' Office is a part of the state Division of Economic Security in the Department of Workforce Development. This office receives the 24-month extension applications submitted by the W-2 agencies, reviews each case, asks for additional application materials from the submitting agency as appropriate, and presents the case to the state case review team.

Unless there are unusual circumstances, the W-2 agency must submit the extension request to the regional office by the end of the participant's twenty-first month. Each application packet consists of the DWD 24-Month W-2 Employment Position Extension Request form, which includes a case narrative and any supporting documentation, such as medical reports. A decision on the extension request must be made by DWD within one month of receiving a completed application.<sup>28</sup> If an application is incomplete, the regional office will return it to the agency for additional information.

Staff at the regional office use two fundamental criteria when reviewing a case. First, they decide whether they believe that the participant has cooperated with W-2 as fully as possible. To assess this, they review any sanctions, missed appointments, refusals to allow in-home assessors, and so on. If the W-2 agency can show that the client's nonparticipation is related to a mental or physical disability, this information is also taken into account. Essentially, it is unexplained nonparticipation that is viewed negatively. Second, staff look to ensure that the case material includes enough supporting evidence — for example, medical documentation. If the regional office concurs that the application is complete, a meeting is scheduled with the state DWD team to review the case.

#### **D. Extension Case Review at the State DWD Office**

All W-2 employment position time-limit extensions require DWD approval.<sup>29</sup> This is done through a team meeting that typically includes a W-2 policy analyst, a staff member from the Bureau of Field Support, the DWD administrator or a designee, and a staff member from the Office of Refugee Services (if appropriate). From DWD's perspective, a primary purpose of the review team is to ensure statewide consistency in extension decisionmaking. During the meeting, the regional administrator introduces the case, and each case is discussed. At the conclusion of the meeting, the team prepares two documents: (1) a summary of the discussion for state files and (2) an outcome letter that is given to the local W-2 agency. As Section VII details, to date, no W-2 extension requests have been denied by the state.

#### **E. Case Review Factors**

The preceding sections describe the process by which time-limit extension cases are reviewed at the agency, regional, and state levels. Key case review factors at each stage of the process include (1) the client's participation record in the W-2 program, (2) the degree to which the agency has provided appropriate case management, and (3) whether the client has barriers to employment that prevent movement up the W-2 ladder or whether the local labor market precludes a reasonable job opportunity or trial job.

W-2 statute allows for the consideration of a participant's program performance in determining whether a case qualifies for a time-limit extension. The FEP has the task of evaluating the participant's efforts in finding and accepting employment and in participating in assigned activities. But assessing and interpreting performance is complex, and a participant's noncooperation

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<sup>28</sup>*Wisconsin Works Manual*, Section 2.3.2.1.1, p. 12.

<sup>29</sup>*Wisconsin Works Manual*, Section 2.3.2.1.1, p. 12.

does not preclude making an extension request. For example, is the participant not cooperating because of hidden barriers, such as mental illness?

Cases are also reviewed to ascertain whether they received the “full benefit of W-2 services.” Participant performance in W-2 is evaluated against the services that were offered and received. Key questions include: What effort did the agency make to identify barriers to participation? Did the agency periodically reassess the client? Was the assessment adequate? Were the services appropriate? How successful was the agency in identifying employment barriers? Did staff direct the participant toward appropriate employment?

#### **F. Special Case Management Review of Those Approaching Time Limits**

Given the importance of case management services in deciding on time-limit extensions in W-2, this aspect of administration has received special attention. Arguably, if a social service agency has not provided appropriate case management services during the 24 month limit, the agency bears additional responsibility for “lost time” when clients were not receiving adequate case management.

The Private Industry Council (PIC) of Milwaukee County and the regional office of the Division of Workforce Development perform central roles in monitoring case management. In the period covered by this study, for example, the PIC randomly selected cases for review each month, giving preference to cases that had 15 or more monthly ticks on their W-2 clocks. At the PIC, there were W-2 regional liaisons who reviewed case management by examining the case file in CARES (Wisconsin’s automated record system) as well as hard copies of the participant’s W-2 file. During this review, they monitored whether the participant had been informed of the time-limit policy (as reported in CARES), whether there were any barriers to participation, and the appropriateness of assigned activities. The liaisons could make recommendations to the W-2 agency for improving case management — usually by reducing barriers, improving job search, or reassigning the participant to a more appropriate tier. For example, if a participant had the employment goal of becoming a paramedic but did not have a driver’s license, the liaisons could recommend that a more realistic employment goal be pursued.

To understand the scope and intensity of the case management review process, we examined 179 case management reports prepared by the PIC for January 2001. Four major themes emerged from this examination, although the themes seem to vary somewhat depending on the PIC reviewer. Recommendations vary in terms of depth. Some reviewers offered specific recommendations to case managers, while others made general recommendations:

1. *Additional assessment.* The PIC reviewers tended to encourage case managers to gain more accurate understanding of participants’ barriers. They made recommendations for psychological evaluations, domestic violence screening, in-home assessments, the development of parenting skills, and updating or readministering assessment instruments to identify physical and developmental disabilities. As one PIC reviewer commented on a case, “There appear to be hidden barriers — behavioral problems, loss of custody, and housing instability — that point to the need for a more in-depth assessment.”

2. *Case management improvements.* PIC reviewers' recommendations for improving case management focused primarily on accurately and completely entering case information into CARES, updating participants' employability plans, and resolving conflicting data and discrepancies. In one case, for example, the PIC reviewer commented that there was conflicting medical information regarding the participant's capacity to work. The reviewer recommended that the case manager resolve this issue to ensure that the client's tier placement and employability plan were appropriate.
3. *Employability and skills improvement.* In some cases, PIC reviewers offered suggestions for skills improvement or employment possibilities. For example, one reviewer commented: "Typing classes are the first step toward her goal of employment in office administration. Since she has started along this route, this training should be supplemented with additional training in office administration. Perhaps an office assistant certification program would be appropriate."
4. *Broad focus.* The PIC reviewers particularly seemed to challenge case managers to examine the case broadly and to understand how issues involving other family members impact the participant's situation. Many cases discussed the disabilities of participants' children and/or legal issues involving a family member. In particular, noncompliance with Learnfare<sup>30</sup> was a recurring theme. For example, one reviewer commented: "[Client] has difficulty with behavior of sons [and] back problems. Father of the children is incarcerated. Client states that she is not sure what kind of trouble sons are getting into though they are often being arrested. One son is in house arrest and the other one was suspended from school because of attacking a school counselor. Client stated that both sons have learning problems and are taking medications."

## **VII. Outcomes of Initial W-2 Time-Limit Extension Requests**

Between October 1999 and September 2000, all W-2 agencies in Wisconsin submitted 285 extension requests to the Department of Workforce Development. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the outcomes for these cases, based on when they reached month 24. Of the 285 extension requests, 228 (80 percent) were approved; 3 (less than 1 percent) were pending; none was

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<sup>30</sup>Learnfare has three program requirements: (1) school enrollment — children in W-2 groups are required to be enrolled in school; (2) mandatory case management — members of certain target groups are required to participate in case management; and (3) financial penalties — a financial penalty is imposed for not being enrolled in school or, if not enrolled, for not participating in case management, if required to do so (*Wisconsin Works Manual*, Section 12.1.0).

**Implementing W-2 in Milwaukee County**

**Table 2**

**State of Wisconsin 24-Month Extension Request Outcomes,  
April 1999 to November 2000**

Outcome	Quarter 2 1999	Quarter 3 1999	Quarter 4 1999	Quarter 1 2000	Quarter 2 2000	Quarter 3 2000	Quarter 4 2000	Total
Approved	1	11	76	51	46	37	6	228
Pending	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
Denied	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Withdrawn	0	3	15	20	7	9	0	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>285</b>

**State of Wisconsin 24-Month Extension Request Outcomes: Withdrawn Cases,  
April 1999 to November 2000**

Reason Withdrawn	Quarter 2 1999	Quarter 3 1999	Quarter 4 1999	Quarter 1 2000	Quarter 2 2000	Quarter 3 2000	Quarter 4 2000	Total
Moved to another tier	0	1	12	9	3	3	0	28
Found job	0	0	1	3	2	0	0	6
Received SSI	0	0	1	2	0	2	0	5
Ineligible	0	1	1	6	2	3	0	13
Moved	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>54</b>

SOURCE: Based on data provided by the State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.

denied; and 54 (nearly 24 percent) were withdrawn. Among the withdrawn cases, half (27) were moved to another employment position in W-2; 11 were determined ineligible for an extension by the local W-2 agency; 6 obtained a job; 4 received Supplemental Security Income (SSI); 5 were deemed ineligible; and 2 moved.

Expectedly, most of the extension requests (67.7 percent) were from W-2 agencies in Milwaukee County. As shown in Table 3, the outcomes for these requests were similar to the outcomes for the entire state. W-2 agencies in Milwaukee County submitted 193 extension requests, of which 148 (76.7 percent) were approved; 1 was pending; none was denied; and 44 (22.8 percent) were withdrawn. Of the cases withdrawn, over half (23) were moved to another employment position, most often to the CSJ tier; 9 were determined not eligible for an extension by the local W-2 agency; 5 obtained employment; 1 received SSI; 5 were ineligible; and 1 person moved.

#### **A. What Types of Cases Received an Extension?**

Nearly all the time-limit extension requests involved medical issues of some sort, and most participants had applied for (and in some cases been denied) SSI. The medical conditions included AIDS, alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA) issues, and severely disabled children with conditions including cerebral palsy, brain damage, and mental illness. Medical documentation was very important in these cases, and the staff we interviewed discussed the difficulties of obtaining documentation from physicians. Staff at the agency level reported that some physicians were tired of documentation requests from W-2 agencies and were reluctant to complete the forms needed to support an extension application.

#### **B. Why Were There So Few Extension Applications?**

Through November 2000, there were only 285 time-limit extension requests submitted from the entire state of Wisconsin. Given a total of approximately 11,000 W-2 cases, one may have expected more extension requests. In an interview with the state regional office, one staff member commented, “Initially [October 1999], we were preparing to receive about 260 extension requests from the agencies, but we only received 41.”

Several factors may influence the number of cases that are brought forward for an extension request. First, the extent to which participants are notified about the availability of an extension may vary. W-2 policy requires that FEPs discuss extensions with participants at month 18, but our study did not examine the extent to which this occurred. A previous MDRC study found that W-2 time limits were discussed in 51 percent of intake interviews,<sup>31</sup> although W-2 policy stipulates that time limits be discussed in all intake interviews. This issue was raised in interviews with staff at the PIC. Although W-2 policy requires that that FEPs notify participants about the availability of an extension, this is monitored only by reviewing CARES or hard copies of the files. A PIC staff member commented: “There is too much emphasis on CARES, without a valid way to really determine whether the information entered in CARES is actually valid. Did the FEP discuss this with the participant? Did the participant understand? There are too many important areas that are not effectively monitored.” Another PIC staff member commented: “Case management is not really reviewed. We review CARES management.”

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<sup>31</sup>Gooden, Doolittle, and Glispie, 2001.

**Implementing W-2 in Milwaukee County**

**Table 3**

**Milwaukee County 24-Month Extension Request Outcomes,  
April 1999 to November 2000**

Outcome	Quarter 2 1999	Quarter 3 1999	Quarter 4 1999	Quarter 1 2000	Quarter 2 2000	Quarter 3 2000	Quarter 4 2000	Total
Approved	0	1	48	37	31	26	5	148
Pending	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Denied	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Withdrawn	0	1	11	19	7	6	0	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>193</b>

**Milwaukee County 24-Month Extension Request Outcomes: Cases Withdrawn,  
April 1999 to November 2000**

Reason Withdrawn	Quarter 2 1999	Quarter 3 1999	Quarter 4 1999	Quarter 1 2000	Quarter 2 2000	Quarter 3 2000	Quarter 4 2000	Total
Moved to CSJ tier	0	0	5	3	3	2	0	13
Moved to W-2T tier	0	0	3	5	0	0	0	8
Moved to trial job tier	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Found job	0	0	1	2	2	0	0	5
Received SSI	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Ineligible	0	1	1	7	2	3	0	14
Moved	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>44</b>

SOURCE: Based on data provided by the State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.



Second, given the still-early implementation of W-2 and the effort involved in submitting an extension request, W-2 agencies may elect to offer the participant additional services through reassignment to another employment tier, in which the participant has additional clock time. This allows the agency to uncover additional barriers to employment and helps to ensure that the participant has received appropriate case management services from W-2.

Third, participants may have found employment or decided to no longer participate in W-2. According to a recent study examining 1,282 participants who reached 21 months in W-2 and did not receive an extension, 30 percent obtained employment; 20 percent moved to a different employment tier; and 25 percent were found by the W-2 agency not to qualify for an extension because they did not participate in finding employment or in assigned work activities. Less common reasons for not receiving an extension included, for example, voluntarily declining an extension, obtaining SSI or SSDI, and moving.<sup>32</sup>

### **C. Why Were No Extension Requests Denied?**

W-2 agencies contend that the state is hesitant to deny an extension request, whereas the state makes similar claims about the W-2 agencies. Some W-2 agency staff indicate that unapproved cases face three fates: (1) The state continues to request additional information or indicates that the application is not complete, thus engaging in a cyclic, back-and-forth exchange; since the application is not officially “complete,” it does not have to be reviewed by the state, and the agency finally gives up and withdraws the case. (2) The participant is reassessed and moved to a different tier, which adds months to the employment position clock. (3) The state strongly encourages the agency to withdraw the request.

Staff at the state DWD office refute the assertion that they will not deny an extension request and contend that it is the W-2 agencies that are hesitant. One senior administrator said: “I had my pen in one hand and was on the phone with a W-2 agency with the other, fully prepared to fail to concur on the case. The agency asked, ‘Will we be the first agency [to have a case denied]?’ I answered, ‘Yes.’ The agency then agreed to our suggested course for the case, because they did not want to be the first W-2 agency to reject a request.” The state DWD office also denies that it encourages agencies to withdraw cases. Rather, it clarifies existing policies that make an extension request inappropriate or unnecessary, and when this is brought to the W-2 agency’s attention, the appropriate action is taken — which may include moving the participant to another employment tier or reexamining the extension criteria for the case.

## **VIII. Trends and Lessons from the Time-Limit Extension Process in Milwaukee County**

Based on Milwaukee County’s experience with W-2, several important points emerge regarding the time-limit extension process. First, W-2 time-limit extensions are designed for use on a case-by-case basis and only in unusual circumstances. The program’s underlying philosophy is

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<sup>32</sup>Mikelson, 2001, pp. 5-6.

to offer extensions only to participants who have verifiable, documented, and significant barriers to employment, and the implementation of extension policy is consistent with this philosophy.

Second, the extension request process requires an investment of administrative time. Although there have been relatively few extension applications, each case receives multiple reviews. Caseworkers and other W-2 agency staff spend considerable time assembling the application packets, each of which is about 15 to 50 pages and typically requires extensive medical documentation. Early critics of W-2 feared that families would be terminated from W-2 with little consideration. In practice, however, extension requests receive considerable review at the agency, regional, and state levels, suggesting that the examination is thorough and thoughtful. This is important, because the outcome of a case has direct impacts on the family involved. If the number of extension applications rises significantly over time, however, the agencies may face a difficult choice: increase staff and maintain the in-depth review process, or retain staffing levels and reduce the per case review process.

Third, the outcomes of extension requests depend heavily on the cooperation of the medical community, and this varies. Most extension requests relate to a medical condition of the participant or a family member. W-2 agency staff contend that the state requests more and more medical documentation, including multiple assessments by physicians. The agencies rely on the medical community to provide this documentation, and securing it can be time-consuming. A W-2 agency staff member commented: “The doctors are often not aware of the significance of that form and how it will affect the client’s benefits. A lot of times the doctors will indicate that the client will never get better. This does not satisfy the state’s requirements.” The state wants further information about such requests, and, in many instances, physicians are slow to respond.

Fourth, as the W-2 program has evolved over time, agency case management practices are randomly and routinely monitored to determine whether clients are receiving appropriate services. In assessing early extension requests, regional administrators were surprised by the lack of case management by the W-2 agencies. A regional staff member commented: “These extensions were approved because of the lack of case management. The state review team wrote fairly specific letters of recommendations and the [staff] communicated this back to the agencies. Over time, the agencies have improved their case management and are screening cases better.” The extension request process examines how the W-2 agencies have managed their cases and identifies areas for improvement.

Fifth, it is clear that W-2 cases that are granted a time-limit extension have received multiple and intensive reviews. However, the process does not operate in reverse: Comparable effort is not invested to determine whether all cases that should receive an extension are brought forward. For instance, if the PIC review of cases offers recommendations for improved case management, those cases do not automatically receive a time-limit extension. There is no uniform programmatic compensation for W-2 participants who receive poor or inappropriate case management services; nor is there monitoring of the implications for time-limit extension applications that are never officially denied but are also never officially completed.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>According to state DWD staff, during the MDRC study period, review of such cases stopped temporarily due to workload issues and was reinstated after this study concluded.

Sixth, some individuals are highly unlikely to ever be able to work, and, in its current form, W-2 is not designed to offer long-term support services. During all the interviews, consensus arose that there is a group of W-2 participants who have severe barriers to employment. A staff member at the state regional office suggested that the state DWD office needs to set what is considered to be an acceptable level of extension requests: “There is too much time spent on these few cases.” This same staff member proposed that the state establish a fifth tier for clients with severe barriers and extremely low likelihood of employment. A state DWD administrator conceded: “Some have asked whether W-2 should have a fifth rung. The state will have to review this and articulate a policy direction.”

## **IX. Epilogue**

Since the data collection period for this report, the State of Wisconsin’s Department of Workforce Development and the W-2 agencies have reported that they have learned much from the time-limit extension review process and have applied some of these lessons to the W-2 program. Cases approaching the 24-month time limit are now reviewed before the extension request point. Further, the Division of Workforce Solutions has developed a comprehensive plan to ensure that W-2 agencies are aware of the need for, and have the tools to perform, early and ongoing screening and assessment of participants. Also, the state has revamped the medical capacity form, which now includes a brief explanation of the W-2 program and offers a spectrum of options for W-2 activities, including some that participants can perform within their medical restrictions. As these innovations are put in place, they will alter the implementation of W-2’s time-limit policies.

## Glossary

- CARES. Client Assistance for Re-Employment and Economic Support.** Wisconsin's state-wide automated record system; used in W-2 to establish eligibility and to record case management activities.
- Case management follow-up (CMF).** A case management category in the unsubsidized employment tier; includes employed individuals previously assigned to a subsidized employment tier, such as CSJ, trial job, or W-2T. Participants in this category do not receive a cash grant but are eligible for case management services, earned income credits, Food Stamps, medical assistance, child care, and job access loans.
- Case management services (CMS).** A case management category in the unsubsidized employment tier; includes individuals who are unemployed but capable of obtaining employment. Participants in this category do not receive a cash grant but are eligible for case management services, earned income credits, Food Stamps, medical assistance, child care, and job access loans.
- Case management unsubsidized employment (CMU).** A case management category in the unsubsidized employment tier; includes individuals working in unsubsidized employment. Participants in this category do not receive a cash grant but are eligible for case management services, earned income credits, Food Stamps, medical assistance, child care, and job access loans.
- Community service job (CSJ).** A W-2 employment position or tier for individuals who are not job-ready. A CSJ is intended to improve the employability of participants by providing work experience and training in the public and private sectors. Participants in this tier can receive a cash grant of \$673 per month.
- Custodial parent of an infant (CMC).** A category in W-2 that allows the parent of an infant (up to 12 weeks old) to receive a monthly payment of \$673 without being subject to any participation requirements.
- Department of Workforce Development (DWD).** The State of Wisconsin agency responsible for the overall administration of W-2.
- Early entrants.** Participants who enrolled in W-2 during the period of conversion from AFDC (from October 1997 through March 1998).
- Employment Solutions of Milwaukee, Inc.** One of five agencies selected to implement W-2 in Milwaukee County. Employment Solutions is a nonprofit organization that is a subsidiary of Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin. Employment Solutions provides W-2 services to participants in Regions 4 and 5.
- Financial and employment planner (FEP).** A case manager employed or contracted by a W-2 agency who provides eligibility determination, job-readiness screening, employability planning, and ongoing financial and employment case management services.

**Job access loan.** A loan administered through the W-2 agency to assist a participant to overcome an immediate and discrete financial crisis that prevents the participant from obtaining or maintaining employment.

**Late entrants.** Participants who enrolled in W-2 during the second year of operations (from November 1998 through October 1999).

**Maximus, Inc.** One of five agencies selected to implement W-2 in Milwaukee County. Maximus is a private, for-profit firm that provides W-2 services to participants in Region 6.

**Middle entrants.** Participants who enrolled in W-2 during the remainder of the first year of operations (from April through October 1998).

**Opportunities Industrialization Center of Greater Milwaukee, Inc. (OIC).** One of five agencies selected to implement W-2 in Milwaukee County. A nonprofit, community-based organization that provides services to participants in Region 3.

**Resource specialist.** A W-2 agency employee or contracted employee who assesses an applicant's needs, performs initial referrals to service providers, diverts the individual to other resources, and evaluates the need for W-2 services.

**Sanction.** A financial penalty imposed on a CSJ or W-2T participant for failure to participate in assigned activities, without good cause. Cash benefits are reduced by \$5.15 per hour for each hour of nonparticipation.

**Strike.** A penalty imposed on a W-2 participant who fails or refuses, without good cause, to participate in a W-2 employment position. A participant who accumulates three strikes in any W-2 employment tier will be ineligible to participate in that tier for life.

**Supportive services planner (SSP).** A county government employee who determines eligibility for W-2 supportive services such as Food Stamps, medical assistance, child care, and emergency assistance.

**Tier.** A W-2 employment position; see CSJ, trial job, unsubsidized employment, and W-2T.

**Trial job.** A W-2 employment position or tier designed to improve the employability of participants by providing work experience and training to assist them in moving to unsubsidized employment. The W-2 subsidy for a trial job is paid directly to the employer.

**United Migrant Opportunity Services, Inc. (UMOS).** One of five agencies selected to implement W-2 in Milwaukee County. UMOS is a nonprofit, community-based organization that provides services to participants in Region 2.

**Unsubsidized employment.** Employment for which a W-2 agency provides no subsidy to the employer; includes self-employment and entrepreneurship. This highest tier, or rung, of the W-2 program includes three subcategories: CMF, CMS, and CMU.

**W-2 Transition (W-2T).** A W-2 employment position or tier designed for individuals who are not job-ready but tend to have long-term barriers to employment, such as incapacitation of self or child. This is the lowest rung on the W-2 employment ladder. Participants in this tier can receive a cash grant of \$628 per month.

**Wisconsin Works (W-2).** Wisconsin's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant program for families with dependent children.

**YW Works.** One of five agencies selected to implement W-2 in Milwaukee County. YW Works is a limited-liability, for-profit organization that provides services to participants in Region 1.

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# Recent Publications on MDRC Projects

Note: For works not published by MDRC, the publisher's name is shown in parentheses. With a few exceptions, this list includes reports published by MDRC since 1999. A complete publications list is available from MDRC and on its Web site ([www.mdrc.org](http://www.mdrc.org)), from which copies of MDRC's publications can also be downloaded.

## Reforming Welfare and Making Work Pay

### Next Generation Project

A collaboration among researchers at MDRC and several other leading research institutions focused on studying the effects of welfare, antipoverty, and employment policies on children and families.

*How Welfare and Work Policies Affect Children: A Synthesis of Research.* 2001. Pamela Morris, Aletha Huston, Greg Duncan, Danielle Crosby, Johannes Bos.

*How Welfare and Work Policies Affect Employment and Income: A Synthesis of Research.* 2001. Dan Bloom, Charles Michalopoulos.

### reWORKing Welfare: Technical Assistance for States and Localities

A multifaceted effort to assist states and localities in designing and implementing their welfare reform programs. The project includes a series of "how-to" guides, conferences, briefings, and customized, in-depth technical assistance.

*After AFDC: Welfare-to-Work Choices and Challenges for States.* 1997. Dan Bloom.

*Work First: How to Implement an Employment-Focused Approach to Welfare Reform.* 1997. Amy Brown.

*Business Partnerships: How to Involve Employers in Welfare Reform.* 1998. Amy Brown, Maria Buck, Erik Skinner.

*Promoting Participation: How to Increase Involvement in Welfare-to-Work Activities.* 1999. Gayle Hamilton, Susan Scrivener.

*Encouraging Work, Reducing Poverty: The Impact of Work Incentive Programs.* 2000. Gordon Berlin.

*Steady Work and Better Jobs: How to Help Low-Income Parents Sustain Employment and Advance in the Workforce.* 2000. Julie Strawn, Karin Martinson.

*Beyond Work First: How to Help Hard-to-Employ Individuals Get Jobs and Succeed in the Workforce.* 2001. Amy Brown.

### Project on Devolution and Urban Change

A multi-year study in four major urban counties — Cuyahoga County, Ohio (which includes the city of Cleveland), Los Angeles, Miami-Dade, and Philadelphia — that examines how welfare reforms are being implemented and affect poor people, their neighborhoods, and the institutions that serve them.

*Big Cities and Welfare Reform: Early Implementation and Ethnographic Findings from the Project on Devolution and Urban Change.*

1999. Janet Quint, Kathryn Edin, Maria Buck, Barbara Fink, Yolanda Padilla, Olis Simmons-Hewitt, Mary Valmont.

*Food Security and Hunger in Poor, Mother-Headed Families in Four U.S. Cities.* 2000. Denise Polit, Andrew London, John Martinez.

*Assessing the Impact of Welfare Reform on Urban Communities: The Urban Change Project and Methodological Considerations.* 2000. Charles Michalopoulos, Johannes Bos, Robert Lalonde, Nandita Verma.

*Post-TANF Food Stamp and Medicaid Benefits: Factors That Aid or Impede Their Receipt.* 2001. Janet Quint, Rebecca Widom.

*Social Service Organizations and Welfare Reform.* 2001. Barbara Fink, Rebecca Widom.

*Monitoring Outcomes for Cuyahoga County's Welfare Leavers: How Are They Faring?* 2001. Nandita Verma, Claudia Coulton.

*The Health of Poor Urban Women: Findings from the Project on Devolution and Urban Change.* 2001. Denise Polit, Andrew London, John Martinez.

*Is Work Enough? The Experiences of Current and Former Welfare Mothers Who Work.* 2001. Rebecca Widom, Denise Polit, Kathryn Edin, Stan Bowie, Andrew London, Ellen Scott, Abel Valenzuela.

## ***Time Limits***

### **Florida's Family Transition Program**

An evaluation of Florida's initial time-limited welfare program, which includes services, requirements, and financial work incentives intended to reduce long-term welfare receipt and help welfare recipients find and keep jobs.

*The Family Transition Program: Implementation and Three-Year Impacts of Florida's Initial Time-Limited Welfare Program.* 1999. Dan Bloom, Mary Farrell, James Kemple, Nandita Verma.

*The Family Transition Program: Final Report on Florida's Initial Time-Limited Welfare Program.* 2000. Dan Bloom, James Kemple, Pamela Morris, Susan Scrivener, Nandita Verma, Richard Hendra.

### **Cross-State Study of Time-Limited Welfare**

An examination of the implementation of some of the first state-initiated time-limited welfare programs.

*Welfare Time Limits: An Interim Report Card.* 1999. Dan Bloom.

### **Connecticut's Jobs First Program**

An evaluation of Connecticut's statewide time-limited welfare program, which includes financial work incentives and requirements to participate in employment-related services aimed at rapid job placement. This study provides some of the earliest information on the effects of time limits in major urban areas.

*Connecticut Post-Time Limit Tracking Study: Six-Month Survey Results.* 1999. Jo Anna Hunter-Manns, Dan Bloom.

*Jobs First: Implementation and Early Impacts of Connecticut's Welfare Reform Initiative.* 2000. Dan Bloom, Laura Melton, Charles Michalopoulos, Susan Scrivener, Johanna Walter.

*Connecticut's Jobs First Program: An Analysis of Welfare Leavers.* 2000. Laura Melton, Dan Bloom.

### **Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project**

An evaluation of Vermont's statewide welfare reform program, which includes a work requirement after a certain period of welfare receipt, and financial work incentives.

*Forty-Two Month Impacts of Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project.* 1999. Richard Hendra, Charles Michalopoulos.

*WRP: Key Findings from the Forty-Two-Month Client Survey.* 2000. Dan Bloom, Richard Hendra, Charles Michalopoulos.

## ***Financial Incentives***

*Encouraging Work, Reducing Poverty: The Impact of Work Incentive Programs.* 2000. Gordon Berlin.

### **Minnesota Family Investment Program**

An evaluation of Minnesota's pilot welfare reform initiative, which aims to encourage work, alleviate poverty, and reduce welfare dependence.

*Reforming Welfare and Rewarding Work: Final Report on the Minnesota Family Investment Program.* 2000:

*Volume 1: Effects on Adults.* Cynthia Miller, Virginia Knox, Lisa Gennetian, Martey Doodoo, Jo Anna Hunter, Cindy Redcross.

*Volume 2: Effects on Children.* Lisa Gennetian, Cynthia Miller.

*Reforming Welfare and Rewarding Work: A Summary of the Final Report on the Minnesota Family Investment Program.* 2000. Virginia Knox, Cynthia Miller, Lisa Gennetian.

*Final Report on the Implementation and Impacts of the Minnesota Family Investment Program in Ramsey County.* 2000. Patricia Auspos, Cynthia Miller, Jo Anna Hunter.

### **New Hope Project**

A test of a community-based, work-focused antipoverty program and welfare alternative operating in Milwaukee.

*New Hope for People with Low Incomes: Two-Year Results of a Program to Reduce Poverty and Reform Welfare.* 1999. Johannes Bos, Aletha Huston, Robert Granger, Greg Duncan, Thomas Brock, Vonnie McLoyd.

### **Canada's Self-Sufficiency Project**

A test of the effectiveness of a temporary earnings supplement on the employment and welfare receipt of public assistance recipients. Reports on the Self-Sufficiency Project are available from: Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC), 275 Slater St., Suite 900, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5H9, Canada. Tel.: 613-237-4311; Fax: 613-237-5045. In the United States, the reports are also available from MDRC.

*Does SSP Plus Increase Employment? The Effect of Adding Services to the Self-Sufficiency Project's Financial Incentives* (SRDC). 1999. Gail Quets, Philip Robins, Elsie Pan, Charles Michalopoulos, David Card.

*When Financial Work Incentives Pay for Themselves: Early Findings from the Self-Sufficiency Project's Applicant Study* (SRDC). 1999. Charles Michalopoulos, Philip Robins, David Card.

*The Self-Sufficiency Project at 36 Months: Effects of a Financial Work Incentive on Employment and Income* (SRDC). 2000. Charles Michalopoulos, David Card, Lisa Gennetian, Kristen Harknett, Philip K. Robins.

*The Self-Sufficiency Project at 36 Months: Effects on Children of a Program That Increased Parental Employment and Income* (SRDC). 2000. Pamela Morris, Charles Michalopoulos.

*When Financial Incentives Pay for Themselves: Interim Findings from the Self-Sufficiency Project's Applicant Study* (SRDC). 2001. Charles Michalopoulos, Tracey Hoy.

## **Mandatory Welfare Employment Programs**

### **National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies**

Conceived and sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), with support from the U.S. Department of Education (ED), this is the largest-scale evaluation ever conducted of different strategies for moving people from welfare to employment.

*Do Mandatory Welfare-to-Work Programs Affect the Well-Being of Children? A Synthesis of Child Research Conducted as Part of the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies* (HHS/ED). 2000. Gayle Hamilton.

*Evaluating Alternative Welfare-to-Work Approaches: Two-Year Impacts for Eleven Programs* (HHS/ED). 2000. Stephen Freedman, Daniel Friedlander, Gayle Hamilton, JoAnn Rock, Marisa Mitchell, Jodi Nudelman, Amanda Schweder, Laura Storto.

*Impacts on Young Children and Their Families Two Years After Enrollment: Findings from the Child Outcomes Study* (HHS/ED). 2000. Sharon McGroder, Martha Zaslow, Kristin Moore, Suzanne LeMenestrel.

*What Works Best for Whom: Impacts of 20 Welfare-to-Work Programs by Subgroup* (HHS/ED). 2000. Charles Michalopoulos, Christine Schwartz.

*Evaluating Two Approaches to Case Management: Implementation, Participation Patterns, Costs, and Three-Year Impacts of the Columbus Welfare-to-Work Program* (HHS/ED). 2001. Susan Scrivener, Johanna Walter.

### **Los Angeles's Jobs-First GAIN Program**

An evaluation of Los Angeles's refocused GAIN (welfare-to-work) program, which emphasizes rapid employment. This is the first in-depth study of a full-scale "work first" program in one of the nation's largest urban areas.

*The Los Angeles Jobs-First GAIN Evaluation: First-Year Findings on Participation Patterns and Impacts*. 1999. Stephen Freedman, Marisa Mitchell, David Navarro.

*The Los Angeles Jobs-First GAIN Evaluation: Final Report on a Work First Program in a Major Urban Center*. 2000. Stephen Freedman, Jean Knab, Lisa Gennetian, David Navarro.

## **Teen Parents on Welfare**

*Teenage Parent Programs: A Synthesis of the Long-Term Effects of the New Chance Demonstration, Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program, and the Teenage Parent Demonstration (TPD)*. 1998. Robert Granger, Rachel Cytron.

### **Ohio's LEAP Program**

An evaluation of Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program, which uses financial incentives to encourage teenage parents on welfare to stay in or return to school.

*LEAP: Final Report on Ohio's Welfare Initiative to Improve School Attendance Among Teenage Parents*. 1997. Johannes Bos, Veronica Fellerath.

### **New Chance Demonstration**

A test of a comprehensive program of services that seeks to improve the economic status and general well-being of a group of highly disadvantaged young women and their children.

*New Chance: Final Report on a Comprehensive Program for Young Mothers in Poverty and Their Children*. 1997. Janet Quint, Johannes Bos, Denise Polit.

*Parenting Behavior in a Sample of Young Mothers in Poverty: Results of the New Chance Observational Study*. 1998. Martha Zaslow, Carolyn Eldred, editors.

## **Focusing on Fathers**

### **Parents' Fair Share Demonstration**

A demonstration for unemployed noncustodial parents (usually fathers) of children on welfare. PFS aims to improve the men's employment and earnings, reduce child poverty by increasing child support payments, and assist the fathers in playing a broader constructive role in their children's lives.

*Fathers' Fair Share: Helping Poor Men Manage Child Support and Fatherhood* (Russell Sage Foundation). 1999. Earl Johnson, Ann Levine, Fred Doolittle.

*Parenting and Providing: The Impact of Parents' Fair Share on Paternal Involvement*. 2000. Virginia Knox, Cindy Redcross.

*Working and Earning: The Impact of Parents' Fair Share on Low-Income Fathers' Employment.* 2000. John M. Martinez, Cynthia Miller.

*The Responsible Fatherhood Curriculum.* 2000. Eileen Hayes, with Kay Sherwood.

*The Challenge of Helping Low-Income Fathers Support Their Children: Final Lessons from Parents' Fair Share.* 2001. Cynthia Miller, Virginia Knox.

### **Other**

*Monitoring Outcomes for Cuyahoga County's Welfare Leavers: How Are They Faring?* 2001. Nandita Verma, Claudia Coulton.

## **Career Advancement and Wage Progression**

### **Opening Doors to Earning Credentials**

An exploration of strategies for increasing low-wage workers' access to and completion of community college programs.

*Opening Doors: Expanding Educational Opportunities for Low-Income Workers.* 2001. Susan Golonka, Lisa Matus-Grossman.

## **Education Reform**

### **Accelerated Schools**

This study examines the implementation and impacts on achievement of the Accelerated Schools model, a whole-school reform targeted at at-risk students.

*Evaluating the Accelerated Schools Approach: A Look at Early Implementation and Impacts on Student Achievement in Eight Elementary Schools.* 2001. Howard Bloom, Sandra Ham, Laura Melton, Julienne O'Brien.

### **Career Academies**

The largest and most comprehensive evaluation of a school-to-work initiative, this study examines a promising approach to high school restructuring and the school-to-work transition.

*Career Academies: Building Career Awareness and Work-Based Learning Activities Through Employer Partnerships.* 1999. James Kemple, Susan Poglinco, Jason Snipes.

*Career Academies: Impacts on Students' Engagement and Performance in High School.* 2000. James Kemple, Jason Snipes.

### **Project GRAD**

This evaluation examines Project GRAD, an education initiative targeted at urban schools and combining a number of proven or promising reforms.

*Building the Foundation for Improved Student Performance: The Pre-Curricular Phase of Project GRAD Newark.* 2000. Sandra Ham, Fred Doolittle, Glee Ivory Holton.

### **LILAA Initiative**

This study of the Literacy in Libraries Across America (LILAA) initiative explores the efforts of five adult literacy programs in public libraries to improve learner persistence.

*So I Made Up My Mind: Introducing a Study of Adult Learner Persistence in Library Literacy Programs.* 2000. John T. Comings, Sondra Cuban.

*"I Did It for Myself": Studying Efforts to Increase Adult Learner Persistence in Library Literacy Programs.* 2001. John Comings, Sondra Cuban, Johannes Bos, Catherine Taylor.

### **Toyota Families in Schools**

A discussion of the factors that determine whether an impact analysis of a social program is feasible and warranted, using an evaluation of a new family literacy initiative as a case study.

*An Evaluability Assessment of the Toyota Families in Schools Program.* 2001. Janet Quint.

### **Project Transition**

A demonstration program that tested a combination of school-based strategies to facilitate students' transition from middle school to high school.

*Project Transition: Testing an Intervention to Help High School Freshmen Succeed.* 1999. Janet Quint, Cynthia Miller, Jennifer Pastor, Rachel Cytron.

### **Equity 2000**

Equity 2000 is a nationwide initiative sponsored by the College Board to improve low-income students' access to college. The MDRC paper examines the implementation of Equity 2000 in Milwaukee Public Schools.

*Getting to the Right Algebra: The Equity 2000 Initiative in Milwaukee Public Schools.* 1999. Sandra Ham, Erica Walker.

### **School-to-Work Project**

A study of innovative programs that help students make the transition from school to work or careers.

*Home-Grown Lessons: Innovative Programs Linking School and Work* (Jossey-Bass Publishers). 1995. Edward Pauly, Hilary Kopp, Joshua Haimson.

*Home-Grown Progress: The Evolution of Innovative School-to-Work Programs*. 1997. Rachel Pedraza, Edward Pauly, Hilary Kopp.

## **Employment and Community Initiatives**

### **Jobs-Plus Initiative**

A multi-site effort to greatly increase employment among public housing residents.

*Mobilizing Public Housing Communities for Work: Origins and Early Accomplishments of the Jobs-Plus Demonstration*. 1999. James Riccio.

*Building a Convincing Test of a Public Housing Employment Program Using Non-Experimental Methods: Planning for the Jobs-Plus Demonstration*. 1999. Howard Bloom.

*Jobs-Plus Site-by-Site: An Early Look at Program Implementation*. 2000. Edited by Susan Philipson Bloom with Susan Blank.

*Building New Partnerships for Employment: Collaboration Among Agencies and Public Housing Residents in the Jobs-Plus Demonstration*. 2001. Linda Kato, James Riccio.

### **Neighborhood Jobs Initiative**

An initiative to increase employment in a number of low-income communities.

*The Neighborhood Jobs Initiative: An Early Report on the Vision and Challenges of Bringing an Employment Focus to a Community-Building Initiative*. 2001. Frieda Molina, Laura Nelson.

### **Connections to Work Project**

A study of local efforts to increase competition in the choice of providers of employment services for welfare recipients and other low-income populations. The project also provides assistance to cutting-edge local initiatives aimed at helping such people access and secure jobs.

*Designing and Administering a Wage-Paying Community Service Employment Program Under TANF: Some Considerations and Choices*. 1999. Kay Sherwood.

*San Francisco Works: Toward an Employer-Led Approach to Welfare Reform and Workforce Development*. 2000. Steven Bliss.

### **Canada's Earnings Supplement Project**

A test of an innovative financial incentive intended to expedite the reemployment of displaced workers and encourage full-year work by seasonal or part-year workers, thereby also reducing receipt of Unemployment Insurance.

*Testing a Re-employment Incentive for Displaced Workers: The Earnings Supplement Project*. 1999. Howard Bloom, Saul Schwartz, Susanna Lui-Gurr, Suk-Won Lee.

## **MDRC Working Papers on Research Methodology**

A new series of papers that explore alternative methods of examining the implementation and impacts of programs and policies.

*Building a Convincing Test of a Public Housing Employment Program Using Non-Experimental Methods: Planning for the Jobs-Plus Demonstration*. 1999. Howard Bloom.

*Estimating Program Impacts on Student Achievement Using "Short" Interrupted Time Series*. 1999. Howard Bloom.

*Using Cluster Random Assignment to Measure Program Impacts: Statistical Implications for the Evaluation of Education Programs*. 1999. Howard Bloom, Johannes Bos, Suk-Won Lee.

*Measuring the Impacts of Whole School Reforms: Methodological Lessons from an Evaluation of Accelerated Schools*. 2001. Howard Bloom.

*The Politics of Random Assignment: Implementing Studies and Impacting Policy*. 2000. Judith Gueron.

*Modeling the Performance of Welfare-to-Work Programs: The Effects of Program Management and Services, Economic Environment, and Client Characteristics*. 2001. Howard Bloom, Carolyn Hill, James Riccio.

*A Regression-Based Strategy for Defining Subgroups in a Social Experiment*. 2001. James Kemple, Jason Snipes.

*Extending the Reach of Randomized Social Experiments: New Directions in Evaluations of American Welfare-to-Work and Employment Initiatives*. 2001. James Riccio, Howard Bloom.

## About MDRC

The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan social policy research organization. We are dedicated to learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people. Through our research and the active communication of our findings, we seek to enhance the effectiveness of social policies and programs. MDRC was founded in 1974 and is located in New York City and San Francisco.

MDRC's current projects focus on welfare and economic security, education, and employment and community initiatives. Complementing our evaluations of a wide range of welfare reforms are new studies of supports for the working poor and emerging analyses of how programs affect children's development and their families' well-being. In the field of education, we are testing reforms aimed at improving the performance of public schools, especially in urban areas. Finally, our community projects are using innovative approaches to increase employment in low-income neighborhoods.

Our projects are a mix of demonstrations — field tests of promising program models — and evaluations of government and community initiatives, and we employ a wide range of methods to determine a program's effects, including large-scale studies, surveys, case studies, and ethnographies of individuals and families. We share the findings and lessons from our work — including best practices for program operators — with a broad audience within the policy and practitioner community, as well as the general public and the media.

Over the past quarter century, MDRC has worked in almost every state, all of the nation's largest cities, and Canada. We conduct our projects in partnership with state and local governments, the federal government, public school systems, community organizations, and numerous private philanthropies.