The Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration

Implementation and Early Impacts of the Next Generation of Subsidized Employment Programs

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Chapter 2

GoodTransitions
(Atlanta, GA)

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Executive Summary

The GoodTransitions program provided eligible noncustodial parents with a staged sequence of transitional jobs designed to build participants' employability and work experience by gradually increasing their responsibilities. It was operated by Goodwill of North Georgia and the Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) in the Georgia Department of Human Services. As described in Chapter 1, the staged approach to subsidized jobs is considered a structural enhancement to previous transitional jobs programs. Following an intensive screening and enrollment process that involved writing assignments, group speaking, drug tests, and assessments, the program placed participants in jobs at local Goodwill retail stores where they received close instruction and supervision from job coaches. Once job coaches observed that participants had demonstrated sufficient preparation and work habits in Goodwill stores, participants moved into placements with private, external employers located around greater Atlanta, in positions that more closely resembled "real-world" jobs, with their wages subsidized by GoodTransitions. Finally, employment specialists worked with participants to identify and secure permanent, unsubsidized jobs in the regular labor market. Over the course of their participation in the program, participants also received job coaching and individual case management services designed to help them address obstacles to performing well in their transitional jobs or securing unsubsidized employment.

Main Findings

- **Ninety-one percent of participants were black, 94 percent were male, and 70 percent were 35 years old or older. Almost all (99 percent) had work experience, but many were struggling.** Almost all of the study participants had worked before, and almost 85 percent had held a job for at least six months at some point in the past. About 80 percent had at least high school diplomas or equivalents, though only a little over 10 percent had post-secondary degrees. At the same time, it is clear that many participants were struggling: Nearly half had worked for a year or less in the previous three years, and half were staying in someone else's home. At least two-thirds of participants had past convictions according to state administrative records, and one-third had been incarcerated in prison.

- **GoodTransitions met its enrollment targets, but recruitment was a challenge.** Almost all study participants were referred by the DCSS Fatherhood program, which provides employment services to unemployed noncustodial parents. Over time, it became clear that the pool of Fatherhood participants

who were eligible for GoodTransitions (having registered with Selective Service and passed the required drug tests) and who were interested in it was smaller than anticipated. In addition, only a portion of those who were referred ended up enrolling, in part because of GoodTransition's intensive screening process, which required participants to show up for two and a half days of assessment activities before being randomly assigned to the program or back to Fatherhood services. As a result, the individuals who enrolled in the study were likely to have been relatively highly motivated, which may help to explain the high levels of retention in program services.

- **GoodTransitions delivered most of its core components as intended, and all program group members received some level of service through the program.** Staff members were generally experienced in working with the population, appeared well acquainted with their caseloads, and consulted frequently with one another and with employment partners. Almost all program group members (97 percent) were placed into the first stage of subsidized employment at Goodwill, and almost two-thirds (63 percent) worked in a second-stage subsidized job in the community. Those who worked in subsidized jobs participated for around the time periods initially intended (one month at Goodwill and three months in a second-stage external employer job). However, the program deviated from the intended model in the types and diversity of second-stage jobs that were available to participants. While these positions offered exposure to real-world work environments, there were a limited number of employers working with the program at this stage and those offered little opportunity for advancement. Most jobs at this second stage of the program were provided by a small number of retail stores and nonprofit organizations.

- **As expected, many control group members received employment help, but the program group received a more robust array of services.** Nearly all GoodTransitions participants (97 percent) received help finding or keeping a job, compared with about two-thirds of those in the control group (65 percent). Similarly, program group members received more help than control group members with criminal justice matters, child support and family issues, and education and training.

- **The program group was more likely to work than the control group during the first year of follow-up, and had higher earnings, though the differences between groups diminished over time.** Seventy-one percent of the control group worked during the first year, but the employment rate for

the program group (including subsidized jobs) was 98 percent. Similarly, program group members earned about $2,000 more, on average, over the course of the year. There was still a statistically significant difference in employment rates at the end of the follow-up period, but it appears that much of the difference between groups could be attributed to program group members who were working in GoodTransitions subsidized jobs, probably because they had reengaged with the program. It remains to be seen whether these differences will translate into longer-term increases in unsubsidized employment, length of employment, or earnings.

- **Overall, in the year after random assignment, program group members were 19 percentage points more likely to pay child support, made more consistent payments, and had higher payment amounts on average.** This increase is most likely because program group members had higher employment and earnings during this period.

This chapter offers detail on how the GoodTransitions program was structured and implemented. The first section provides background on the program model, the intended intervention, the recruitment and screening process, and the characteristics of the participants enrolled. The second section describes the implementation of the program, with a particular focus on the ways implementation aligned with or deviated from the intended model. The final section describes the program's one-year impacts on participation in services, employment, child support payments, and criminal justice outcomes (since two-thirds of the sample had past convictions in the state of Georgia and one-third had been previously incarcerated in prison).

GoodTransitions

Background

The GoodTransitions program was designed as a partnership between Goodwill of North Georgia and the Georgia Division of Child Support Services' Fatherhood program. It aimed to improve employment and earnings — as well as child support compliance rates — among low-income noncustodial parents in the Atlanta area who owed child support. It was one of two Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration (ETJD) programs testing a staged transition model, in which participants advanced from highly supported positions within the grantee organization — in this case, working in Goodwill retail stores with close instruction and supervision from job coaches — into private-sector jobs where their wages were subsidized by the program. The following sections provide a detailed overview of the local context in which the program operated, the process by which participants found their way into the program, and the service model and implementation of the GoodTransitions program.

Context

GoodTransitions services were delivered at five Goodwill locations in greater Atlanta, with participants drawn primarily from the five counties that make up the Atlanta metropolitan area: Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Gwinnett, and Fulton. The program was administered by Goodwill of North Georgia, an independent affiliate of Goodwill Industries International. Goodwill of North Georgia operates employment and training services for people with a variety of barriers to employment in counties throughout northern Georgia.

As one of the largest cities in the south, Atlanta has a diverse economy with several large employers spanning many industries. The area's largest employers — each employing 10,000 to 20,000 workers — include well-known businesses such as Delta Airlines, Coca-Cola, Walmart, and the Home Depot, as well as preeminent institutions of research and higher education such as Emory University and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.[1]

Despite this diverse economic base, the city experienced high unemployment during the evaluation period, and many study participants came from particularly hard-hit areas. Between 2012 and 2013, unemployment in the city was above 10 percent, and poverty rates ranged from 14 percent to 28 percent across the five counties of the Atlanta metropolitan area.[2] GoodTransitions' employment services were primarily intended for those struggling with longer-term

[1]Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce (2013)
[2]U.S. Census Bureau (2013); Bloch, Ericson, and Giratikanon (2014).

Box 2.1

The Fatherhood Program

The Fatherhood program was implemented by DCSS in 1998 in an effort to shift away from strict enforcement. The program works with noncustodial parents, primarily fathers, who owe child support, helping them gain skills and stable employment so that they can make regular child support payments. Noncustodial parents typically learn about Fatherhood services through word of mouth or from letters of interest sent out by DCSS once they become delinquent in their child support payments. In fiscal year 2011, 4,600 noncustodial parents received services through the Fatherhood program.[*]

In contrast to the subsidized work and intensive support offered by GoodTransitions, the Fatherhood program offers less comprehensive services, though the program does provide job-search assistance and some light case management. It appeared from interviews with Fatherhood staff members that the main incentives to participate are the renewal of one's driver's license and the suspension of enforcement actions by DCSS. When noncustodial parents are delinquent in paying child support, their driver's licenses are typically suspended after 90 days of nonpayment. If they participate in the Fatherhood program, however, their licenses are renewed. Furthermore, participation in Fatherhood suspends any enforcement action such as intercepting tax refunds, reporting delinquency to credit bureaus, seizing bank accounts, and filing contempt-of-court actions, which may result in jail time.

[*]Georgia Department of Human Services (n.d.).

barriers to employment, not temporary unemployment resulting from the recession, but this economic context may have made it harder to place participants in unsubsidized positions after they completed the program.

Child support policies also affected participants' experiences. In general, GoodTransitions operated in a child support enforcement environment that offered few accommodations for program participants. Child support enforcement suspended driver's licenses after 90 days of nonpayment, intercepted tax refunds, reported delinquency to credit bureaus, seized bank accounts, and filed contempt of court actions. (These types of typical enforcement actions can be found in many states.) There were no additional child support incentives to participate in GoodTransitions beyond those already offered for participation in the Fatherhood program. Those incentives included the suspension of enforcement actions during program participation and the reinstatement of driver's licenses. Box 2.1 describes the Fatherhood program in more detail. While the Fatherhood program did help participants seeking to modify their child support orders, GoodTransitions did not offer specific services to its participants in this area. Participants had to take the initiative on their own to request modifications. As is shown in Box 2.2, many participants were left with very little take-home pay after child support and taxes were deducted from their wages. In one case, a participant's take-home pay while in the program was as little as $2.31 per hour.

Box 2.2

Child Support Wage Withholding

A common refrain MDRC heard during research visits and in calls with GoodTransitions staff members was that it was difficult to keep participants motivated to stick with the program given their sometimes extraordinarily low take-home pay. While some programs in the ETJD project established additional incentives to encourage participation (including staged forgiveness for debt and expedited order modifications), DCSS offered GoodTransitions participants only the same benefits it offered all noncustodial parents who enrolled in Fatherhood services: a halt to enforcement actions and a reinstatement of driver's licenses. The program did not offer order adjustments or forgiveness of debt for study participants.

The table below shows the amount deducted for child support for 20 randomly chosen program participants. It shows the hours they worked over a two-week period, their gross pay, the amount withheld for child support (as a percentage of their gross pay and as a dollar amount), and their net pay (both total and hourly).

Child Support Withholding for Goodwill of North Georgia Participants

Participant	Hours Worked	Gross Pay ($)	Withheld for Child Support ($)	Withheld for Child Support (%)	Net Pay ($)	Net Pay/ Hour ($)
1	40	290.00	171.47	59.1	92.33	2.31
2	24	174.00	95.70	55.0	78.30	3.26
3	45	326.25	83.80	25.7	242.45	5.39
4	75	540.13	161.04	29.8	334.40	4.49
5	39	279.13	153.51	55.0	125.62	3.26
6	27	192.13	116.51	60.6	62.73	2.37
7	36	257.38	153.23	59.5	82.51	2.32
8	78	565.50	171.66	30.4	392.90	5.04
9	27	195.75	86.10	44.0	96.28	3.57
10	58	420.50	50.24	11.9	370.26	6.38
11	62	445.88	138.97	31.2	255.03	4.15
12	25	181.25	117.81	65.0	63.44	2.54
13	35	253.75	139.56	55.0	114.19	3.26
14	50	362.50	223.67	61.7	120.44	2.41
15	80	580.00	254.37	43.9	325.63	4.07
16	65	467.63	242.88	51.9	222.75	3.45
17	55	400.56	142.23	35.5	258.33	4.68
18	52	377.00	146.33	38.8	230.67	4.44
19	80	580.00	92.99	16.0	487.01	6.09
20	41	293.63	146.80	50.0	120.10	2.97

Intended Model

The GoodTransitions program was designed as a sequence of services moving participants from a heavily supported work environment and counseling structure toward a more real-world employment experience. The program design called for all participants to be recruited into the evaluation by case workers in the Fatherhood program. These staff members conducted the initial outreach, screening, and referral to Goodwill for orientation and enrollment. Immediately after enrollment, each participant was assigned a case manager and a Goodwill location to begin the first of two transitional jobs. That participant worked at a Goodwill store for approximately one month while receiving support and constructive criticism from an on-site job coach, and then moved into a less-supported position with a private employer in the community for about three months.[3] In interviews, program staff members acknowledged that some participants would need more than a month before they were ready to leave Goodwill stores, while others would be prepared to move on sooner. The one-month period was established, then, as an average length of time during which participants could build the employability skills they would need in the more traditional jobs of the program's second phase.

These second-stage private placements are referred to here as "community sites." Participants were still paid by the program during this stage, and Goodwill remained the employer of record. In some cases, the intention was that a participant would be hired at the community site at the end of the wage-subsidy period; in other cases, the community site was intended instead to offer a more realistic work experience as well as a reference and a line on one's résumé. Which of these two roles a community site played for a given participant was supposed to depend in part on how specific the participant's goals were, and in part on whether the participant had skills particularly suited to a certain job or career. In any case, the matching of participants with community sites was intended to be a deliberate process guided by each participant's long-term goals and by the kinds of skills the participant hoped to develop. At the same time, job developers were to work with participants to prepare them to search for unsubsidized jobs and to work with employers who might hire them.

At each stage of the program, participants were to receive personalized case management and job development services to help them overcome barriers to employment and to prepare them for interviews and for workforce expectations. In addition, for the duration of the program, weekly job club meetings were to allow participants to share job-search strategies and hear from guest speakers providing motivation. Participants would also be required to attend a

[3]GoodTransitions designed this phased model based on earlier research, including research about the GoodWorks! model operated in Augusta, Georgia by Goodwill Industries in collaboration with several government agencies. Past research suggested that the phased approach could ease hard-to-employ participants into a "real-world" work environment over time, as they were exposed to progressively greater responsibilities and higher expectations following an initial period of observation and assessment. See Kirby et al. (2002).

number of workshops (led by partner organizations) on topics such as anger management, financial literacy, and balancing work and home.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the sequence in which participants were meant to move through the components of the GoodTransitions program.

The staged employment model, central to Goodwill's enhancement of the transitional jobs intervention, has a theory of change that rests on the following central assumptions:

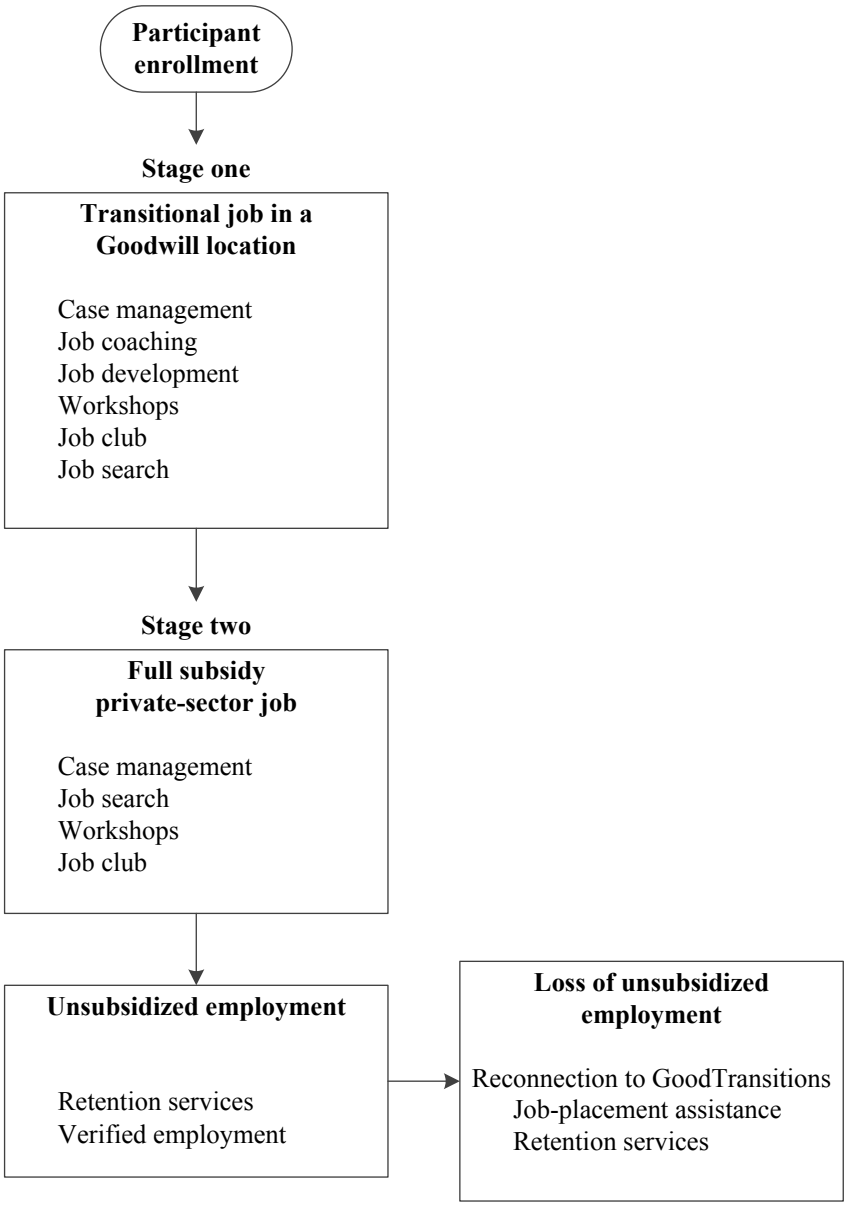
- **A staged model builds participants' skills by gradually increasing their responsibilities and exposure to workplace norms.** In several interviews with staff members, this gradual increase was consistently described as the strongest potential benefit of the staged approach. Staff members repeatedly said that the movement from a Goodwill store into a community-site position was intended to build soft skills such as personal presentation, punctuality, accountability, and proper conflict management, as well as confidence and self-esteem. As the program's proposal put it, "most program participants need a gradual transition after having been unemployed or having little to no work experience. The gradual progression to more independence, less direct supervision ... leads to increases in self-esteem, self-worth, stamina, and skills attainment." Notably, this rationale assumed that most participants would lack the soft skills needed to get and keep jobs.

- **The experience of having worked in a real-world, private-sector job makes a participant more appealing to potential future employers.** A secondary rationale for the staged approach is the hypothesis that employers may value "real-world" work experience more highly than experience gained in the supportive environment of "program jobs" like the jobs at Goodwill stores.

- **Subsidies allow potential employers to test participants at no cost before deciding whether to hire them.** The program initially planned to partner with employers who would consider hiring participants after their subsidies had expired. In such cases, the employers and participants would effectively be using the subsidy as an "opportunity to try each other out," as it was put in the grant proposal, at no cost to the employer. Further, employers had the assurance that the program would be able to help if problems arose on the job.

Figure 2.1

GoodTransitions Program Model



Recruitment and Study Enrollment

The target population for the GoodTransitions program was low-income noncustodial parents in metropolitan Atlanta. The program did not specify eligibility criteria beyond those established by the ETJD grant.[4] Referrals to the program came almost exclusively from the Fatherhood program. Evaluation participants were required to pass a program-administered drug test and — as required by the Department of Labor (DOL) — to be registered with Selective Service (for males). Referrals and enrollment into the program occurred every other week between March 2012 and December 2013. The program had an enrollment target of 1,000 people for the study (with 500 randomly assigned to receive services and 500 randomly assigned to serve as a control group).

- **Although the program ultimately met its enrollment target, recruitment proved to be much more difficult than either DCSS or Goodwill anticipated. The difficulty appeared to be largely due to communication challenges between DCSS and Goodwill and overly optimistic estimates of the pool of interested and eligible noncustodial parents.**

The referral process from the Fatherhood program into GoodTransitions began when Fatherhood agents — the case managers responsible for working directly with Fatherhood participants — talked to their current and new clients to gauge their interest in and suitability for GoodTransitions services. Those who were interested and eligible were referred to a GoodTransitions orientation and assessment week (discussed below). The Fatherhood agent completed and faxed a short form to Goodwill to provide information about the person referred. Goodwill then called the referred person before the first day of assessment week to encourage that person to show up.

According to Fatherhood staff members, only 30 percent to 40 percent of existing Fatherhood participants were eligible to participate in GoodTransitions. A large number were excluded because they had not registered with Selective Service, and many were simply not interested. According to Fatherhood staff members, participants who were referred to GoodTransitions but who did not show up at their assigned assessment weeks (without a good reason) were removed from the Fatherhood program and returned to DCSS enforcement. It is unclear whether this policy was truly enforced, however, as certain names appeared multiple

[4]The ETJD grant required that participants in programs targeting noncustodial parents be low-income, noncustodial parents who either had child support orders in place or who agreed to start the process of establishing orders within 30 days of enrollment. In addition, DOL grants require that male participants register with Selective Service. If an applicant is over age 26 and has not registered, it is no longer possible for him to register and he must seek a waiver of the requirement in order to receive funded services. This issue presented challenges for recruitment at a number of ETJD sites. In GoodTransitions, all participants had child support orders when they entered the program.

times on the referral forms faxed to Goodwill. Overall, of those who were eligible and expressed an initial interest in GoodTransitions, about 60 percent made it to the first day of assessment week.

Although GoodTransitions did not have specific eligibility criteria beyond those specified in the ETJD grant, Goodwill did conduct additional screening before enrollment and random assignment to determine whether potential participants would be best served by GoodTransitions or one of Goodwill's other programs. This determination took place during assessment week, a three-day intake and screening process that culminated in random assignment.[5] Assessment week was generally conducted every two weeks until the sample enrollment targets were met in December 2013. It was led by Goodwill's vocational evaluator with assistance from other Goodwill staff members. A representative from the Fatherhood program also attended to answer general child support questions and to reengage those participants who were ultimately deemed unsuitable for GoodTransitions or who were assigned to the control group.

Potential participants were administered a drug test, given written assignments and worksheets focusing on motivation and their desired occupations, and engaged in team-building exercises and role-playing in dealing with common workplace scenarios. GoodTransitions provided all potential participants with transportation vouchers (a gas card or public transportation card) to facilitate their attendance.

At the end of the second day, Goodwill and Fatherhood staff members assessed each potential participant using a standardized rubric that measured participants' suitability in a number of areas.[6] Based on the assessments, they decided whether potential participants would be suitable for the GoodTransitions program or for other Goodwill programs. For example, potential participants who lacked motivation or who had significant cognitive or behavioral challenges that the GoodTransitions staff was not prepared to address might be guided to a different program. Similarly, potential participants who did not need all of GoodTransitions' services (that is, those with no criminal background and stable work histories) were referred to less intensive services available through other Goodwill programs.

[5]In the early stages of the program, this assessment and screening period lasted four days. It was scaled back due to concerns about the burden on participants and the additional disappointment it generated among those assigned to the control group.

[6]The rubric assessed each participant as "below average," "average," or "above average" in the following areas: punctuality and attendance; curiosity (the ability to ask appropriate questions); motivation; critical thinking, reasoning, and problem solving; writing skills; employment history; and criminal background. Assessments were based on background information, exercises conducted during the first two days of assessment week, a homework assignment given the first day, and interactions with GoodTransitions and Fatherhood staff members.

Potential participants accepted as candidates for GoodTransitions often faced significant barriers to employment such as criminal records, low levels of education, and spotty employment histories.

On the third day of assessment week, those who were still interested in participating (and who had been deemed suitable for participation) returned to be randomly assigned to either the program group (GoodTransitions) or to the control group. Before random assignment, all potential participants were reminded of the details of the ETJD evaluation and had an opportunity to ask questions, after which they signed informed-consent forms and completed baseline information forms. After random assignment, participants assigned to the program group met with GoodTransitions staff members to review the program's components, rules, and expectations, and to complete sexual harassment training. Participants assigned to the control group met with GoodTransitions and Fatherhood staff members to discuss other options available to them, including returning to the Fatherhood program.

GoodTransitions reported that the intensive assessment process was successful in identifying participants who were appropriate for the program, and it is possible that this success contributed to high program retention. It is also possible that the lengthy process contributed to the program's difficulty meeting enrollment targets, though, as there was substantial attrition between the beginning and the end of the process. For example, in October 2012 a typical assessment week began with 83 participants referred to Goodwill for orientation and assessment. Fifty-seven showed up on the first day (with 17 rescheduling and 9 no-shows); 44 attended through the second and third day; and 39 were ultimately deemed appropriate to participate and enter the evaluation. In short, fewer than half of those who were referred on a typical week ultimately made it to enrollment.

This process almost certainly resulted in participants who were motivated and ready to search for jobs. Those who were not motivated or committed were weeded out through the drug-testing, homework, and attendance requirements of the assessment week.[7] It is also possible, of course, that this process discouraged some people who may have otherwise benefited from GoodTransitions services.

Over the course of the evaluation, it became clear that GoodTransitions faced several challenges in managing the referral and enrollment process. The central challenge was simply ensuring that enough participants attended each assessment week to reach the program's target sample size. Throughout the grant period, Goodwill reported that DCSS was not

[7]Homework assignments consisted of writing down job goals and the steps needed to accomplish those goals, completing a worksheet about employment preferences, and completing a personality profiling worksheet. As noted earlier, very high-functioning participants were also screened out through this process and referred to other Goodwill programs with less intensive services.

supplying its lists of referred participants in a timely manner, leaving insufficient time for Goodwill to call potential participants before assessment week, which in turn meant that fewer of them ultimately attended. While this problem was discussed repeatedly over the course of the grant period, it also appeared that difficulty in meeting enrollment targets stemmed more simply from there being a smaller pool of eligible and interested people than Goodwill and DCSS had anticipated.

Late in the recruitment phase, when it appeared that Fatherhood would not be able to refer enough people to meet GoodTransitions' enrollment targets, Goodwill began recruiting from a wide variety of community programs that serve noncustodial parents, such as churches, YMCAs, and the Salvation Army. In some cases, staff members recruited people who might be eligible through classified ads and visits to barbershops. These efforts were meant to reach people who may not have learned about the program from Fatherhood's early outreach. The eligibility criteria remained the same, and interested participants recruited through these channels still had to be formally referred by Fatherhood, so they were typically sent to Fatherhood in order to receive an official referral to the GoodTransitions program. Fatherhood also sent out additional mass mailings to noncustodial parents in the area to advertise the program. Finally, Fatherhood began recruiting directly from the parole and probation agency in the fall of 2013, but very few of those recruits made it into GoodTransitions, primarily due to the Selective Service requirement.

Baseline Characteristics

This section presents the characteristics of study participants at the time of random assignment. The data collected — presented in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 and Appendix Table A.1 — include participant demographic characteristics, family and child support characteristics, and histories of employment, crime, mental health, substance abuse, and receipt of public assistance and benefits.

Overall, 94 percent of the evaluation sample members were men and 91 percent were black/non-Hispanic. The average age of participants was 40 years old. About 80 percent of study participants had at least a high school diploma or equivalent (for example, a General Educational Development [GED] certificate), and 11 percent had a degree beyond high school.

Among the most serious barriers to employment affecting the sample were the relatively high levels of past incarceration and other contact with the criminal justice system. As the table shows, two-thirds of the sample had past criminal convictions in the state of Georgia, and

Table 2.1

Characteristics and Employment Histories of Sample Members: *Atlanta*

Characteristic	Atlanta Program	ETJD Programs Targeting Noncustodial Parents
Male (%)	93.7	93.2
Age (%)		
18-24	2.9	7.6
25-34	27.3	32.6
35-44	39.0	34.9
45 or older	30.8	24.9
Average age	39.8	37.6
Race/ethnicity (%)		
Black, non-Hispanic	91.3	82.4
White, non-Hispanic	4.3	5.5
Hispanic	2.5	7.9
Asian, non-Hispanic	0.0	1.4
Other/multiracial	1.8	2.9
Educational attainment (%)		
No high school diploma or equivalent	19.8	29.2
High school diploma or equivalent	69.4	66.0
Associate's degree or equivalent	4.7	2.6
Bachelor's degree or higher	6.1	2.3
Marital status (%)		
Never married	54.6	66.2
Currently married	12.2	8.4
Separated, widowed, or divorced	33.1	25.4
Veteran (%)	12.8	4.9
Has a disability (%)	5.5	5.4
Housing (%)		
Rents or owns	40.6	45.4
Halfway house, transitional house, or residential treatment facility	3.6	3.7
Homeless	4.5	7.9
Staying in someone else's apartment, room, or house	51.2	43.0

(continued)

Table 2.1 (continued)

Characteristic	Atlanta Program	ETJD Programs Targeting Noncustodial Parents
Employment history		
Ever worked (%)	99.3	95.6
Among those who ever worked:		
Worked in the past year (%)	61.2	49.9
Average hourly wage in most recent job ($)	11.74	11.21
Ever worked for the same employer for 6 months or more (%)	84.7	79.5
Months worked in the previous 3 years (%)		
Did not work	10.5	13.8
Fewer than 6 months	15.5	27.8
6 to 12 months	19.5	28.7
13 to 24 months	19.4	14.1
More than 24 months	35.1	15.6
Sample size	996	3,998

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on baseline survey data and ETJD management information system data.

one-third had previously been incarcerated in prison.[8] Those in the sample who had served time in prison had been out for 58 months on average (almost five years) at the time they enrolled in the evaluation. Fifty-six percent of those who had previously been incarcerated in prison were on parole or probation at the time of enrollment or had other kinds of involvement with the criminal justice system or court supervision. These high rates of criminal justice involvement are a potentially serious barrier to employment and one which justified additional services to help these participants overcome the stigma of their records and connect with the job market.[9]

[8]Note that this third of the sample members who had been previously incarcerated represents only those who had been in state or federal prison. It does not include those who had been incarcerated in jail. This evaluation did not collect administrative data on jail incarceration for programs targeting noncustodial parents, and participants in these programs were not asked about jail incarceration at enrollment. Past convictions include only convictions in the state of Georgia as recorded in administrative records.

[9]Employment specialists worked with participants on how to discuss their incarceration history in interviews. Legal assistance and expungement were also offered to participants on a case-by-case basis through a partnership with The Center for Working Families, but very few program group members made use of those services.

Table 2.2

Child Support and Criminal Justice Characteristics of Sample Members: *Atlanta*

Characteristic	Atlanta Program	ETJD Programs Targeting Noncustodial Parents
Parental and child support status		
Noncustodial parent (%)	100.0	100.0
Has any minor-age children (%)	88.9	93.2
Among those with minor-age children:		
Average number of minor-age children	2.4	2.5
Living with minor-age children (%)	26.5	18.1
Has a current child support order (%)	90.5	86.3
Has an order only for child support debt (%)	9.9	12.7
Criminal history		
Ever convicted of a crime[a] (%)	65.5	76.4
Ever convicted of a felony	24.7	49.2
Ever convicted of a misdemeanor	55.9	63.3
Ever incarcerated in prison[b] (%)	33.6	40.2
Among those ever incarcerated in prison:		
Average years in prison[c]	2.9	3.8
Years between most recent release and program enrollment[d] (%)		
Less than 1 year	38.9	33.2
1 to 3 years	19.1	17.5
More than 3 years	41.9	49.2
Average months since most recent release[d]	58.0	62.2
On community supervision at program enrollment[e] (%)	55.9	51.6
Sample size	996	3,998

(continued)

Table 2.2 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on baseline survey data, ETJD management information system data, and criminal justice administrative records.

NOTES: Measures are self-reported unless otherwise noted.

[a]Includes convictions in the state of Georgia as recorded in administrative records. Does not include federal convictions or convictions from other states.

[b]Includes self-report of incarceration in state or federal prison and prison incarceration as recorded in Georgia administrative records.

[c]Includes time spent in Georgia state prisons according to administrative records. Does not include time spent in federal prisons or prisons in other states.

[d]Most recent release can be from prison or jail.

[e]Includes parole, probation, and other types of criminal justice or court supervision.

Other programs working with noncustodial parents may have similarly high rates of criminal justice system involvement and might consider providing such services.

As the GoodTransitions program targets noncustodial parents, most of the sample (89 percent) had minor-age children (that is, children under 18 — on average, they had between two and three minor-age children), though only about a quarter (27 percent) lived with any minor-age children. Ninety-one percent of the sample had current child support orders, while 10 percent had arrears-only orders.

Almost the entire sample (over 99 percent) had been employed at some point before program enrollment, but almost 40 percent had not worked in the last year. The average wage at the most recent job was $11.74 per hour. About 41 percent of those who had previously worked had earned less than $10 per hour in their most recent jobs (see Appendix Table A.1).

Program Implementation

GoodTransitions sought to provide low-income noncustodial parents with a more robust array of employment services than they would typically receive through the state Fatherhood program. The grant proposal described a staged model consisting of gradually increasing responsibility and exposure to workplace expectations, paired with job development and case management services. While the program did connect almost all participants with transitional jobs, some challenges and adjustments over the course of the grant period led to important deviations from the intended model. (Most notably, the second-stage, community-site jobs offered fewer individually tailored employment options than originally intended; almost all participants worked for a small number of employers and, according to Goodwill, many of them returned to Goodwill stores after losing a second-stage job.) Based on interviews conducted during three site visits, Goodwill staff members appeared to be well trained and knowledgeable about their

participants and about best practices in working with people who have barriers to employment. The staff members, who came to their positions with backgrounds in human and employment services, remained fairly constant during the evaluation. They maintained regular contact with employers and followed clear procedures for building relationships with employers. The program's employment services were likewise closely managed and based on clear internal targets and benchmarks.

This section provides detail on the implementation of the GoodTransitions program, including changes that were made from the planned intervention. Important strengths and challenges of the program and the model that may have affected the program's effectiveness are discussed toward the end of the section.

Program Structure and Staffing

As it was conceived, Goodwill would operate the GoodTransitions program in partnership with two other local organizations: the Center for Working Families, Inc., and the Urban League of Greater Atlanta. While Goodwill was to handle the majority of participants, these partners were to provide some of the assessments, transitional jobs, and job development, and to lead workshops in financial literacy, anger management, conflict resolution, legal advocacy, healthy parenting, and sexual harassment prevention. In practice, it became clear early on that both partner agencies were struggling to move participants through the program in a manner satisfactory to Goodwill. The partnership was then scaled back so that the Center for Working Families and the Urban League provided only workshop training to participants; Goodwill took on full responsibility for providing assessments, transitional jobs, and job development services.

Within GoodTransitions, services were delivered by about a dozen staff members working with participants in different capacities and at different phases in the program. Members of the GoodTransitions staff brought with them several years of experience working in other Goodwill programs or in other human and employment service positions. All of them received standard Goodwill training in diversity and disability awareness, crisis prevention, and sexual harassment prevention. Job developers received additional training specific to their roles. Each of the staff roles — including more detail on job-specific training and backgrounds — is outlined below. It is also important to note that almost all of these staff members also participated, to a greater or lesser degree, in the biweekly assessment sessions described in the previous section and in the weekly job-club meetings described in more detail below.

A **vocational evaluator** led the orientation and assessment week, introducing potential participants to GoodTransitions and managing the enrollment process. As the previous section described, the GoodTransitions assessment week involved a number of activities designed to gauge potential participants' appropriateness and readiness for GoodTransitions services. The

intention of these sessions was to ensure that the program did not enroll people who either had too many barriers to employment for the GoodTransitions program to overcome or who were basically job-ready and only needed some light job-development assistance (which was available through a separate program). These sessions, and the process of determining who was right for the program, were largely managed by the vocational evaluator — in consultation with program managers and other staff members. This staff member remained in the position for the length of the grant and was well qualified for the role, having built up significant assessment and case management experience over more than 10 years with Goodwill.

Case managers worked with participants at each stage of the program to develop their employment goals and connect them with other providers to meet their other needs. Case managers also communicated with community-site employers and assessed participants' readiness to move into unsubsidized work.

Immediately after being enrolled in the program, each participant was assigned a case manager with whom he or she completed an Individual Employment Plan, detailing employment-specific needs (for example, résumé preparation, improvement in interview skills, or workplace attire), as well as goals and broader needs such as child care, transportation, and housing assistance. This plan helped case managers and participants ensure that barriers to participants' employability would be addressed over the course of their time in the program. The plan was generally completed during a participant's initial meeting with a case manager.

Next, case managers met weekly with participants at the Goodwill locations where they were employed. During these meetings, case managers continued to work with participants to address their needs (job-specific or otherwise) and to assess their readiness to enter community-site jobs. They also made routine visits to community sites to check in with participants and employers and to learn about and address any on-the-job issues that may have arisen.

Case managers were assigned participants in part based on their expertise in working with certain types of people. One case manager, for example, typically worked with those clients who had emotional and physical disabilities because she had a background in vocational rehabilitation and mental health; another case manager tended to work with younger men and harder-to-serve former prisoners. The case managers at Goodwill (three or four at any given time) stayed fairly consistent over the course of the evaluation, with minor turnover. Like other staff members, they had experience at Goodwill, having worked in vocational rehabilitation, workforce development, and counseling.

Job coaches worked with participants during the first transitional job phase — the phase in a Goodwill store — providing constructive criticism on their work performance, communicating expectations, and evaluating their readiness to advance into the second stage of the program. Each store had a job coach present to oversee participants' work and to instruct

them in how to present themselves in the workplace, get along with their coworkers, follow instructions, and see tasks through to completion. Job coaches in the Goodwill stores worked exclusively with GoodTransitions participants and typically supervised about 15 to 25 of them at a time. They also helped case managers assess how prepared participants were to move into community-site jobs.

There was slight turnover among job coaches, but there was no indication that it caused any significant interruption in services for participants. Those who filled the positions came to the job with backgrounds in a variety of human services and related fields, including law enforcement/probation, management, education, and workforce development.

Job developers established relationships with community-site employers and provided final employment preparation (in interview skills, self-presentation, and job-search strategies) to connect participants with positions and follow up on applications. Early on, job developers recruited community-site employers for the second phase of the program. As is described elsewhere in this chapter, the number of these employers was fairly small; they consisted primarily of a handful of large retail stores and hardware stores, and a few local nonprofit organizations. As the evaluation went on and more participants moved from Goodwill jobs to community sites, job developers focused more on helping participants find and secure unsubsidized employment. To that end, job developers met with case managers and job coaches to assess participants' readiness for unsubsidized work.

Job developers in GoodTransitions — like job developers in all Goodwill employment programs — received training in how to work with employers to carve out positions for their program participants. They had monthly benchmarks concerning how many employers they were able to build relationships with, how many interviews they were able to secure for participants, how many of their participants were hired in unsubsidized positions, and how well they retained their jobs. They also had a benchmark concerning the average wage among new hires. To meet these targets, they worked with participants to ensure that they were looking for work actively and consistently, that they were prepared to talk about themselves in job interviews, and that they were following up on all applications and interviews.

Job developers at Goodwill received training in conducting needs analyses with employers and finding specific tasks and roles for participants to fill with specific employers. They also used software and online programs such as SalesForce and Hoovers employment reports to generate leads for participants. In general, the job developers were encouraged to focus on "the hidden job market," rather than simply guiding participants through the process of applying for open, advertised positions. That is, the job developers met often with employers and attempted to find out about positions that might be opening up soon, but that had not

yet been posted. They also attempted to identify potential positions that employers might not have yet identified themselves.

There were three or four job developers working for GoodTransitions at any time, overseen by the Goodwill Director of Employment Initiatives. These staff members had backgrounds in business, marketing, workforce development, and prison reentry services.

A retention specialist was hired midway through the grant and given the task of verifying participants' employment, distributing retention incentives (bonuses to participants for keeping jobs), and reconnecting participants with GoodTransitions if they lost jobs. For the first several months of the grant, job developers were responsible for maintaining contact with participants who had found unsubsidized work. As the number of program participants increased, a new staff member was hired to perform this task. As a condition of the grant, DOL set a target for ETJD grantees of ensuring that 75 percent of those who found unsubsidized work maintained their jobs for at least three quarters (nine months), so this program component received increasing emphasis over the course of the grant. (See Chapter 1 for more information about DOL performance measures.)

Once participants found unsubsidized jobs, the retention specialist verified their employment several times over the course of a year. Participants who stayed in contact with the retention specialist at these times and who provided proof of their continued employment (for example, a pay stub) received retention bonuses in the form of $20 to $25 public transportation or gas cards. Two staff members filled the position of retention specialist over the course of the grant. Both of them had experience as job coaches at Goodwill and further experience in the fields of education and social work.

Implementation of Core Program Components

This section draws from three site visits to Atlanta (including several interviews with staff members, partners, employers, and participants) and ongoing conversations with program managers over the course of the grant period to describe how the program implemented and adapted its various components.[10] Where relevant, it discusses how and why the delivery of certain components changed from the way they were described in Goodwill's grant proposal. Table 2.3 and Figure 2.2 present data on participation in core program components including subsidized jobs; they are based on information entered into the program's management information system.

[10]These three site visits include two implementation research site visits and one early assessment visit to observe how the program was functioning during its early period of operation.

Table 2.3

One-Year Participation in ETJD Subsidized Jobs and Services Among Program Group Members: *Atlanta*

Measure	Program Group
Participated in any activity, including a subsidized job (%)	100.0
Worked in a subsidized job (%)	97.2
Stage two community-site subsidized job (%)	62.8
Among those who worked in a subsidized job:	
Average number of months in the program[a]	5.7
Average number of days from random assignment to first subsidized paycheck	18.1
Average number of days worked in a subsidized job[b]	62.0
Stage one Goodwill job	28.1
Stage two private-sector job, among those who worked in community-site jobs	52.5
Received a service other than a subsidized job (%)	100.0
Formal assessment/testing[c]	94.0
Education and job training[d]	56.9
Workforce preparation[e]	98.8
Work-related support[f]	99.6
Child support assistance	--
Parenting class[g]	8.8
Incentive payment	--
Other services[h]	0.4
Sample size	501

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on data from the ETJD management information system and Goodwill GoodTransitions case notes.

NOTES: A double dash indicates that the service was not offered.

[a]Measured as the duration between random assignment and last subsidized paycheck.

[b]Calculated using net hours worked, assuming a seven-hour workday.

[c]Includes Tests of Adult Basic Education and Career Scope.

[d]Includes forklift training and training in construction flagging.

[e]Includes Individualized Education Program, Participant Employability Profile, legal advocacy, and classes in conflict resolution, anger management, and financial literacy.

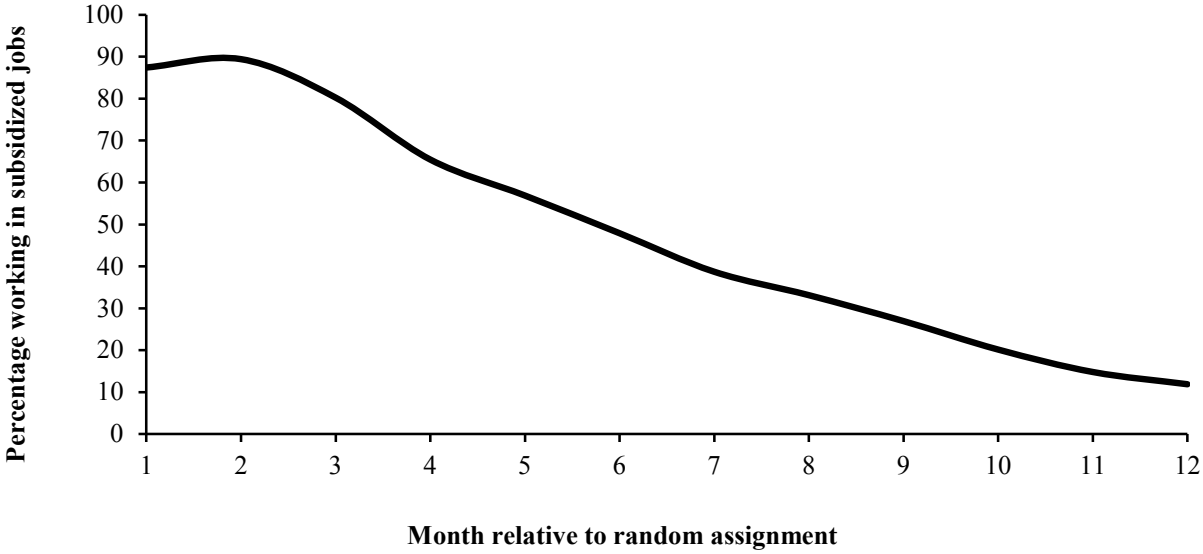
[f]Includes transportation services.

[g]Includes Healthy Parenting class.

[h]Includes follow-up or job-retention services.

Figure 2.2

Subsidized Employment Over Time: *Atlanta*



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data from the ETJD management information system.

NOTE: Month 1 in this figure is the month in which random assignment occurred.

- **Job coaching, case management, and job development services were delivered as intended, with all activities focused on moving participants toward unsubsidized positions.**

As shown in Table 2.3, all individuals assigned to the program received at least one service, with workforce preparation (for example, skills training or conflict resolution) and work-related support (which includes transportation support) topping the list. The specific value of different portions of the GoodTransitions intervention varied from one participant to the next. However, based on informal interviews with over 30 partner and agency staff members and small, structured focus groups with 12 to 15 participants, as well as reviews of 40 participants' case files and discussions with partners and employers, it is clear that core staff members at GoodTransitions delivered their services with fidelity to the program model described in Goodwill's ETJD proposal.

More specifically, interviews with community-site employers suggested that case managers did a good job offering support and troubleshooting problems that came up in the work-

place. Case managers were in touch with community-site employers between once a week and several times a month on average, and employers reported that they felt well informed about how and when to call upon the GoodTransitions staff for help dealing with problems arising on the job. Likewise, a review of job developers' records showed that job developers were diligent in meeting their targets related to employer outreach, participant job interviews, and new hires. While field visits did not involve much direct observation of job coaches' interactions with participants, focus groups and reviews of participant case files suggested that they played the role outlined in the program proposal: supporting and supervising participants in the Goodwill retail jobs and working closely with other staff members to prepare participants for the subsequent stages of the program.

- **GoodTransitions participants were quickly connected to paid work in Goodwill stores. Ninety-seven percent of participants worked in transitional jobs through Goodwill. Sixty-three percent worked in community-site jobs.**

As discussed in the previous section, Goodwill's intensive enrollment and screening process seems likely to have resulted in a group of participants who made extensive use of the program's services. For those who went through the assessment week and enrolled in the program, services began quickly. After enrolling on Wednesday, participants were immediately assigned both a case manager and a Goodwill store location to report to for work on the following Monday. This approach is based on evidence from multiple evaluations of programs for former prisoners and welfare recipients that suggest that rapid engagement into core services is critical for retaining participants. The three-day gap between enrollment and employment meant there was little time for participants to fall out of touch with the program or to grow frustrated with the pace of activities.

On average, sample members who participated in subsidized jobs did so for around the intended amount of time. The program's model intended participants to work for one month in a Goodwill transitional job or until job-ready and finished with any necessary training, and then for three months in a community-site job. As Table 2.3 shows, participants worked 28 work days (around 1.4 calendar months) in Goodwill transitional jobs and around 53 work days (around 2.6 months) in community-site jobs (among those who worked in community-site jobs).

- **Transitional jobs in Goodwill stores emphasized developing positive workplace habits, building confidence, and beginning the search for unsubsidized employment.**

The first core activity for participants was placement in a Goodwill secondhand clothing and goods store. Participants were placed in the stores that were easiest for them to reach

from where they lived. They were paid the minimum wage of $7.25 per hour for their work, worked between 20 and 40 hours per week, and generally performed basic tasks such as unloading delivery trucks, sorting donated clothes and goods, stocking the shelves and racks, and assisting customers. These jobs, as one job coach put it, operated on "a hand-holding model," with an on-site job coach always present to assess participants' performance, suggest areas for improvement, and connect the lessons they were learning at the Goodwill store to skills they would need once they moved into community-site placements and — ultimately — unsubsidized work. Job coaches also set aside time each day for participants to look for jobs on Goodwill computers; in some cases, depending on the person and the workload, this job search occupied as much as half of the day, while in other cases it was as little as an hour per day.

Job coaches reported that their assessments of participants' performance were mostly informal, but that they paid particular attention to issues such as punctuality, the ability to take direction and see a task through to the end, and the ability to get along with their coworkers. Coaches also frequently met with participants individually to discuss their performance and their progress toward the goal of moving into a community-site job. In interviews, job coaches said that two of the most valuable services they offered were assistance in developing résumés and the boost they provided to participants' confidence (through interview prep and a generally optimistic attitude toward participants' job prospects). As shown in Figure 2.3 (and discussed later in this chapter), most participant questionnaire respondents noted positive experiences with soft-skill development at these transitional jobs. They particularly valued the skills they learned related to working with others (not shown).

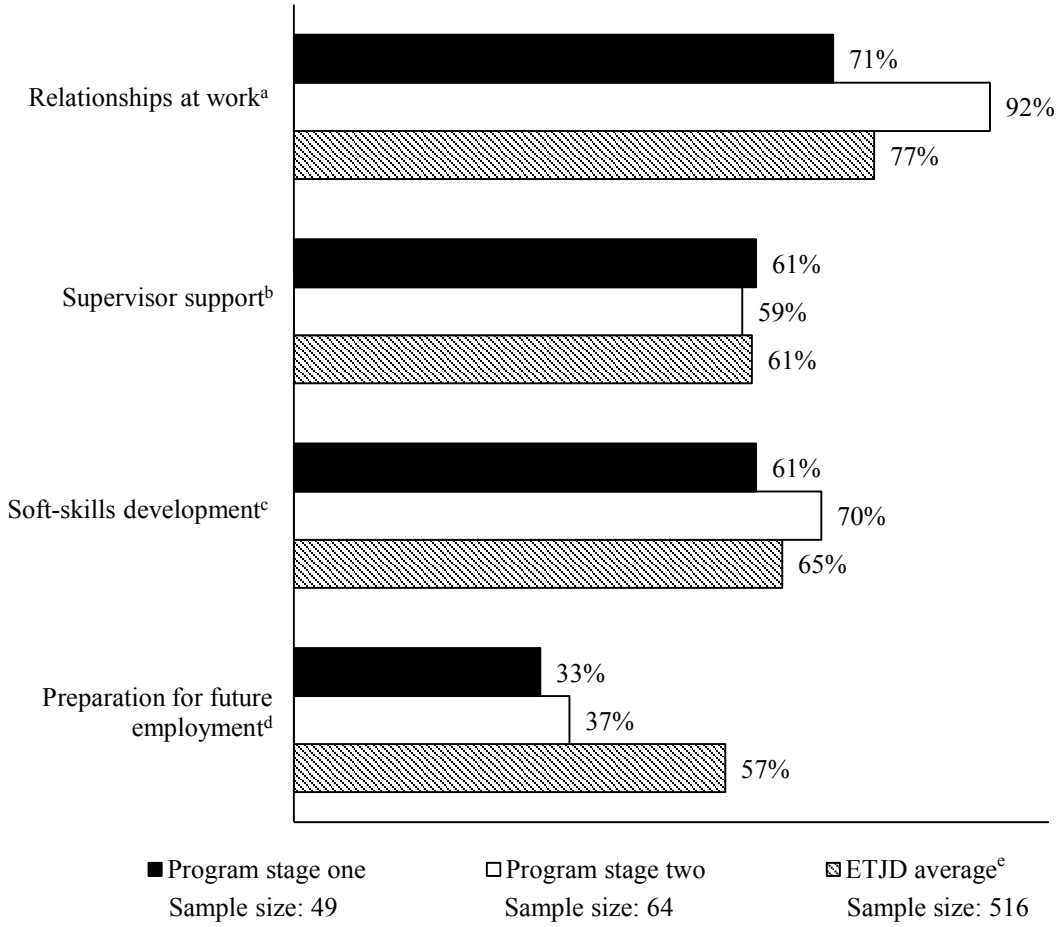
- **While community-site jobs offered exposure to real-world work environments, the job options were limited, and there was little opportunity for advancement.**

According to its ETJD proposal and early conversations with program managers, Goodwill intended to develop relationships with an array of employers who would agree to take on workers whose wages were subsidized. With a wide network of employers to choose from, the program could place participants in positions based on their skills and long-term job interests. The hope was that some of these jobs could even turn into unsubsidized work for participants who performed well.

Over the course of the evaluation, it became clear that the options in this second phase were more limited than intended, and a majority of participants ended up working in retail positions or with a handful of local nonprofit organizations. According to GoodTransitions managers and staff members, the goals for these community sites simply changed over the course of the evaluation. GoodTransitions' managers ultimately came to view the positions as

Figure 2.3

Favorable Impression of the Value of Transitional Job Support and Preparation for Future Employment: *Atlanta*



(continued)

Figure 2.3 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on the ETJD participant questionnaire.

NOTES: The measures presented in this figure, *relationships at work*, *supervisor support*, *soft-skills development,* and *preparation for future employment* were created based on an exploratory factor analysis of a pool of questions. These questions asked participants about their level of agreement with a particular statement on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 indicates strong disagreement and 7 indicates strong agreement. Based on the results of the factor analysis, questions were grouped into factors and a mean score was calculated across the questions included in a particular factor; the percentages presented above represent the proportion of questionnaire respondents who averaged a score of 6 or higher on the questions in that factor, indicating a high level of satisfaction with their program experiences in that area.

With a few exceptions, questionnaires were administered to participants by the research team during site visits at events and activities when many participants would be available at once. Consequently, the responses obtained are from participants who attended program activities and were therefore likely to be more motivated and engaged than the full sample of program participants. For this reason, the results presented in this figure are not necessarily representative of all participant experiences and should be interpreted with caution; they are likely to be more positive.

[a]Based on agreement with the following statements: *I understand what is expected of me on the job*; *I know whom at work to ask for help when I need it*; *My relationships with coworkers are positive and supportive*; and *My coworkers understand me and want me to succeed*.

[b]Based on agreement with the following statements: *I get the support or guidance that I need from my supervisor*; *My supervisor gives me advice about how to handle situations at work*; and *My supervisor helps me if personal issues come up that get in the way of working*.

[c]Based on agreement with the following statements: *I am learning how to work better with coworkers*; *I am learning how to cooperate better with supervisors*; and *This job has helped me learn to present myself better at work*.

[d]Based on agreement with the following statements: *The kind of work I am doing will help me get a decent-paying job later*; *I am learning specific job skills that I will use in the future*; and *I have met people through this job who may help me find a job in the future*.

[e]To account for varying questionnaire sample sizes across ETJD programs, the "ETJD average" is a weighted average of all programs such that each program is equally represented.

an extension of the Goodwill jobs and as an opportunity to expose participants to an increasing amount of responsibility in preparation for the regular labor market. The fact that there was no increase in wages for participants, however, and the fact that the jobs, despite being more rigorous, were not always suited to participants' skills or goals — these were departures from central goals laid out in the program's proposal.

The research team was not able to determine exactly why the GoodTransitions program struggled to enlist a diverse roster of community-site employers, since the evaluation did not interview employers that had not agreed to work with GoodTransitions. It did appear that, at some level, once GoodTransitions recruited enough retailers and nonprofit organizations to employ its participants, it simply shifted its emphasis to the unsubsidized job search rather than developing a wider array of subsidized opportunities. While there may be good arguments for making a higher priority of unsubsidized placements than subsidized ones, it will be important,

when considering the findings from this and other ETJD programs, to further explore the reluctance that may have existed among private employers. A clearer understanding of that reluctance could improve such employer-centered approaches in the future.

- **Workshops and weekly job clubs offered an opportunity for participants to maintain momentum and camaraderie through occupational and life-skills classes and motivational visits from outside speakers.**

While the transitional jobs and individual employment services were the most intensive elements of the program, participants were required to take part in other activities as well. Weekly group job clubs gave participants a chance to discuss job-search strategies and tips with each other and with the staff, and to hear from guest speakers — former participants, professional motivational speakers, and employers — on issues related to child support and employment. At these sessions, participants also completed worksheets and assessments designed to reveal jobs suited to their skills and goals, and practiced cold-calling employers and answering common interview questions they might encounter.

Similarly, participants were required to take part in a series of workshops led by Goodwill's partners: the Urban League of Greater Atlanta and the Center for Working Families. These partner organizations led workshops on anger management, conflict resolution, work/home balance, financial literacy, and sexual harassment prevention. Some workshops also included discussions of family relationships, parenting, and fatherhood, but these were not the workshops' central focus. As Table 2.3 shows, only 9 percent of participants received these parenting and fatherhood services from Goodwill. Table 2.3 also shows nearly all participants took part in this kind of workforce preparation. Further, 57 percent took part in some "education and training." For the most part, this training consisted of forklift certification and construction flagging certification (certification to hold the sign directing traffic around a road construction crew).

Participant focus groups suggested that participants were often motivated by broader goals than child support compliance or increased earnings per se. Several participants, for example, said they were motivated to participate in the program by a desire to take responsibility, do right by their children, or reconnect or strengthen their relationships with their families. It was not clear from these discussions how beneficial participants found the aspects of the program that did not relate directly to employment.

- **In focus groups and brief questionnaires administered during their transitional jobs, participants said that they understood what Good-Transitions was offering and what to expect from the program, but that they also felt some frustration with the program's lack of longer-term employment and training opportunities.**

Figure 2.3 presents results from questionnaires administered to participants as they were working in their Goodwill or community-site jobs.[11] As the figure shows, respondents generally felt most positive about those aspects of the program related to their relationships at work and least positive about the preparation for future employment offered through the positions. There were also notable differences in how positively participants rated their relationships at work between the first and second phases of the program; a much higher percentage of participants gave high marks to their community-site relationships than their Goodwill job relationships (92 percent compared with 71 percent). It is unclear exactly what caused this difference, but participants did confirm in focus groups that the work in their community-site positions was more "real-world" work than the work in the Goodwill jobs.

These questionnaire findings corroborate the reports of participants who took part in focus groups during research site visits. Many of these focus group participants said that they were motivated to live up to their responsibility to their children and that they were resigned to the low pay they were receiving at their community-site jobs. In essence, while they were disappointed to have few options beyond retail jobs, many simply didn't expect the program to deliver them a job, and instead felt that it was their responsibility to get what they could out of the program. This motivation to live up to their responsibilities, along with the suspension of enforcement action and reinstatement of driver's licenses, may explain the fact that participants gave low ratings to many aspects of their experience yet still remained in the program. See Box 2.3 for more on one participant's experiences.

Impacts on Participant Outcomes

GoodTransitions' main goal was to improve the employment and earnings of participants, thereby increasing their compliance with child support orders. These outcomes are important in their own right and may also lead to other positive outcomes such as reduced criminal justice involvement, improved relationships with children, or increased overall well-being. This section compares program and control group members' labor-market, child support, and criminal justice experiences in the year following random assignment, along with measures related to their overall well-being. This analysis is a first step in assessing the extent to which the program achieved its goals. A more definitive answer to this question requires additional follow-up, which will be provided in a later report.

[11]The questionnaires mentioned here were administered to a small number of participants working in transitional jobs at the time of the research team's site visit. These short questionnaires were used in lieu of interviews to inform the implementation study, and are separate from the in-program and one-year follow-up surveys discussed in the impact analysis.

Box 2.3

GoodTransitions Participant Profile

"Richard" is a high school-educated black man in his 40s who lives with his girlfriend. He was referred to GoodTransitions by DCSS's Fatherhood. He was interested in GoodTransitions because he wanted to "find a steady job — steady income." He owes about $500 a month in child support for three of his children (two for debt and one current order). His girlfriend pays many of their bills and he would like to contribute more, and pay his child support. He is looking to make at least $12 an hour to cover his expenses.

In the GoodTransitions program he has had three transitional jobs, at a Goodwill store and at two retail stores. He has also earned two certifications and hopes to earn a commercial driver's license. He reports that his supervisors at the transitional jobs have liked him and wanted to hire him: "I haven't had any problems on any of the job assignments they put me on." Yet he is struggling to find permanent employment. His hours have been cut back at his second transitional job and he has been assigned the GoodTransitions case manager who assists participants "at the end of the line."

Richard's primary barrier to permanent employment is his criminal history. He has two felony convictions and served two prison sentences. He states that his background has greatly hindered his job search: "I've had a few interviews and I actually got all the way in the door, and when the background check came through, they couldn't take me."

He also has some health issues that limit his ability to perform physical labor. When he started the program, he did not own a car, which caused him to miss appointments and reject job offers that could not be reached by public transportation. His lack of computer skills has also made applying for jobs difficult. Richard is hopeful that with a car and gas card from Goodwill, and with assistance from the program with his computer and job-search skills, one of his five weekly job leads will come through soon.

Participation and Service Receipt Outcomes

In order to assess the impact of the program on employment and other outcomes, it is necessary to compare the outcomes of people who were offered GoodTransitions services with the outcomes of similar individuals who were not offered those services. While assignment to the control group means that those sample members did not participate in the GoodTransitions program, control group members did participate in the Fatherhood program and were free to seek out other services available in the community. Examining the differences in participation and service receipt between program and control group members makes it possible to assess the extent to which program group members received different types or amounts of assistance and provides important context for understanding the differences in the outcomes of the two groups.

- **As expected, a large proportion of the control group received employment services. Nevertheless, the program group had higher rates of participation and receipt of services, including services related to employment, child support and parenting, and criminal justice issues.**

Table 2.4 presents the differences in participation and service receipt between program and control group members. The data for these analyses come from a survey of sample members administered roughly 12 months after random assignment.

Nearly all program group members (97 percent) received help related to finding or keeping a job, compared with roughly two-thirds of control group members (65 percent). Considering the high rates of participation in GoodTransitions discussed earlier, it is not surprising that the survey results indicate that the program group received employment services at high rates. As the program group's participation level exceeded the control group's level by a relatively large margin, these results confirm that GoodTransitions was successful in increasing access to employment services.

It is notable that nearly half of the program group (47 percent) reported receiving vocational training; this figure was only 17 percent for the control group. Similarly, there was a 21 percentage point difference between the groups in their receipt of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) or forklift certifications, and a 12 percentage point difference in earning other professional licenses or certifications. Further analysis (not shown in the table) indicates that a large proportion of the certifications reported by program group members were related to driving a forklift.

Program group members also reported higher levels of receipt of services related to child support and criminal justice issues. In addition, they were more likely to report receiving support or mentorship from staff members at agencies where they sought services, which is consistent with the information gathered from the participant questionnaires discussed earlier.

Employment and Earnings Outcomes

- **In the four quarters after random assignment, program group members were more likely to have been employed, worked more consistently, and had higher earnings on average.**

Table 2.5 shows the employment and earnings of the program and control groups in the year after random assignment. The top panel of the table presents measures based on administrative data, including unemployment insurance wage records and GoodTransitions payroll records. The bottom panel of the table presents data from the survey of sample members administered roughly 12 months after random assignment.

Table 2.4

One-Year Impacts on Participation and Service Receipt: *Atlanta*

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Employment support				
Received help related to finding or keeping a job	96.8	65.1	31.6***	[27.5, 35.8]
Job search, job readiness, and career planning[a]	95.8	64.1	31.7***	[27.5, 36.0]
Paying for job-related transportation or equipment costs	82.8	16.2	66.6***	[62.2, 71.0]
Education and training				
Participated in education and training	51.9	28.8	23.1***	[17.5, 28.6]
ESL, ABE, or high school diploma or equivalent[b]	7.5	8.1	-0.6	[-3.8, 2.5]
Postsecondary education leading to a degree	6.4	12.1	-5.7***	[-9.1, -2.3]
Vocational training	46.6	17.3	29.4***	[24.2, 34.5]
Received high school diploma or equivalent	2.3	2.2	0.0	[-1.7, 1.8]
Earned professional license or certification (not including OSHA or forklift)[c]	20.2	8.6	11.7***	[7.6, 15.7]
Earned OSHA or forklift certification	26.5	5.9	20.6***	[16.5, 24.6]
Other support and services				
Among those identified as formerly incarcerated at enrollment:[d]				
Received help related to past criminal convictions	84.8	43.4	41.3***	[31.9, 50.8]
Handling employer questions about criminal history	81.5	42.3	39.2***	[29.4, 49.0]
Legal issues related to convictions	62.6	29.2	33.4***	[23.0, 43.8]
Received help related to child support, visitation, parenting or other family issues	59.9	31.4	28.5***	[23.1, 34.0]
Modifying child support debt or orders	49.7	22.4	27.3***	[22.0, 32.6]
Setting up visitation with child(ren)	27.9	12.3	15.6***	[11.1, 20.2]
Parenting or other family-related issues	37.6	15.6	22.0***	[17.1, 27.0]
Received advice or support from a staff member at an agency or organization	66.9	30.4	36.5***	[31.0, 41.9]

(continued)

Table 2.4 (continued)

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Received mentoring from a staff member at an agency or organization	62.5	29.5	33.1***	[27.6, 38.5]
Received mental health assistance	19.1	8.4	10.7***	[6.7, 14.7]
Sample size	411	401		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the ETJD 12-month survey.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.
Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.
[a]Includes help with job searching, job referrals, developing a résumé, filling out job applications, preparing for job interviews, job-readiness training, and planning for future career or educational goals.
[b]ESL = English as a second language, ABE = adult basic education.
[c]OSHA stands for Occupational Safety and Health Administration. In an effort to separate receipt of professional licenses or certifications that require more intensive and lengthy training (for example, a Certified Medical Assistant certificate or a commercial driver's license) from those that can be earned following more cursory, one-day training, receipt of OSHA and forklift certifications, which fall into the latter group, is presented separately from receipt of other types of licenses or certifications. A review of all reported types of licenses or certifications revealed that OSHA and forklift certifications account for a large majority of the shorter-term, less intensive licenses and certifications received by sample members.
[d]These measures include only those who were identified as formerly incarcarated at study enrollment (program group = 130; control group = 113; total = 243).

As shown in Figure 2.4 and discussed above, most of the program group members participated in subsidized employment in the year following random assignment. The overall employment rate in Year 1 was 28 percentage points higher among the program group than the control group and the program group received $2,056 (or 31 percent) more in earnings. These differences in total employment and earnings reflect the participation of program group members in GoodTransitions subsidized employment: In the year after random assignment, almost all program group members (96 percent) participated in subsidized employment and had average earnings from subsidized employment of $2,017.

Both the administrative records and the survey show that program group members were more likely to be employed one year after random assignment than control group members; the difference between the groups was about 11 percentage points in the unemployment insurance

Table 2.5

One-Year Impacts on Employment and Earnings: *Atlanta*

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Primary outcomes *(based on administrative data)*				
Employment[a] (%)	98.4	70.9	27.5***	[24.1, 30.9]
ETJD subsidized employment (%)	95.7	--		
Number of quarters employed	3.4	1.9	1.5***	[1.4, 1.7]
Average quarterly employment (%)	86.0	48.0	38.1***	[34.9, 41.3]
Employment in all quarters (%)	67.6	20.3	47.4***	[43.0, 51.8]
Total earnings ($)	8,765	6,709	2,056***	[1,164, 2,947]
ETJD subsidized earnings ($)	2,017	--		
Total earnings (%)				
$5,000 or more	60.3	42.4	18.0***	[13.0, 23.0]
$7,500 or more	43.6	34.5	9.2***	[4.2, 14.1]
$10,000 or more	32.7	28.0	4.7*	[0.1, 9.4]
Employment in the first quarter of Year 2 (%)	68.9	57.6	11.3***	[6.4, 16.2]
ETJD subsidized employment in the first quarter of Year 2 (%)	9.6	--		
Sample size	501	495		
Self-reported outcomes *(based on survey data)*				
Ever employed in Year 1 (%)	93.1	80.4	12.7***	[8.7, 16.6]
Currently employed (%)	72.7	65.1	7.6**	[2.3, 13.0]
Currently employed in transitional job program (%)	7.4	0.4	7.1***	[4.8, 9.3]
Type of employment (%)				
Not currently employed	27.9	35.6	-7.7**	[-13.1, -2.3]
Permanent	52.6	40.3	12.3***	[6.5, 18.1]
Temporary, including day labor and odd jobs	18.9	22.3	-3.4	[-8.2, 1.4]
Other	0.5	1.8	-1.2	[-2.5, 0.0]
Among those currently employed:[b]				
Hours worked per week	36.7	35.2	1.4	
Hourly wage ($)	9.9	11.6	-1.8	

(continued)

Table 2.5 (continued)

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Hours worked per week (%)				
More than 20 hours	61.4	53.4	8.0**	[2.3, 13.7]
More than 34 hours	45.0	41.6	3.4	[-2.3, 9.1]
Hourly wage (%)				
More than $8.00	45.2	45.4	-0.2	[-6.1, 5.7]
More than $10.00	21.0	24.4	-3.4	[-8.5, 1.6]
Sample size	411	401		

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on quarterly wage data from the National Directory of New Hires and responses to the ETJD 12-month survey.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.
Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.
[a]Employment rates and earnings include both ETJD subsidized jobs and all other jobs covered by unemployment insurance.
[b]These measures are calculated among those employed at the time of the survey; they are therefore considered nonexperimental and are not tested for statistical significance.

records and 8 percentage points in the survey.[12] However, there was no statistically significant difference between the groups in average earnings in the last quarter of follow-up. In addition, it is important to note that about 10 percent of the program group was working in a GoodTransitions subsidized job in that final quarter.[13] It remains to be seen whether impacts on employment persist after all program group members leave their subsidized jobs.

- **The impacts on employment were largest among those with no recent work experience.**

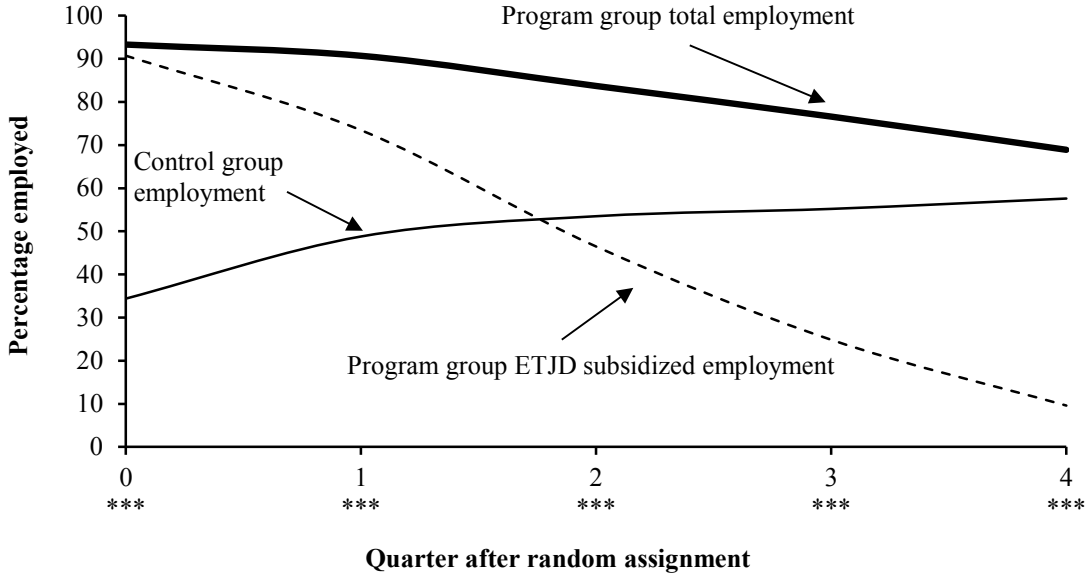
Prior research on transitional jobs programs suggests that the model is most effective for those people who are least likely to find jobs on their own and those with lower levels of

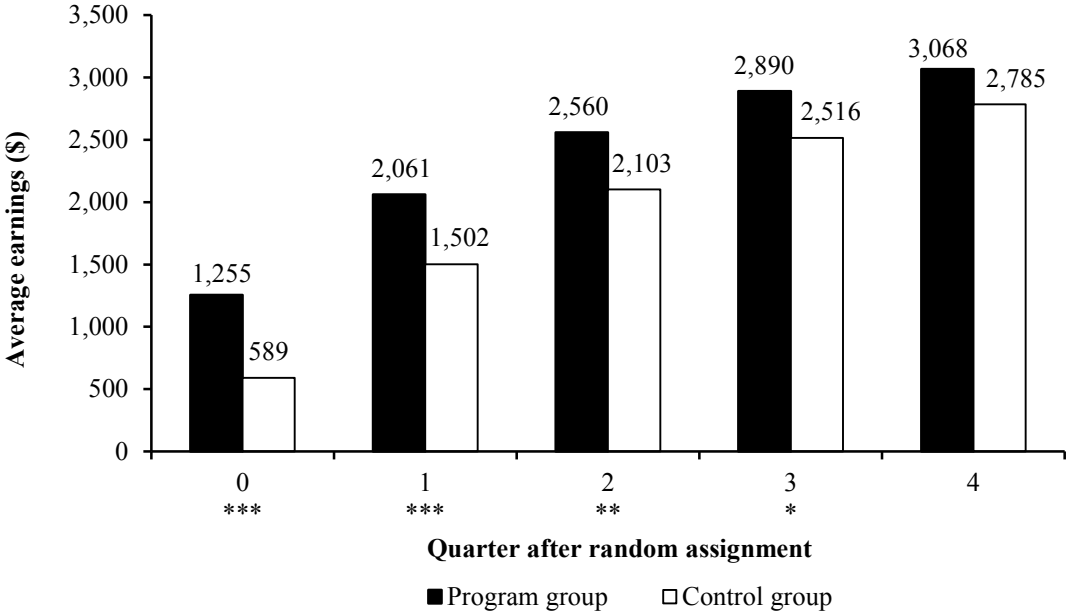
[12]The difference between employment in the first quarter of Year 2 as shown in unemployment insurance wage records and the survey-based "current" employment rates is most likely because respondents reported employment on the survey that was not covered by unemployment insurance.

[13]As discussed above, some program group members who were unable to secure unsubsidized employment stayed in their subsidized jobs much longer than originally anticipated.

Figure 2.4

Employment and Earnings Over Time: *Atlanta*





(continued)

Figure 2.4 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on quarterly wage data from the National Directory of New Hires.

NOTE: Results in this figure are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.
Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.
Employment rates and earnings include both ETJD subsidized jobs and all other jobs covered by unemployment insurance.

recent employment and education.[14] ETJD is based on the hypothesis that the programs may be most effective for people who are the least "employable" and who are therefore least likely to find jobs on their own without assistance. To test this hypothesis, the research team examined the program's impacts on employment among subgroups who had more or less recent work experience when they enrolled in the program. Individuals who had been employed for at least one quarter of the year before random assignment were assumed to be more employable than individuals who had not worked at all during that year. As shown in Table 2.6, employment and earnings levels are much lower during the year of follow-up for control group members who did not work at all in the previous year than they are for those who did work in that previous year, which suggests that preenrollment work experience is a useful indicator of those most in need of ETJD services.

Consistent with the ETJD theory, the program's impacts on employment in the first year after random assignment are largest for those who did not work at all in the previous year. Among those who did not work at all in the previous year, nearly all program group members (98 percent) were employed at some point during the year (because of the transitional job), compared with just 56 percent of the control group. There were also employment gains for program group members who had worked in the year before the program, but the difference between the employment rates of the program and control groups was significantly smaller.

- **Impacts on employment were larger for those enrolled in the first year of the program's operation.**

As discussed above, the program evolved over its course of operation: Its recruitment strategies evolved and its strategies to help program group members after their transitional jobs ended shifted toward assistance with obtaining unsubsidized employment. However, as shown in Appendix Table A.2, program impacts on employment were much larger for those enrolled earlier in the course of the program: There was a 34 percentage point difference in Year 1

[14]Butler et al. (2012).

Table 2.6

One-Year Impacts on Employment and Earnings, by Employment Status in the Prior Year: *Atlanta*

Outcome	Did Not Work in Prior Year				Worked in Prior Year				Difference Between Subgroup Impacts[a]
	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval	
Employment[b] (%)	98.6	55.7	42.9***	[37.1, 48.6]	98.6	84.2	14.5***	[10.7, 18.2]	†††
ETJD subsidized employment (%)	96.2	0.1	96.1***	[94.0, 98.1]	95.2	-0.1	95.2***	[93.0, 97.4]	
Total earnings ($)	6,711	4,516	2,195***	[1,187, 3,202]	10,592	8,383	2,210**	[487, 3,932]	
Average quarterly employment (%)	83.0	35.9	47.1***	[42.2, 52.1]	88.8	58.5	30.4***	[26.2, 34.5]	†††
Employment in the first quarter of Year 2 (%)	60.8	44.8	16.1***	[8.3, 23.8]	75.6	68.3	7.3*	[1.0, 13.6]	
Sample size	215	235			286	260			

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on quarterly wage data from the National Directory of New Hires and responses to the ETJD 12-month survey.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.
Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.
[a]When comparing impacts between two subgroups, an H-statistic is generated. The H-statistic is used to assess whether the difference in impacts between the subgroups is statistically significant. Statistically significant differences across subgroups are indicated as: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.
[b]Employment rates and earnings include both ETJD subsidized jobs and all other jobs covered by unemployment insurance.

employment between the program and control group members enrolled in the first year of the program, compared with a 20 percentage point difference for those enrolled in the second year. It is difficult to tell whether these differences reflect changes in the composition of the enrollees, changes in the local labor market, changes in program implementation practices, or other factors. Additional analysis (not shown) found that sample members who enrolled in the study later may have been somewhat more employable. For example, 64 percent of those who enrolled in the second year of the program had worked in the year before enrollment, compared with 59 percent of those who enrolled in the first year. As discussed earlier, program impacts were generally smaller for more employable sample members. Of course, it is also possible that these differences in employment rates reflect an improving labor market.

Child Support and Family Relations Outcomes

- **Overall, in the year after random assignment, program group members were more likely to pay child support, made more consistent payments, and paid more on average.**

Table 2.7 presents program and control group outcomes related to child support and family relations. The top panel of the table presents measures based on administrative data from the Division of Child Support Services, while the bottom panel presents data from the survey of sample members administered roughly 12 months after random assignment.

Most of the program group members paid formal child support in the year following random assignment. While many of the control group members also paid child support, the program-control difference in payment rates was over 18 percentage points. Program group members also made formal child support payments more consistently than control group members, and paid almost twice as much on average. These results reflect the higher employment and earnings program group members experienced during this period (most, if not all, sample members were subject to automatic child support payments via payroll deduction). As shown in Figure 2.5, most of the increase in formal child support payments occurred in the first two quarters after random assignment, when most program group members were also in subsidized jobs. Impacts on child support compliance did not change much over the course of the program. As shown in Appendix Table A.2, the differences between program and control group child support payments are similar for study members who enrolled in the first year of the program and those who enrolled in the second.

The bottom panel of Table 2.7 shows that increased child support payments due to employment did not appear to reduce the informal child support provided by program group members. Program and control group members reported providing both informal cash and

Table 2.7

One-Year Impacts on Child Support and Family Relations: *Atlanta*

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Primary outcomes *(based on administrative data)*				
Paid any formal child support[a] (%)	91.0	72.4	18.6***	[14.7, 22.6]
Among those who paid formal child support:				
Months from random assignment to first payment[b]	2.4	3.7	-1.3	
Months of formal child support paid	6.7	4.2	2.5***	[2.2, 2.9]
Amount of formal child support paid ($)	1,733	993	740***	[590, 889]
Sample size	501	495		
Self-reported outcomes *(based on survey data)*				
Currently a noncustodial parent of a minor-age child (%)	66.5	69.0	-2.5	[-7.7, 2.7]
Provided informal cash support or noncash support in the past month (%)	47.0	48.2	-1.3	[-7.0, 4.4]
Informal cash support	32.1	31.6	0.5	[-4.9, 5.9]
Noncash support	44.5	44.2	0.3	[-5.4, 5.9]
Owing child support affects willingness to take jobs (%)	23.6	23.4	0.2	[-4.8, 5.2]
Incarcerated for not paying child support (%)	4.5	5.2	-0.7	[-3.2, 1.7]
Among those with minor-age children:[c]				
Frequency of contact with focal child in the past 3 months (%)				
Every day or nearly every day	27.1	23.5	3.6	
A few times per week	18.0	18.6	-0.6	
A few times per month	15.9	18.0	-2.1	
Once or twice	5.8	6.2	-0.3	
Not at all	33.2	33.7	-0.6	
Sample size	411	401		

(continued)

Table 2.7 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support agency data and responses to the ETJD 12-month survey.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.
Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.
[a]Measures of formal child support include all payments made through the state's child support collection and disbursement unit, including funds from employer withholding and other sources (for example, tax intercepts).
[b]This measure is calculated among those who paid child support during the follow-up period; it is therefore considered nonexperimental and is not tested for statistical significance.
[c]This measure is calculated among those who reported having a minor-age child at the time of the survey; it is therefore considered nonexperimental and is not tested for statistical significance. The focal child is defined as the youngest minor-age child living outside of the sample member's household; if the sample member reports no minor-age children living outside of his or her household, the focal child is the youngest minor-age child residing within the household.

noncash support to their children for whom they did not have custody. Likewise, program and control group members reported similar levels of contact with their children who lived apart from them.

Criminal Justice Outcomes

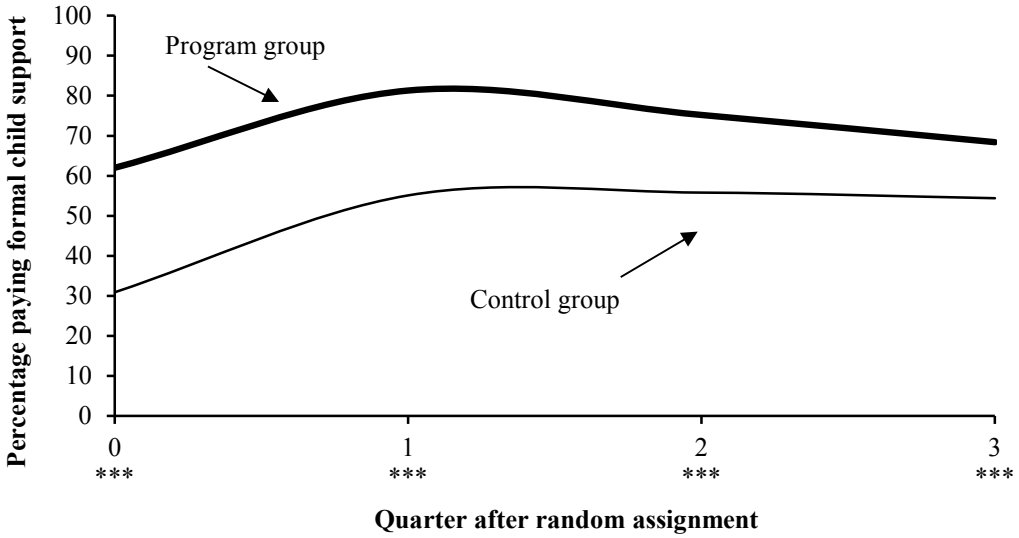
- **In the year following random assignment, program and control group members had similar, low rates of involvement with the criminal justice system.**

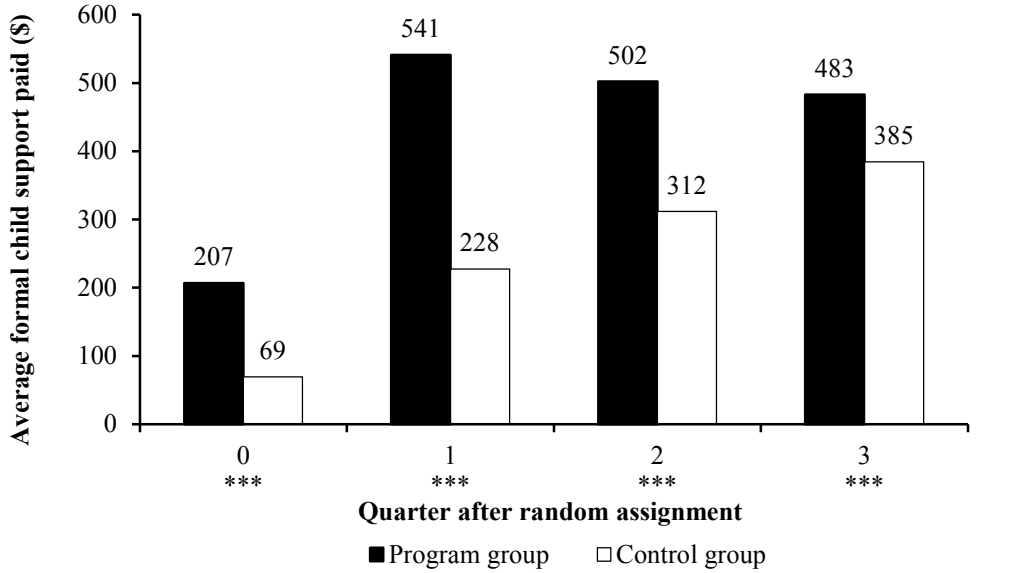
The top panel of Table 2.8 contains measures drawn from administrative sources, including local and state criminal justice agencies. The bottom panel of Table 2.8 presents data from the survey of sample members administered roughly 12 months after random assignment.

Overall, Atlanta sample members were minimally involved in the criminal justice system in the year after random assignment. Recall that 34 percent of the sample had prison incarceration histories at enrollment, and for most, the most recent incarceration in prison or jail was more than a year before random assignment. The estimated difference in arrest rates between the program and control groups was statistically significant (program group members had a lower arrest rate), but there were no differences in conviction or incarceration rates. The small difference in arrest rates may be an effect of the greater employment rates experienced by program group members or could reflect "noise" in the data. This difference in arrest rates is concentrated among sample members who enrolled in the program's second year (see Appendix Table A.2).

Figure 2.5

Formal Child Support Payments Over Time: *Atlanta*





(continued)

Figure 2.5 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support agency data.

NOTES: Results in this figure are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.
Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.
Measures of formal child support include all payments made through the state's child support collection and disbursement unit, including funds from employer withholding and other sources (for example, tax intercepts).

Table 2.8

One-Year Impacts on Criminal Justice Outcomes: *Atlanta*

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Primary outcomes *(based on administrative data)*				
Arrested (%)	14.6	18.7	-4.1*	[-7.8, -0.3]
Convicted of a crime (%)	5.8	6.4	-0.6	[-3.1, 1.8]
Incarcerated in prison (%)	0.8	0.9	-0.1	[-1.0, 0.8]
Total days incarcerated in prison	1.0	1.0	-0.1	[-1.5, 1.4]
Arrested, convicted, or admitted to prison (%)	14.8	19.1	-4.3*	[-8.1, -0.5]
Sample size	501	495		
Self-reported outcomes *(based on survey data)*				
Incarcerated (%)	9.2	9.6	-0.4	[-3.8, 3.0]
Total days incarcerated[a]	4.7	3.3	1.3	[-1.3, 4.0]
On parole or probation (%)	25.8	23.0	2.9	[-1.7, 7.5]
Sample size	411	401		

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on criminal justice data and responses to the ETJD 12-month survey.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.
Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.
[a]This measure includes a small number of outlier values resulting from sample members who were interviewed more than 18 months after study enrollment.

Economic and Personal Well-Being Outcomes

- **The labor-market gains experienced by the program group produced some immediate impacts on well-being, but the gains did not persist very long after participants left the program. One year after random assignment, program and control group members reported similar levels of economic and personal well-being.**

Table 2.9 presents program and control group differences for a variety of outcomes related to general well-being, drawn from data collected while program group members were participating in the program. Table 2.10 presents program and control group differences for a similar set of outcomes drawn from the 12-month follow-up survey, which was administered months after most program group members had left the program and their transitional jobs.

There were differences in a few measures of well-being between program and control group members during the period when most program group members were participating in the program and working in their transitional jobs. In particular, program group members were more likely to report that their current financial situations were better than they were a year ago by a margin of 20 percentage points, which could be a reflection of their earnings from the transitional job and participation in the ETJD program. Program group members were also happier and scored higher on the Pearlin Mastery Scale (indicating that they were more likely to believe they could control events in their lives). Only a small proportion of the sample reported having funds left over at the end of the typical month, and control group members were more likely to report doing so. Program and control group members reported similar, high levels of concern about meeting their expenses, and almost 40 percent of both groups had had insufficient food in the past week.

At 12 months after random assignment, program and control group members reported similar levels of personal and economic well-being. These results suggest that the labor-market gains experienced by the program group did produce some immediate impacts on well-being, but the gains did not persist very long after participants left the program.

Conclusion

The GoodTransitions program was designed to improve employment and earnings — as well as child support compliance rates — among low-income noncustodial parents in the Atlanta area who owed child support. The program was able to deliver most of its components with high fidelity to the model initially laid out in the proposal. Staff members at the program were knowledgeable about the needs and profiles of the participants on their caseloads. They came to their positions with backgrounds in human and employment services, maintained regular

Table 2.9

Short-Term Impacts on Well-Being and Self-Confidence: *Atlanta*

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Financial well-being				
State of family finances at the end of a typical month (%)				
Some money left over	3.6	7.0	-3.4*	[-6.3, -0.5]
Just enough to make ends meet	32.6	32.8	-0.2	[-6.3, 6.0]
Not enough to make ends meet	63.8	60.2	3.6	[-2.8, 9.9]
Financial situation is better than it was this time last year (%)	59.8	39.5	20.3***	[13.9, 26.7]
Frequency of worry about ability to meet monthly living expenses *(range of 0 to 10, where 0 = never and 10 = all the time)*	7.6	7.3	0.4	[-0.1, 0.8]
Had insufficient food in the past week (%)	39.3	37.7	1.6	[-4.8, 8.0]
Personal well-being (%)				
Experienced serious psychological distress in the past month[a]	19.2	23.4	-4.2	[-9.6, 1.1]
Overall happiness				
Very happy	13.2	14.4	-1.2	[-5.7, 3.3]
Pretty happy	58.0	45.5	12.5***	[5.9, 19.0]
Not too happy	28.9	40.1	-11.3***	[-17.5, -5.0]
Self-confidence scales				
Score on Pearlin Mastery Scale[b]	5.3	5.1	0.2**	[0.1, 0.3]
Score on Work Self-Efficacy Scale[c]	3.9	3.9	0.0	[0.0, 0.0]
Score on Job Search Self-Efficacy Scale[d]	4.4	4.4	0.0	[0.0, 0.1]
Sample size	336	316		

(continued)

Table 2.9 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the ETJD in-program survey.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.

For the in-program survey, only sample members randomly assigned between July 2012 and December 2013 were included. The survey response rate for this subsample was 85 percent.

[a]A score of 13 or higher on the Kessler-6 (K-6) scale is used here to define serious psychological distress. The K-6 assesses how often during the past month a respondent felt so sad that nothing could cheer him or her up; nervous; restless or fidgety; hopeless; that everything was an effort; or worthless. As a result of minor differences between the scale used to administer the K-6 in the ETJD in-program survey and the standard K-6 scale, the percentages presented in this table may slightly underestimate the incidence of serious psychological distress among the ETJD sample.

[b]The Pearlin Mastery Scale ranges from 0 to 6. The scale assesses the extent to which respondents agree that they can do anything they set their minds to, they can find a way to succeed at something, their ability to get what they want is in their own hands, their futures depend on themselves, and they can do the things they want to do.

[c]The Work Self-Efficacy scale ranges from 0 to 4. The scale assesses the extent to which respondents agree that they can get to work on time, meet employers' expectations, work well with others, have good relationships with their supervisors, work well as a team, complete assigned tasks, and learn new skills.

[d]The Job Search Self-Efficacy scale ranges from 0 to 5. The scale assesses how confident respondents are that they can make a list of skills that can be used to find a job, talk to friends and contacts to find out about potential employers or discover promising job openings, complete a good job application and résumé, make contact with potential employers and persuade those employers to consider them, and make the best impression and get points across in a job interview.

contact with each other and with employers, and followed clear procedures for building relationships with employers. The job clubs and workshops in the program focused on building networking relationships among participants and reinforcing the skills they needed to find and secure jobs. The implementation of the community-site jobs, however, differed from the initial program design. These job placements were less tailored to participants' skills than originally intended, and less likely to offer the possibility of turning into full-time unsubsidized positions. These differences from the design could affect the program's ability to produce long-term impacts on employment.

Recruitment and service partnerships also proved challenging. The Fatherhood program struggled to make timely referrals. Goodwill had to take on more responsibility for participants than originally planned after its partners proved unable to place participants at a rate that was consistent with GoodTransitions program requirements. Ongoing conversations with Goodwill managers suggested that the program easily absorbed those participants who were meant to be served through partner organizations. The recruitment and enrollment process proved to be a source of ongoing frustration, however. Staff members downplayed the degree to which this frustration interfered with service provision, but GoodTransitions' experience does reveal how

Table 2.10

One-Year Impacts on Economic and Personal Well-Being: *Atlanta*

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Experienced a financial shortfall in the past 12 months	67.3	64.9	2.4	[-3.2, 7.9]
Could not pay rent or mortgage	51.8	50.1	1.7	[-4.2, 7.6]
Evicted from home or apartment	12.6	11.0	1.6	[-2.2, 5.4]
Utility or phone service disconnected	45.4	42.1	3.2	[-2.6, 9.1]
Could not afford prescription medicine	30.6	29.2	1.4	[-3.9, 6.8]
Had insufficient food in the past month	28.1	30.1	-2.0	[-7.3, 3.3]
Housing in the past month				
Rented or owned own apartment or room	40.2	38.0	2.3	[-3.4, 7.9]
Lived with family or friends[a]	55.0	54.8	0.2	[-5.6, 6.0]
Homeless or lived in emergency or temporary housing	3.5	5.4	-1.9	[-4.3, 0.5]
Incarcerated, on work release, or living in a halfway house	0.2	0.3	0.0	[-0.6, 0.6]
Other	1.0	1.5	-0.5	[-1.8, 0.8]
Is currently in good, very good, or excellent health	76.6	75.8	0.8	[-4.2, 5.7]
Had health coverage in the past month	32.3	30.4	1.9	[-3.5, 7.3]
Health coverage was employer-based	16.4	14.4	2.0	[-2.2, 6.2]
Experienced serious psychological distress in the past month[b]	11.7	14.3	-2.7	[-6.6, 1.3]
Sample size	411	401		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the ETJD 12-month survey.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.
Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.
[a]Includes those who lived with friends or family and paid rent and those who lived with friends or family without paying rent.
[b]A score of 13 or higher on the Kessler-6 (K-6) scale is used here to define serious psychological distress. The K-6 assesses how often during the past month a respondent felt so sad that nothing could cheer him or her up; nervous; restless or fidgety; hopeless; that everything was an effort; or worthless. As a result of minor differences between the scale used to administer the K-6 in the ETJD 12-month survey and the standard K-6 scale, the percentages presented in this table may slightly underestimate the incidence of serious psychological distress among the ETJD sample.

important it is to establish clear and realistic enrollment channels in order to ensure that recruitment targets do not detract from a program's mission.

Finally, although it is too early to know how effective the staff was in connecting participants to stable, long-term employment, the employment services provided by Goodwill appeared strong. Job developers used clearly specified strategies to help participants identify openings they probably would not have found on their own and connect with employers. Job developers' case files suggest that they assisted participants in locating opportunities in manufacturing, warehousing, and production, as well as in the transportation, service, and retail sectors. Future reports will offer more details on participants' success retaining these positions and advancing in them.

The impact results on program participation show that the program was, in fact, successful in providing services to program participants, increasing their receipt of services related to employment, child support, and criminal justice. The program group also worked more and had higher earnings than the control group in the year following random assignment, largely because of their GoodTransitions subsidized jobs. These increases in employment and earnings were reflected in higher and more regular child support payments. There were few differences between the program and control group's outcomes related to criminal justice and overall well-being. As the program-control group differences related to employment and child support directly reflect program participation, it is not possible at this point to determine whether GoodTransitions produced long-term impacts. Further follow-up will be needed to determine whether these differences in outcomes will be sustained after participants leave the program.