The Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration

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

Authors:

Cindy Redcross
Bret Barden
Dan Bloom

Atlanta: Joseph Broadus, Jennifer Thompson, Sonya Williams

Milwaukee: Sam Elkin, Randall Juras, Janaé Bonsu

San Francisco: Ada Tso, Bret Barden, Barbara Fink

Syracuse: Whitney Engstrom, Johanna Walter, Gary Reynolds

Fort Worth: Mary Farrell, Cindy Redcross

Indiana: Karen Gardiner, Randall Juras, Arielle Sherman

New York City: Melanie Skemer, Yana Kusayeva, Sara Muller-Ravett

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Chapter 3

Supporting Families Through Work (Milwaukee, WI)

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Executive Summary

The Supporting Families Through Work program (SFTW) of the YWCA of Southeastern Wisconsin offered transitional jobs, employment services, and child support-related assistance to noncustodial parents with child support orders in Milwaukee County. Its goals were to support these parents in entering the formal labor market and remaining employed there, primarily by helping them gain experience, references, and skills through a transitional job. It also aimed to help them with their child support situations. SFTW used a modified transitional jobs model in which participants were placed in fully subsidized, temporary jobs. The program made subsidized placements in positions with external employers throughout the community, including both nonprofit organizations and private-sector businesses. The program enhanced the basic transitional jobs model by offering child support system incentives — including forgiveness of some interest on debt owed to the state — and by offering an earnings supplement to make sure participants entering unsubsidized jobs earned at least $10 an hour.

Main Findings

- **The study participants were all noncustodial parents, and almost all were black men.** Program participants were somewhat younger than those in other programs serving noncustodial parents. Most had previous work experience but had earned low wages in their previous jobs, less than $10 per hour on average. Seventy-seven percent had worked less than 12 months during the previous three years. Over 80 percent had criminal convictions and more than half had been incarcerated.

- **Recruiting enough people proved to be a substantial challenge for SFTW.** In order to meet the ETJD sample goals, the YWCA identified a number of referral partners. Primary among them was the Milwaukee Department of Child Support Services' Children First program, but the actual number of referrals from this source fell far short of expectations.

- **The YWCA implemented several core aspects of its model as intended, but experienced challenges with staffing and the implementation of certain components.** The YWCA succeeded in identifying employers to host transitional job placements and also succeeded in providing child support assistance. However, it faced challenges related to recruitment and staff turnover that affected some aspects of service delivery. For example, because staff members played multiple roles in the program, when they

spent more time than anticipated on recruitment, it affected their ability to focus on other services.

- **The program experienced attrition in vital program services, including placement in transitional jobs.** Program participation dropped off at various stages, and ultimately fewer than two-thirds of participants actually received transitional jobs. Further, there was a substantial delay before many of the transitional job placements. There may have been a trade-off between rapid placement in transitional jobs and the effort to tailor placements to individual circumstances.

- **The child support enhancement was well implemented, but it only affected debt owed to the state, which was a small proportion of the total debt participants owed.** The child support enhancement included forgiveness of interest on child support debt owed to the state, the integration of a Legal Action attorney into program operations, and the availability of an on-site child support representative. This aspect of the program was well regarded by program staff members and participants alike.

- **While the earnings supplement enhancement appears to have been implemented, only a relatively small portion of the program group (9 percent) received it.** A small proportion of program group members received a wage supplement designed to raise low wages in unsubsidized jobs. The low rate of receipt was in part because of program attrition at earlier stages, but also because the supplement was only available to individuals earning less than $10 per hour. Since the average wage among people who were working was about $10 per hour, it is likely that many who did obtain jobs earned too much to receive the supplement.

- **Control group members had access to a wide variety of services in the community, but program group members had higher rates of service receipt, especially in the areas of child support assistance and legal assistance related to past criminal convictions.** Control group members had access to programs that were not part of SFTW, including the services of the YWCA's Career Opportunity Center, employment services offered by the nearby Milwaukee Urban League, and two state-funded transitional employment programs. Nonetheless, SFTW significantly increased program group members' receipt of services related to employment, child support, and criminal justice issues. The program did not significantly increase program

group members' receipt of most educational/vocational services, but these were not a focus of the program model.

- **SFTW significantly increased employment and earnings during the one-year follow-up period.** Twelve months after enrollment, program group members had higher rates of employment and earnings in unemployment insurance-covered jobs. The proportion of study participants who were employed during the first year increased from 61 percent in the control group to 86 percent in the program group, and total average earnings during the first year increased from $3,139 to $4,910. Most of this impact is from subsidized employment, which accounted for $1,157 of the program group's earnings. These employment and earnings impacts are not observed in the survey data, probably because some control group members were employed in jobs not covered by unemployment insurance.

- **SFTW increased child support payments.** Perhaps due to their higher earnings (or at least their higher earnings in unemployment insurance-covered jobs) and perhaps due to the child support services they received, program group members were about 23 percentage points more likely to have paid child support, paid more on average, and paid for more months than control group members. The program did not significantly affect informal or noncash support.

The first section of this chapter provides background information on the SFTW program model and the characteristics of the study sample. The second section describes the implementation of the program and the third section describes its impacts on participation in program services, employment, child support payments, and criminal justice outcomes, one year after random assignment.

Supporting Families Through Work

Background

The Supporting Families Through Work (SFTW) program of the YWCA of Southeastern Wisconsin offered transitional jobs, employment services, and child support-related assistance to noncustodial parents with child support orders in Milwaukee County. Its goals were to support these parents in entering the formal labor market and remaining employed there, primarily by helping them gain experience, references, and skills through a transitional job. It also aimed to help them with their child support obligations.

The SFTW program built on the YWCA's experience with the New Hope program. The New Hope Project was created in 1991 with the goal of lifting men and women out of poverty through work-related benefits and services such as wage supplements and transitional jobs. Services provided as part of New Hope changed over time, and the New Hope Project merged with the YWCA in 2009; as part of the YWCA, the New Hope program served ex-offenders. It ended at the time SFTW began.[1]

Like New Hope, SFTW made fully subsidized placements in positions with external employers throughout the community. Positions were with private-sector nonprofit and for-profit employers, and were not necessarily intended to become permanent, unsubsidized jobs. This model centered on improving participants' skills and behaviors through their experiences in transitional jobs, supported by other services such as a job-readiness workshop, case management, and training for selected participants that they would not otherwise have received. While the transitional jobs themselves were not expected to be permanent, the program provided services after the transitional jobs ended that aimed to help participants connect with unsubsidized jobs they would not have otherwise secured. As part of ETJD, SFTW falls into the group of programs using a modified transitional jobs model.

SFTW's theory of change posited that employment itself would lead to improved child support payments, facilitated by assistance from an advocate who could help participants understand their orders and potentially adjust them. The Milwaukee County Department of Child Support Services (DCSS), a partner in the project, offered the forgiveness of some child support interest as an incentive to promote engagement in the program at various stages.

[1]Details on New Hope are available in Redcross et al. (2010).

Context

The Great Recession that began in 2007 had a lasting effect on the labor market in Milwaukee, even after its official end in 2009. Unemployment rates in the City of Milwaukee during the time of the program were over 2 percentage points above the national average in 2012 and 2013, at 10.4 and 10.1 percent, respectively.[2] Joblessness among black men, who made up the vast majority of SFTW's service population, was particularly severe in Milwaukee. In 2010, the year before the start of the study, barely more than half of black men in their prime working years (ages 25 to 54) were employed, compared with 85 percent almost 40 years ago.[3] Further, a 2012 study found that in 2010, out of 40 metropolitan areas considered, Milwaukee ranked last in employment rates for prime-working-age black men.[4]

Noncustodial parents' abilities to keep up with child support orders are inextricably linked to these employment challenges. However, Milwaukee County does have some flexibility to ensure that child support orders reflect these realities. The state of Wisconsin has general guidelines as to what policies should be used when setting orders or compromising on debt, but allows counties discretion within those guidelines. Using that discretion, Milwaukee County takes a liberal interpretation of the state regulations, taking into consideration factors such as employment prospects, living arrangements, and custodial parents' requests. A child support attorney described the county's philosophy by saying that the county child support enforcement agency wants to arrange a court order that is reachable, so as to not set noncustodial parents up for failure. The agency realizes that if someone does not have a job or good job prospects, then it is not sensible to set an order amount based on what he or she used to get paid, because many of the high-paying jobs that used to be in the area have disappeared.

A number of other programs available from the YWCA provide employment services, fatherhood-related programs, and, in some cases, even transitional jobs. The YWCA offered a fatherhood group that met monthly, ran a healthy relationships program, and operated a Career Opportunity Center that provided services through the Workforce Investment Act, Wisconsin Works, and FoodShare Employment and Training.[5] Both program and control group members were encouraged to take advantage of these services, if they were eligible, and all SFTW participants who were eligible for FoodShare Employment and Training were enrolled in that program alongside SFTW.

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[2]U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016f).

[3]Levine (2012).

[4]Levine (2012).

[5]Wisconsin Works is Wisconsin's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; FoodShare Employment and Training is Wisconsin's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program employment and training program. The Workforce Investment Act has been superseded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Other community-based organizations also provided similar services in Milwaukee. The Milwaukee Urban League, for example, is located less than a 10-minute walk from the YWCA; it provides employment training and assistance with child support orders. In addition, two state-funded transitional jobs programs operated in Milwaukee at the same time as SFTW: the Transitional Jobs Demonstration Project, which began in September 2010 and ran through mid-2013, and the Transform Milwaukee Jobs Program, which began enrollments in mid-2014. Both programs operated through contracts with community organizations. The earlier program was administered by the Department of Children and Families, which had contracts with seven agencies in Milwaukee County to develop partnerships with host employers for the transitional jobs.[6] The later program is operated by UMOS, a nonprofit advocacy organization that provides services to improve the employment, educational, health, and housing opportunities of underserved populations. It is possible that control group members made use of one of these other programs.

Intended Model

The YWCA based its program model on the New Hope program's transitional jobs model, while making use of some other YWCA workforce-, training-, and child support-related services and partnerships. As initially designed, the first component of the SFTW program model was to be a five-day job-readiness workshop. The workshop's first day focused on assessments of participants' skills and interests and the types of jobs that would be good matches for them, while the following days focused on job-readiness activities and job-search preparation. On the last day, each participant was assigned to a case manager, met with an attorney from Legal Action of Wisconsin for assistance with child support, and received the first adjustment to the interest on his or her child support debt.

Case management started after the job-readiness workshop and continued throughout program participation. Case managers assessed participants' service needs, helped them improve their job readiness, provided job coaching, helped them address barriers that could get in the way of work (for example, a lack of clothing, transportation, or housing), helped them develop soft skills, provided referrals to services within the YWCA or elsewhere, and reviewed the results of criminal background checks. Case managers also discussed specific job opportunities with participants.

SFTW used a scattered-site transitional jobs model with placements at external, private-sector employers, including for-profit companies and nonprofit organizations. The jobs lasted four months at up to 30 hours per week, with an optional two-month extension, and paid minimum wage ($7.25 per hour), fully subsidized by the program. The program's site coordina-

[6]Davis and Rupinski (2013).

tor was responsible for matching participants with transitional jobs based on their skills and interests and on labor-market demands; the goal was to place participants in positions that would develop their skills and prepare them for unsubsidized work. The program did not specify how long it should take to place participants in transitional jobs, but the intention was to make placements quickly yet at the same time to find good matches for participants' interests and skills.

The model envisioned that participants would work their 30 hours per week over four days, leaving a day for other program activities and unsubsidized job searching, though the program was open to other arrangements if employers preferred them. In the intended model, participants began searching for unsubsidized employment midway through the transitional job, working with a job developer at the YWCA's Career Opportunity Center (rather than a staff member paid through the program). Participants also spent two hours per week in job-club-like group sessions held every Friday, when they picked up their paychecks. Separate sessions were held for those still in their transitional jobs and those in the unsubsidized job-search phase.

SFTW also included three components thought of as enhancements to the basic transitional jobs model:

- **Child support-related assistance.** Legal Action of Wisconsin assisted participants with their child support cases starting on the last day of the job-readiness workshop. Participants also had the interest frozen on the debt they owed the state, and interest on state-owed debt forgiven wholly or in part at set benchmarks related to program participation (25 percent upon completing the job-readiness workshop, an additional 50 percent after completing the four-month transitional job period, and the final 25 percent upon obtaining an unsubsidized job).

- **Earnings supplement.** The program provided a wage supplement to bring wages up to $10 per hour for the first six months of unsubsidized employment, for those earning less. The supplement was meant as a strategy to keep participants in unsubsidized employment.

- **Training for a subset of participants.** The original program design included occupational-skills training as a central feature of the model. The intention was to have partners provide it for 150 participants. However, by the time the YWCA began implementing the program, it was not treating this training as a high priority. (This shift is discussed further in the program implementation section of the chapter.)

Underlying this design is the idea that these components would help participants enter the formal labor market and stay employed there. The transitional job was meant to provide participants with experience, references, and workplace skills. Case management was meant to improve participants' job readiness. The child support assistance and earnings supplements were meant as additional economic incentives for entering and retaining formal employment, as was the training, which was intended to help participants earn higher wages.

Recruitment and Study Enrollment

It proved to be a substantial challenge for SFTW to enroll enough people into the study. The YWCA identified a number of referral partners from which it anticipated meeting its enrollment goals. Chief among them was DCSS's Children First program, but the actual number of referrals from this source fell far short of expectations, for several reasons: Children First case managers were focused on making referrals to a different program (a fatherhood program operating at various locations in Milwaukee), the paperwork involved in making the referrals was daunting, and there were delays in working out a referral process. As referrals were slow to come, the child support enforcement agency agreed to have its own caseworkers also make referrals. In the end, the YWCA reported having received more than 500 referrals from Children First and the Department combined. An interviewee from the child support enforcement agency said it had met its referral target but substantially fewer actually enrolled in the program, for unknown reasons.

A number of referrals were also anticipated from criminal justice agencies, including prison and jail facilities and the Community Corrections Employment Program (CCEP), a program operated by the Wisconsin Department of Corrections that provides employment assistance to individuals returning to their communities. The program did receive a number of referrals from CCEP, but the corrections facilities did not end up being major referral sources.

Many referrals came from the YWCA's own Career Opportunity Center, including several people who walked into the facility.

Determined to reach its enrollment goals, in the latter part of the enrollment period the program began to engage all staff members and even current participants in recruitment efforts. The program employed a wide range of recruitment tactics in this last push, including outreach to businesses and organizations within a 10-mile radius (for example, faith-based organizations, barbershops, and public assistance offices), outreach to shelters, public-service announcements on the radio, and incentives for participants who made referrals (in the form of bus tickets). These efforts required a great deal of staff attention. Because these outreach efforts were particularly intensive toward the end of the enrollment period, the program had particularly high enrollments during the last three months of that time (October to December 2013). Enrollments during these months accounted for more than 20 percent of the program's total.

- **The program ultimately met the target sample size, but the characteristics of individuals enrolled late in the enrollment period may have been different from those recruited earlier.**

SFTW targeted unemployed noncustodial parents with Milwaukee County child support orders (or parents who were willing to have orders established), who were identified as "not job-ready." For most of the program's enrollment period, the program defined "not job-ready" as being unemployed and meeting at least one of the following criteria:

- Has no high school diploma or equivalent
- Has been actively seeking employment, is ineligible for or exhausted unemployment insurance benefits, and has been unemployed for a period of 12 weeks before applying to the program
- Has not had any period of continuous employment for one employer for a period of 4 months or more during the past 12 months
- Has a major barrier to employment (for example, a substance-abuse issue, a pending criminal justice action, or some other issue that must be resolved before an employer will hire)

These criteria were implemented in July 2012. The original criteria excluded individuals who had been in transitional jobs programs before, who had child support orders from other counties, or who met a broader definition of "job-ready" that included individuals who had worked for 3 consecutive months in the previous 18. However, because program enrollment started slowly, the program expanded eligibility.

Referral sources (including the YWCA's own Career Opportunity Center, which handled most walk-ins) screened participants using a checklist that asked whether participants met each of the program's eligibility requirements. A YWCA intake specialist then called each referred noncustodial parent to go over that parent's information. The intake specialist ran checks on child support, using information provided by a DCSS paralegal at the YWCA, and Selective Service status. The intake specialist invited those whose child support status met program guidelines and who appeared to meet the program's other eligibility criteria to an information session.[7] Interested individuals filled out additional forms at the session and provided documents needed to confirm their eligibility. Case managers conducted random assignment after potential participants were determined to be eligible.

[7]Individuals who had not registered for Selective Service were still invited to the information session, as they had the opportunity to register before enrollment.

Staff members indicated that the wide-ranging recruitment strategy adopted late in the program's enrollment period might have affected the characteristics of the sample population. For example, organizations like Children First had prescreened participants before they came to SFTW, but as the program instituted broad canvassing in the community, such prescreened referrals made up a smaller share of the sample. Staff members had a general impression that participants enrolled late in the program were harder to serve, facing more issues like criminal backgrounds, homelessness, substance abuse, and mental health issues. A comparison between those enrolled during the last three months of the enrollment period and earlier enrollees does show modest but statistically significant differences: later enrollees were somewhat older, more likely to have disabilities, and less likely to have ever worked — and if they did, they were less likely to have worked six or more months in the previous three years. More of them were homeless and more of them had received treatment for substance abuse. However, they were not more likely to have received mental health services or to have been incarcerated. Some program staff members suggested that many participants enrolled in December may have just been interested in the immediate prospect of getting a job, not in the program as a whole.

Baseline Characteristics

This section discusses the background characteristics of the evaluation sample in areas such as demographics, educational background, work history, and child support history. These characteristics are presented in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 and Appendix Table B.1.[8]

The research team obtained data from the baseline information forms and the management information system for participants enrolled from November 2011 through December 2013. As Table 3.1 shows, virtually all of SFTW participants are black men, and most were between the ages of 18 and 44 when they enrolled. About a third had not earned a high school diploma or equivalent. The vast majority of program participants had been employed at some point in their lives, and 68 percent of the sample had worked for the same employer for six months or more at some point. However, earned wages from participants' most recent jobs were generally low; more than two-thirds of the sample earned less than $10 per hour (see Appendix Table B.1). Most participants had never been married, and rented or owned their housing at the time of enrollment.

[8]As expected (given the random assignment design), there were very few statistically significant differences between the program and control groups with respect to these characteristics. Therefore, for simplicity, Tables 3.1 and 3.2 and Appendix Table B.1 present numbers for the full Milkwaukee sample. For a detailed comparison of the baseline characteristics of program group members and control group members across the ETJD programs, see Appendix I.

Table 3.1

Characteristics and Employment Histories of Sample Members: *Milwaukee*

Characteristic	Milwaukee Program	ETJD Programs Targeting Noncustodial Parents
Male (%)	97.3	93.2
Age (%)		
18-24	9.5	7.6
25-34	42.9	32.6
35-44	31.8	34.9
45 or older	15.9	24.9
Average age	35.1	37.6
Race/ethnicity (%)		
Black, non-Hispanic	93.1	82.4
White, non-Hispanic	2.5	5.5
Hispanic	3.2	7.9
Asian, non-Hispanic	0.1	1.4
Other/multiracial	1.1	2.9
Educational attainment (%)		
No high school diploma or equivalent	32.2	29.2
High school diploma or equivalent	65.8	66.0
Associate degree or equivalent	1.6	2.6
Bachelor degree or higher	0.3	2.3
Marital status (%)		
Never married	84.5	66.2
Currently married	4.8	8.4
Separated, widowed, or divorced	10.7	25.4
Veteran (%)	3.1	4.9
Has a disability (%)	6.1	5.4
Housing (%)		
Rents or owns	85.8	45.4
Halfway house, transitional house, or residential treatment facility	3.7	3.7
Homeless	4.7	7.9
Staying in someone else's apartment, room, or house	5.8	43.0

(continued)

Table 3.1 (continued)

Characteristic	Milwaukee Program	ETJD Programs Targeting Noncustodial Parents
Employment history		
Ever worked (%)	92.0	95.6
Among those who ever worked:		
Worked in the past year (%)	56.4	49.9
Average hourly wage in most recent job ($)	9.34	11.21
Ever worked for the same employer for 6 months or more (%)	68.1	79.5
Months worked in the previous 3 years (%)		
Did not work	5.1	13.8
Fewer than 6 months	38.5	27.8
6 to 12 months	33.6	28.7
13 to 24 months	13.9	14.1
More than 24 months	9.0	15.6
Sample size	1,003	3,998

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

Table 3.2 presents the child support and criminal justice characteristics of the study sample. All participants were noncustodial parents and almost all had minor-age children (that is, children under 18). Most participants had active current child support orders at the time of enrollment, while a much smaller number (4 percent) had arrears-only child support orders.

Fifty-five percent of program group members had been incarcerated in prison, mostly for nonviolent offenses. This figure is not surprising, as over half of black men in their 30s in Milwaukee County have served time in state prison.[9] About half of the formerly incarcerated participants were on community supervision when they enrolled. This group may have faced particularly steep employment challenges.

SFTW participants were somewhat younger than sample members in other ETJD programs that served noncustodial parents. They were less likely to have ever had a job for the same employer for at least six months, and were also somewhat more likely to have been incarcerated, which may have presented some challenges for employment. They were also

[9]Pawasarat and Quinn (2013).

Table 3.2

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

Characteristic	Milwaukee Program	ETJD Programs Targeting Noncustodial Parents
Parental and child support status		
Noncustodial parent (%)	100.0	100.0
Has any minor-age children (%)	98.8	93.2
Among those with minor-age children:		
Average number of minor-age children	2.6	2.5
Living with minor-age children (%)	12.8	18.1
Has a current child support order (%)	95.3	86.3
Has an order only for child support debt (%)	3.8	12.7
Criminal history		
Ever convicted of a crime[a] (%)	82.0	76.4
Ever incarcerated in prison[b] (%)	54.6	40.2
Among those ever incarcerated in prison:		
Average years in prison[c]	3.7	3.8
Years between most recent release and program enrollment[d] (%)		
Less than 1 year	29.3	33.2
1 to 3 years	17.8	17.5
More than 3 years	52.8	49.2
Average months since most recent release[d]	58.2	62.2
On community supervision at program enrollment[e] (%)	51.9	51.6
Sample size	1,003	3,998

(continued)

Table 3.2 (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 arrests and convictions in the state of Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin administrative records.
[c]Includes time spent in Wisconsin 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.

somewhat more likely to have current child support orders. Lastly, they were more likely to be receiving food stamps and less likely to have health care coverage (see Appendix Table B.1).

Program Implementation

The YWCA faced a number of challenges in implementing the full structure of the SFTW program. The YWCA succeeded in implementing some core features of the program largely as intended, but other features were not fully implemented, and the program faced challenges related to staffing and recruitment.

Program Structure and Staffing

Plans for staffing varied even at early stages, but initial plans included a full-time program manager, several case managers (there were three for most of the program), an intake specialist, an instructor for the job-readiness workshop, a site coordinator responsible for transitional job placements, and a quality-assurance specialist. A number of partner organizations also played roles in various aspects of the program: the YWCA's on-site Career Opportunity Center, which provided some services the SFTW program did not offer directly; DCSS and Legal Action of Wisconsin, which provided child support-related services; and two training providers.

- **Turnover in important positions and understaffing affected the program at several times.**

The YWCA's chief operating officer, who was largely responsible for the SFTW program's design, left the organization in December 2011. Several partnerships central to the original design were based on her relationships with other organizations in Milwaukee, and in interviews, some staff members at these partner organizations attributed challenges or delays in working with SFTW to her departure.

The program was not fully staffed until October 2012, nearly a year after enrollment began. Up to that point, staffing constraints affected the program's ability to implement all of the model's components; managers acknowledged that the program had not been able to give sufficient attention to unsubsidized job placement in particular. After October 2012, the program remained fully or almost fully staffed until the end of 2013, when the job-readiness instructor and site coordinator positions ended (they were only budgeted to continue through that year). Given the late surge in enrollment described above, a number of participants received job-readiness instruction and transitional job placement from other staff members. The departure of the site coordinator may also have affected the pace at which participants were placed into training, as the site coordinator had been serving as the primary point of contact with the training provider.

Initial staffing plans did not include a job developer; those plans assumed that one of the existing job developers at the YWCA's Career Opportunity Center would help place participants in unsubsidized jobs. The program's management ultimately decided a job developer would be helpful, however, and added someone in that position in October 2012. However, due to turnover, this position was vacant for part of 2013. One case manager said that when there was no job developer, individuals finishing their transitional jobs may not have received enough assistance finding unsubsidized employment.

- **The program's partners delivered child support assistance largely as envisioned.**

Two partners were responsible for the program's child support services. DCSS arranged the freeze on and forgiveness of interest on debt owed to the state. That incentive was implemented appropriately, though not every participant had forgivable interest. Details on this program feature are discussed more in Box 3.1. An attorney from Legal Action of Wisconsin assisted participants with their child support orders, requesting modifications when appropriate, and helped ensure that the interest forgiveness was applied correctly. A paralegal from DCSS who was already located on-site at the YWCA obtained information for the program about participants' and potential participants' child support orders.

- **Partnerships with two organizations meant to provide occupational skills training were not put into place as planned.**

The YWCA's initial plans called for occupational skills training to be provided to 150 individuals, or 30 percent of participants. This training was to be provided by two partner organizations: Northwest Side Community Development Corporation, a not-for-profit development organization with connections to advanced manufacturing employers in the community,

Box 3.1

Forgiveness of Interest on State-Owed Debt as Part of Supporting Families Through Work

Through its partnership with DCSS, SFTW was able to offer participants forgiveness of some child support-related debt. Described by the program as forgiveness of "interest of state owed arrears," in practice this meant forgiveness of interest on state-owed child support debt accrued while a child was on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the federal welfare program in place before the welfare reform of the mid-1990s. Wisconsin has a policy of passing through to the custodial parent any child support related to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF, the postreform welfare program), which means that forgiveness of interest on TANF debt requires written agreement from the custodial parent. Partway through the life of the program, the department also agreed to forgive interest on foster care-related debt and some birth expenses.

Forgiveness occurred in stages:

- When a participant completed the job-readiness workshop, interest was frozen and 25 percent was forgiven.
- When a participant finished a transitional job, an additional 50 percent of interest and 50 percent of birth expenses were forgiven.
- When a participant started an unsubsidized job, the remaining interest balance was forgiven.

Before they entered the program, 95 percent of program group members had some child support debt, but only 31 percent had interest on state-owed debt that could be forgiven, and 71 percent owed birth expenses. However, most of those with applicable debt seem to have benefited from the policy; for example, just over a quarter of program group members saw some reduction in the eligible interest they owed, and 10 percent of program group members saw their eligible state-owed interest completely eliminated.

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and the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership, a "construction and manufacturing intermediary" organization that provides training based on industry needs. However, training from these organizations was not a central focus of the program as it was implemented, in part due to the early departure of SFTW's chief operating officer and in part due to understaffing, which led the program to focus primarily on more basic activities of recruitment, enrollment, and arranging placement in transitional jobs. The training organizations also said that participants needed to have an appropriate level of skills for the employers they work with, though the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership added that its employers would accommodate

Box 3.1 (continued)

While the available data do not show how much of the reduction was due to forgiveness rather than payments, the table below suggests that forgiveness played a large role. It presents average state-owed debt and interest for both the program and control groups.* The program group saw reductions in state-owed debt, presumably in part due to payments (and possibly also forgiveness of birth expenses), but the reductions in interest were much steeper. In contrast, the control group saw both state-owed debt and interest grow, with interest growing faster.

	Before Random Assignment	One Year Later	Change
Program group			
State-owed debt	$5,968	$5,597	-6.2%
State-owed interest	$3,889	$2,279	-41.4%
Control group			
State-owed debt	$5,199	$5,444	4.7%
State-owed interest	$3,465	$3,709	7.0%

*The figures include TANF debt, which was not covered by SFTW's interest forgiveness. The averages in the table cover all members of the program and control groups, including those who did not have each specific type of debt; averages for only those with each type of debt would be substantially higher.

individuals they knew were working with the YWCA. Partnerships with each organization were only fully active for different parts of the program period, and in the end, only a small number of participants received training through the organizations.

Implementation of Program Components

This section draws from the research team's observations during four site visits to Milwaukee: an early assessment of operations, an evaluation monitoring visit that occurred about nine months into the enrollment period, and two implementation visits. It also draws on ongoing conversations with program managers over the course of the grant period and information entered by the program's staff into the ETJD management information system. The site visits included interviews with YWCA staff members, partners, and employers, and a focus group with participants. Table 3.3 presents data from the management information system on participation in core program components.

Table 3.3

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

Measure	Program Group
Participated in any activity, including a subsidized job (%)	92.2
Worked in a subsidized job (%)	62.8
Among those who worked in a subsidized job:	
Average number of months in the program[a]	5.9
Average number of days from random assignment to first subsidized paycheck	67
Average number of days worked in a subsidized job[b]	56
Received a service other than a subsidized job (%)	91.8
Formal assessment/testing[c]	85.1
Education and job training[d]	8.8
Workforce preparation[e]	83.5
Work-related support[f]	73.1
Child support assistance[g]	74.9
Parenting class	--
Incentive payment[h]	1.8
Other services[i]	72.3
Received a wage supplement during unsubsidized employment (%)	9.4
Among those who received a wage supplement:	
Average hourly wage supplement ($)	2.07
Average total wage supplement amount received ($)	631
Average hours worked with wage supplement	308
Sample size	502

(continued)

Table 3.3 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on data from the ETJD management information system and the YWCA's wage supplement and work-related support records.

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, Prove-It, Wiscareers, and Accuvision.
[d]Includes alternate fuel training and manufacturing skills training.
[e]Includes work-readiness training workshops.
[f]Includes clothing for interviews and bus tickets.
[g]Includes order modifications, stipulations, and child support debt compromises.
[h]Includes gift cards for sustaining unsubsidized employment.
[i]Includes case management and follow-up services.

- **A large majority of program group members received at least one service from the program.**

Table 3.3 shows that 92 percent of individuals who went through random assignment and were assigned to the program group received some type of service from SFTW. The other 8 percent appear not to have returned to the YWCA to participate in the job-readiness workshop (which was usually offered within a week of random assignment) or other services.

- **The job-readiness workshop was popular with participants, but was reduced over time to speed transitional job placements.**

The job-readiness workshop was the first activity participants were supposed to attend. It was designed as a five-day workshop, and the material it covered stayed close to the intended model. Several assessments were administered on the first day to gauge participants' skills and interests and the types of jobs that would be good matches for them. During days two through four, participants learned about different industries, discussed their goals and the steps on the road to making a career decision, and learned how to perform a job search, including working on résumés and cover letters. Participants met with the Legal Action attorney for assistance with child support on the last day. In spring 2013, the workshop was cut to three days to facilitate faster placement in transitional jobs. The program arrived at this decision after interactions with other ETJD programs that did not have preplacement workshops lasting as long.

Focus group participants spoke very highly of the workshop. However, the extent to which the program built on the workshop in later activities is unclear. The job-readiness instructor provided case managers with a short written assessment of each participant based on what he learned about that participant during the workshop, but the case managers acknowledged they did not always review it before the initial meeting with a participant. The program did not appear to make an effort to ensure that later activities explicitly built on or referred back

to the activities and lessons of the workshop. The program stopped running workshops shortly after the enrollment period ended, and some participants who had not yet completed a workshop by that time received less formal job-readiness training on an ad hoc basis.

Not surprisingly, since it was the program's first stage, a large majority of individuals served by the program participated in the workshop. Table 3.3 shows that 85 percent received the assessments administered as the first activity in the workshop — which means 15 percent of program group members never participated in the program's first activity. There was also some attrition during the workshop, as only 75 percent received child support assistance, which typically began on the last day of the workshop and was delivered to anyone who completed the workshop. Based on interviews with program staff members, it appears that some participants did not fully understand the program and left on the first day — potentially even before completing the assessments — after realizing that the transitional job would pay only $7.25 an hour, and that placements in transitional jobs might not be immediate.

- **Child support assistance was provided consistently, and participants reported that it was a helpful aspect of the program.**

Meetings between participants and the Legal Action attorney appear to have taken place regularly at the end of the job-readiness workshops, and participants said in the focus group and in individual interviews that they found this assistance helpful and that they were satisfied with the experience of working with Legal Action. Case managers said that the child support assistance was what attracted many participants to the program in the first place.

- **Case management under SFTW was largely implemented as envisioned but not fully so, in part due to other burdens on the case managers.**

Case managers worked with participants to understand their strengths and weaknesses, and to identify their needs and connect participants with appropriate services. After getting an understanding of participants' strengths and interests, case managers worked with the site coordinator to make sure appropriate transitional job placements were arranged. Case managers also reviewed criminal background reports on all participants, and regularly helped them get records of arrests not resulting in convictions removed.

The model called for staff members to have meetings with transitional job employers and participants at 30, 60, and 90 days into participants' time on the transitional job, but in practice, only the 30-day meetings happened regularly. Staff members appear to have given this responsibility less weight than other, competing demands on their time, including outreach and enrollment. The lack of time devoted to these meetings is also reflected in data collected from the staff for a time study based on activity late in the enrollment period; case management only represented 7 percent of staff time at that point, in part because case managers were spending

time on recruitment and on activities related to study sample enrollment.[10] Case managers said that it became easier to provide individual services after random assignment ended.

Table 3.3 shows that nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of participants received "other services," which consisted of case management and follow-up services generally provided by the case managers. This finding suggests that the vast majority of those who finished the job-readiness workshop also received other services from the program. Similarly, nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of participants received some type of work-related support from the program or from other sources at the YWCA (most often bus tickets or clothing for interviews), the need for which was generally determined by case managers.

One noteworthy issue raised by several staff members during interviews was that it was sometimes difficult for the female case managers to build rapport and relationships with their male clients. For much of the program period, the case managers were all female, while the participants were almost all male. Sometimes other, male staff members would get involved. Their involvement could help, because they could sometimes more easily build rapport with the clients, but those relationships could also get in the way of case managers' efforts to build their own rapport.

- **While occupational training was an important part of the intended model, it never became a major part of the program that was actually implemented. Nonetheless, a small number of participants received training of various types.**

As discussed earlier, only a small number of participants received occupational training from two partner organizations. The idea of coordinating transitional jobs with training opportunities remains a potentially promising strategy that may be worth evaluating in the future, but the concept was not meaningfully tested in this study.

Some other individuals received other types of education and training through the YWCA's Career Opportunity Center, in part by enrolling in FoodShare Employment and Training and Workforce Investment Act services. Some participants received training at Milwaukee Area Technical College.

Participants received training in automotive repair, manufacturing, food services, and commercial driver's license certification. In total, 9 percent of participants received education or job training from the program. In addition, some participants received high school equivalency

[10]During the fall of 2013, the evaluation team conducted a study that asked staff members to report the time they spent on each program component during a specified period.

test preparation. The most common certifications reported by respondents were related to forklift operation, hazardous materials, and food handling or culinary arts.

- **The transitional job placement component was implemented in a manner largely consistent with the program model, with some exceptions. The program was generally able to find employers willing to host participants. However, less than two-thirds of participants actually received transitional jobs. There was a substantial delay in many of the placements and the experiences of participants on the job varied.**

Transitional job placements were with for-profit and nonprofit employers. The types of positions varied, ranging from janitorial to warehousing to manufacturing to food service to administrative. Employers included a nonprofit environmental-education center, a nonprofit organization operating a food bank and offering other food-related services, a local for-profit food manufacturer, a commercial printing company, and the YWCA itself. The program tried to develop relationships with larger companies that could serve as transitional job sites for a number of program participants. At times it had difficulty establishing these types of arrangements, but eventually it identified a small number of larger employers who took on several participants in transitional jobs.

The program did not require employers to commit to consider hiring participants after the transitional job, and it was not common for that to occur, although it did happen. The site coordinator tried to find employers who might do so. He used the earnings supplement as a selling point. The program did not provide much guidance to employers about the role they were supposed to play in preparing participants for unsubsidized employment, and participants therefore had a variety of experiences. At least one nonprofit employer made a deliberate effort to help participants develop their skills and employability, while other employers treated participants as they would other employees.

The site coordinator was responsible for arranging placements. To determine an appropriate placement for a participant, the site coordinator was supposed to meet with the case manager and job-readiness instructor, and to review the participant's résumé, referral form, and criminal background check. This meeting did not always happen consistently; instead case managers simply made recommendations to the site coordinator based on their familiarity with participants and knowledge of available placements. Case managers also had more responsibility for placements after the funding budgeted for the site coordinator position ended. Employers had the option to take on or not take on any participants referred to them. While they all screened participants, the extent to which they conducted something approximating a formal interview was at the discretion of the employer.

As Table 3.3 indicates, 63 percent of participants held transitional jobs, meaning that more than one-third of program group members did not receive the program model's central service, largely due to attrition that occurred before they were placed. As noted earlier, only about three-quarters of participants completed the job-readiness workshop, and more than 80 percent of those who completed the workshop entered transitional jobs. Several factors may have contributed to the continuing attrition. Case managers said that some of those who did complete the workshop never showed up for an initial meeting with them. While case managers had responsibility for reengaging participants who dropped off at this stage or later, they may not have given as much attention to reengagement during the time when they were contributing to recruitment and enrollment. (Case managers reported doing more to reach out to such participants after the program stopped enrolling new people.)

Staff members also reported that some participants were difficult to place. It may have been particularly hard to place participants with criminal backgrounds; staff members reported that they did have some employers open to hiring people with criminal backgrounds, but at times those jobs were all full. In an early review of transitional job placements (conducted about a quarter of the way into the enrollment period), case managers reported that about a quarter of those not placed into transitional jobs had either become incarcerated since enrolling in the program or had found unsubsidized employment without going through the transitional job. The actual numbers may have been higher — almost half of those who had not received transitional job placements had disengaged from the program (or never engaged with it in the first place) for reasons unknown to the case managers.

Among those participants placed in transitional jobs, placement occurred roughly two months after random assignment, on average. More precisely, as shown in Table 3.3, the average length of time between random assignment and receipt of the first transitional job paycheck was approximately 67 days. However, the length of time varied from participant to participant. Some were placed relatively quickly: About one-fifth received their first transitional job paychecks within 30 days. Since checks are given out only weekly, that means they were placed in jobs only a week or two after completing the job-readiness workshop. Almost half of participants received their first paychecks between 31 and 60 days after random assignment. On the other hand, for almost one-fifth, more than 90 days passed between random assignment and receipt of the first paycheck. Some people in this latter category most likely disengaged from the program after the workshop and then reconnected with it after an extended period of absence.

However, even many of those who stayed engaged with the program experienced some delay in placement due to early program activities and the process involved in matching participants with employers. That delay may account for much of the program's attrition. About nine months after it began enrolling people, when the extent of the attrition before transitional

job placement became clear, the program began to put more emphasis on placing participants rapidly, and less on carefully matching them to jobs.

Table 3.3 shows that the average participant worked in a transitional job for 56 days. About half of those placed worked 61 or more days in one or more transitional job placement, suggesting that they completed the time they expected to spend there, while about half worked 60 or fewer days, suggesting voluntary or involuntary termination.[11] Case managers cited on-the-job behavior issues, inconsistent attendance, tardiness, and physical altercations as reasons for program termination. When a participant was terminated from a transitional job, the staff often emphasized more job coaching before placing him or her in a second transitional job or moving straight to unsubsidized job searching. Staff members were hesitant to risk another employer having a negative experience with the program because they placed a participant who had already demonstrated problems with on-the-job behavior.

A relatively small number of participants were still in transitional jobs at the end of the 12-month follow-up period, as shown in Figure 3.1. These participants could reflect lags between random assignment and placement in transitional jobs, or they could be individuals who left the program before completing a first transitional job and who later returned and were given a second placement.

In interviews, participants said they were disappointed with the pay and hours offered by the transitional jobs. Some had misunderstood the pay and hours they would get. They also felt that the staff did not take their individual circumstances into account when making recommendations about what transitional jobs to place them in, and expressed frustration with what they saw as the slow pace of placements.[12]

- **The program ran "engagement sessions" or "support sessions," led by various staff members, designed to keep participants engaged in the program and support them in finding unsubsidized employment.**

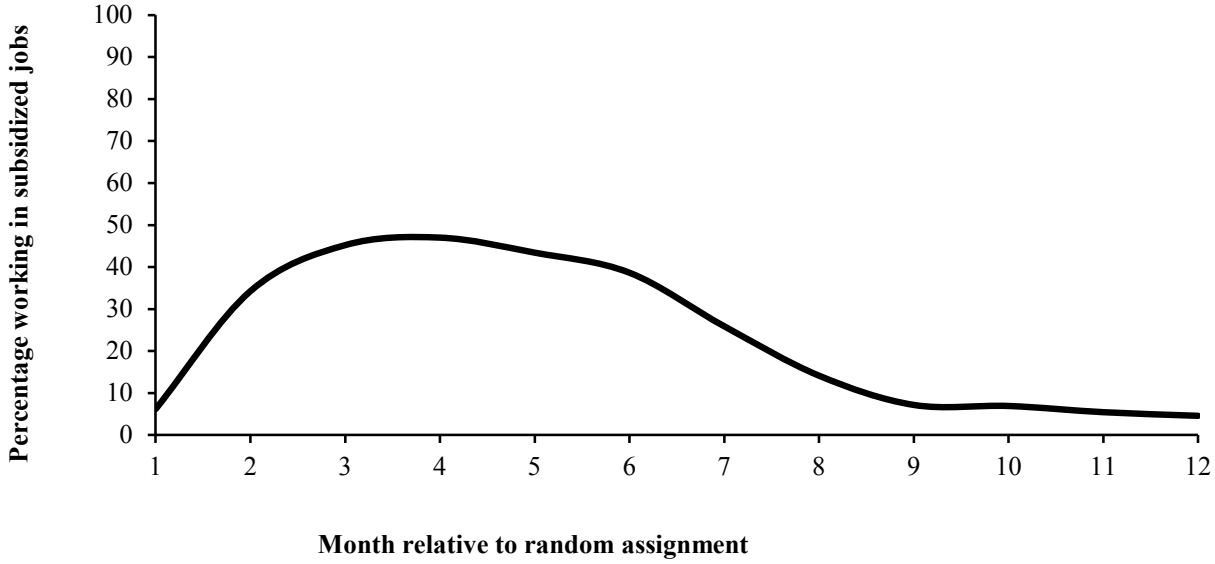
The program sometimes held sessions designed to improve engagement in the program's services. These sessions were usually run separately for those in their transitional jobs or earlier stages and those in the unsubsidized job search stage, but the staff sometimes combined these groups. Participants were expected to attend to help them prepare to search

[11]Transitional job placements were typically expected to last four months at up to 30 hours per week, so a placement would be expected to last around 65 to 70 work days. (See footnote b in Table 3.3 for a description of how workdays were measured.)

[12]As noted later, a sample of participants surveyed after they were already working in transitional jobs had generally positive responses about their experiences.

Figure 3.1

Subsidized Employment Over Time: *Milwaukee*



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.

for unsubsidized employment, unless their employers' requirements made it difficult to be in class at the scheduled time. Sessions focused on employment issues. Participants role-played situations that might come up on the job or in interviews. They talked about how to conduct job searches while still in their transitional jobs, and learned about sexual harassment in the work-place. Various staff members could suggest topics they thought were relevant to participants.

- **Job development to help participants find unsubsidized employment was provided inconsistently.**

The job developer position was only filled intermittently. A dedicated job developer was only on staff from October 2012 through July 2013, and then after October 2013. Case managers reported that when there was no job developer, they and other staff members pitched in to help participants find unsubsidized jobs, but some individuals didn't receive consistent help. Staff members said it helped that the site coordinator tried to find employers interested in hiring participants after their transitional jobs. It is not clear from the available data how often

employers did hire participants into permanent, unsubsidized jobs in this manner. Anecdotes from the staff suggest it happened at least occasionally.

- **The earnings supplement appears to have been implemented as anticipated. Participants in unsubsidized jobs that paid less than $10 an hour had the supplement available to them. However, only a relatively small portion of the program group received it.**

As shown in Table 3.3, only 9 percent of participants received the supplement in the 12 months following random assignment.[13] This low percentage may be partly because to receive the supplement, participants had to stay engaged with the program past the transitional job phase and into their period of unsubsidized employment. The supplement was provided directly to participants who presented pay stubs (though a small number of employers asked to pay the higher wages themselves and have the YWCA reimburse them). The attrition that occurred at earlier stages of program participation may have meant that many program group members with unsubsidized earnings under $10 an hour were not sufficiently connected to the program to obtain the supplement. Further, it may have been difficult for some participants to present their pay stubs.

Survey data on wages earned by the program group (discussed later in this chapter) also suggest that those who did find jobs earned more than $10 per hour on average, so it is likely that many would not have been eligible for the supplement.

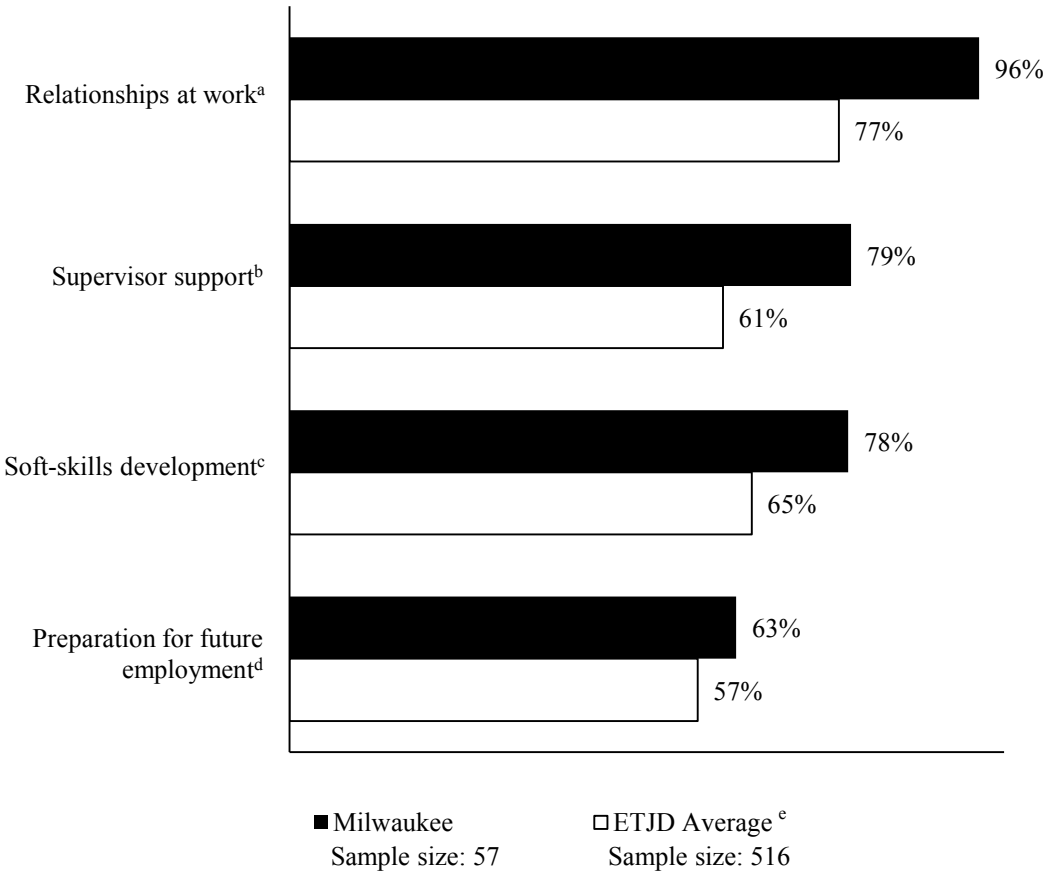
- **Participants in transitional jobs reported mostly positive experiences in those jobs. However, some had mixed assessments of the program. Some participants expressed disappointment about the types of jobs they were matched with, and about the amount of time it took to get placed.**

Information on participants' perceptions of the SFTW program comes from three main sources: participant questionnaires administered at group engagement and retention meetings during the two implementation site visits, a focus group of program participants conducted during the first implementation site visit, and one-on-one interviews with a small number of participants. Findings from the questionnaire are summarized in Figure 3.2. This figure shows that most participants expressed favorable opinions about their relationships at work, supervisor support, and soft-skills development. This finding is notable, as supervision at the transitional job sites was provided by the employers, not by program staff members, suggesting the program did a good job identifying employers that could provide a supportive transitional job experience.

[13] Another 7 percent of participants received the supplement after that time.

Figure 3.2

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



(continued)

Figure 3.2 (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 who 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.

(However, since participants were surveyed at group retention meetings, the respondents probably do not make up a representative sample. They do not include participants whose engagement with the program dropped off, who might have had more negative responses.)

Participants appear to have had more varied opinions about the extent to which the transitional jobs would help them get good jobs in the future, because of the skills they were developing, the relationships they were establishing on the job, or the type of work they were getting experience performing. Close to two-thirds (63 percent) gave very positive responses to these questions. While two-thirds is more than half of respondents, it was the lowest-scoring area on the questionnaire. Further, this comparatively low score was consistent with responses given by several participants in the focus group, who expressed disappointment that the program was not setting them up with transitional jobs well matched to their interests, skills, or long-term goals. In the individual interviews, participants also expressed some frustration with

the amount of time it took to get placed in transitional jobs. Box 3.2 describes the experience of a SFTW participant.

Focus group members were strongly positive about some of the other services the program provided. In particular, participants in the focus group said that they found the job-readiness workshop and the child support-related legal services to be very helpful. These sentiments were echoed by individual participants in interviews.

Box 3.2

Supporting Families Through Work Participant Profile

"Mike" is a 32-year-old black man with four minor-age biological children and one minor-age stepchild. He has never completed high school or received a high school equivalency, and has been struggling to find long-term employment, working a number of odd jobs with temp agencies. He has been incarcerated twice, both times for nonviolent offenses, and was on probation at the time of the research team's site visit. Mike's federal probation officer referred him to Supporting Families Through Work because he was having difficulty finding permanent employment. This difficulty prevented him from making his child support payments — he had $3,000 in child support debt and three active child support orders when he enrolled in the program. He had been taking on a series of temp-agency jobs as a way to avoid the financial strain of child support payments: Once the child support agency became aware of his income at one job, he would quit and find a new one.

Mike went to the program thinking it would provide him with a job that paid $10/hour. He was disappointed when he found out that the jobs actually pay closer to $7.25/hour. Additionally, he thought the job would be 40 hours a week instead of 30 hours a week. While he was upset that the transitional job paid less and involved fewer hours than expected, he still thought some kind of employment was better than being unemployed. He felt that many components of the program seemed rushed, and some of the information they presented he already knew, but he found the staff to be friendly and helpful.

Mike expects that the program will help him to get a better insight into how to find a more permanent, stable job. He hopes the transitional job will match his interests and that it will be something he can keep for a prolonged period. Depending on transportation and timing, he thinks that he has a 50/50 chance of obtaining a job that meets his expectations. He plans to use the money from his future employment to pay outstanding bills, to pay child support, to take care of himself, to buy himself things, and "to have a little life." Of all of the programs he has tried, he reported that he thinks Supporting Families Through Work has been the most helpful, and he likes that it takes place over the long term.

Impacts on Participant Outcomes

Participation and Service Receipt Outcomes

This section uses data from a survey of program and control group members conducted about a year after random assignment to present information on the receipt of services such as employment support, education and training, and help related to past criminal convictions.[14] Only the program group was offered the program's services. Control group members may have received similar services — including subsidized employment — from other programs or providers: All received a list of alternate service providers following random assignment, and other transitional employment programs operated in the community during the program's service period. The findings in this section help to inform the analysis of the program's effects on employment, criminal justice outcomes, and child support, which are presented in the subsequent sections.

- **SFTW increased receipt of services related to employment by a small amount, and substantially increased receipt of services related to child support and criminal justice issues. It did not increase receipt of most educational or vocational services, but those were not core components of the program model.**

As noted above, services similar to those in SFTW were available from several other programs and providers in the community. Control group members had access to the services of the YWCA's Career Opportunity Center, including the FoodShare Employment and Training program, and several other community organizations in Milwaukee also offered employment services, including the nearby Milwaukee Urban League. Further, two state-funded transitional employment programs operated in Milwaukee at the same time as SFTW. Data provided by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families show that about 20 percent of control group members participated in one of these alternate programs. Nonetheless, Table 3.4 shows that the program had a significant effect on the receipt of services in many areas.

The first section of Table 3.4 shows the impacts on receipt of employment support services. According to the survey data, many sample members — including those in the control group — received help related to finding or keeping a job. However, program group members were significantly more likely to have received such assistance than those in the control group: 93 percent of the program group and 79 percent of the control group reported receiving help

[14]Survey response rates were 80.2 percent in the program group and 77.4 percent in the control group. An analysis of nonresponse bias found no evidence that differences in survey response rates biased the results of the impact analysis (see Appendix H).

Table 3.4

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

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Employment support				
Received help related to finding or keeping a job	93.3	79.3	14.0***	[10.1, 17.9]
Job search, job readiness, and career planning[a]	92.1	78.4	13.7***	[9.6, 17.8]
Paying for job-related transportation or equipment costs	58.3	35.4	22.8***	[17.1, 28.6]
Education and training				
Participated in education and training	42.7	38.1	4.5	[-1.2, 10.2]
ESL, ABE, or high school diploma or equivalent[b]	14.8	16.1	-1.3	[-5.4, 2.9]
Postsecondary education leading to a degree	11.0	8.2	2.8	[-0.7, 6.2]
Vocational training	26.9	21.4	5.4*	[0.4, 10.5]
Received high school diploma or equivalent	3.4	3.1	0.3	[-1.8, 2.4]
Earned professional license or certification (not including OSHA or forklift)[c]	13.9	12.4	1.5	[-2.4, 5.5]
Earned OSHA or forklift certification	7.6	4.3	3.3**	[0.5, 6.1]
Other support and services				
Among those identified as formerly incarcerated at enrollment:[d]				
Received help related to past criminal convictions	85.6	53.5	32.1***	[24.0, 40.3]
Handling employer questions about criminal history	83.6	52.0	31.6***	[23.3, 39.9]
Legal issues related to convictions	49.0	17.5	31.5***	[23.1, 39.9]
Received help related to child support, visitation, parenting or other family issues	81.5	39.4	42.2***	[37.0, 47.3]
Modifying child support debts or orders	79.1	29.7	49.3***	[44.3, 54.4]
Setting up visitation with child(ren)	22.1	11.9	10.2***	[5.9, 14.6]
Parenting or other family-related issues	35.5	22.5	13.0***	[7.8, 18.3]
Received advice or support from a staff member at an agency or organization	69.4	46.6	22.7***	[17.1, 28.3]

(continued)

Table 3.4 (continued)

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Received mentoring from a staff member at an agency or organization	64.2	38.9	25.2***	[19.6, 30.9]
Received mental health assistance	12.3	16.1	-3.8	[-7.8, 0.3]
Sample size	403	388		

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 incarcerated at study enrollment (program group = 172; control group = 158; total = 330).

finding or keeping a job. This difference is likely attributable in large part to SFTW's mandatory job-readiness workshop, which provided job-search preparation and job-readiness assessments. Program group members were also more likely than control group members to receive job-search assistance and to receive help paying for job-related transportation or equipment costs. Ninety-two percent of program group members received assistance with job searching, job readiness, and career planning compared with 78 percent in the control group, and 58 percent of program group members received help paying for job-related expenses, compared with only 35 percent in the control group.

The second section of Table 3.4 shows the percentages of the program and control groups who participated in various types of educational and training activities. As mentioned above, educational and occupational skills training was not a central part of the SFTW program model and — according to service data reported in Table 3.3 — only 9 percent of participants received educational or training services through the program. The 12-month survey confirms

that the program had few impacts on such activities. Program group members were not significantly more likely than control group members to have engaged in secondary or postsecondary education activities, were no more likely to have received a high school diploma or equivalent, and were no more likely to have earned a professional license or certification. The program moderately increased the proportion of sample members receiving vocational training (27 percent of the program group versus 21 percent of the control group) and Occupational Health and Safety Administration or forklift certifications received through subsidized employment (8 percent of the program group versus 4 percent of the control group).

As noted earlier, the program provided intensive and well-implemented assistance with child support order modification and debt compromise in partnership with Legal Action of Wisconsin and DCSS. For program participants who had been formerly incarcerated, case managers also provided help getting arrests that had not led to convictions removed from criminal background reports. Table 3.4 shows that program group members were significantly more likely than control group members to report receiving child support assistance or help dealing with past criminal convictions. A large majority of program group members — 82 percent — reported that they received help related to child support, visitation, parenting, or other family issues, compared with only 39 percent of the control group. Program group members were significantly more likely than the control group to have received help with child support modifications, setting up visitation, and other parenting issues. Likewise, a large majority of the program group participants who had been formerly incarcerated received help related to criminal convictions: 86 percent of program group members reported that they received such help compared with 54 percent of the control group.

Finally, the bottom three rows of Table 3.4 show that while many control group members received other support services, survey respondents in the program group were even more likely than those in the control group to report having received them. A large proportion — 69 percent — of program group members reported receiving advice or support from a staff member, compared with about 47 percent of the control group, and 64 percent of program group members reported receiving mentorship from a staff member, compared with almost 39 percent of the control group. Mental health assistance was not part of the program model, and only a small proportion of study participants received mental health assistance in either the program or control group. The program did not have a significant effect on this outcome.

Employment and Earnings Outcomes

This section presents the program's 12-month impacts on employment and earnings using unemployment insurance data from the National Directory of New Hires, supplemented by data from the 12-month survey of study participants. Using these two data sources it is possible

to describe employment and earnings in jobs that were reported to the unemployment insurance system, and to describe job characteristics as reported by survey respondents.

- **Program group members had higher rates of employment and earnings in unemployment insurance-covered jobs than control group members. Most of this impact is the result of subsidized employment.**

Table 3.5 and Figure 3.3 present the program's impacts on employment and earnings. The top panel of Table 3.5 shows one-year impacts estimated using unemployment insurance data, while the bottom panel shows impacts based on survey data. During the first 12 months, unemployment insurance data show that program group members were significantly more likely to have been employed, had more consistent employment, and had higher earnings than control group members. Control group members reported a substantially higher employment rate on the survey than is shown in unemployment insurance data records, which may indicate that control group members were more likely than program group members to be employed in jobs that did not report to unemployment insurance (for example, jobs in the informal economy or jobs where the worker is classified as an independent contractor); in other words, the program may have moved participants from uncovered employment to unemployment insurance-covered employment. The remainder of this section explores these findings in depth.

The top panel in Table 3.5 presents the program's impact on unemployment insurance-covered employment and earnings, which includes transitional employment. Even though the program screened participants to determine that they met the eligibility criterion of being "not job-ready," a majority of control group members — 61 percent — worked in unemployment insurance-covered jobs during the 12 months after random assignment. Program group members were even more likely to have worked during this time, with more than 86 percent having had unemployment insurance-covered employment (including the 61 percent who had transitional jobs provided by the program). Program group members were employed in significantly more quarters than control group members (an average of 2.4 quarters versus 1.5 quarters) and were about twice as likely to have been employed in all four quarters (25 percent versus 13 percent).

Program group earnings were also significantly higher than control group earnings, on average: Program group members earned an average of $4,910 during the 12-month follow-up period while control group members earned an average of $3,139.[15] A large portion of this earnings differential can be accounted for by the program group's earnings from transitional jobs, an average of $1,157.

[15]These 12-month averages include zeros for program and control group members who were not employed at all during the follow-up period.

Table 3.5

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

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Primary outcomes *(based on administrative data)*				
Employment[a] (%)	86.3	60.6	25.7***	[21.4, 30.0]
ETJD subsidized employment (%)	60.7	--		
Number of quarters employed	2.4	1.5	0.9***	[0.8, 1.0]
Average quarterly employment (%)	59.3	37.0	22.2***	[18.8, 25.7]
Employment in all quarters (%)	24.6	12.8	11.9***	[8.1, 15.6]
Total earnings ($)	4,910	3,139	1,772***	[1,273, 2,270]
ETJD subsidized earnings ($)	1,157	--		
Total earnings (%)				
$5,000 or more	36.5	22.5	14.0***	[9.5, 18.4]
$7,500 or more	22.4	14.8	7.6***	[3.7, 11.4]
$10,000 or more	14.2	11.0	3.2	[-0.1, 6.4]
Employment in the first quarter of Year 2 (%)	55.2	44.3	10.9***	[5.8, 16.0]
ETJD subsidized employment in the first quarter of Year 2 (%)	6.7	--		
Sample size[b]	500	501		
Self-reported outcomes *(based on survey data)*				
Ever employed in Year 1 (%)	77.7	72.5	5.2*	[0.1, 10.3]
Currently employed (%)	47.4	46.4	1.0	[-4.9, 6.9]
Currently employed in transitional job program (%)	5.7	2.2	3.4**	[1.1, 5.7]
Type of employment (%)				
Not currently employed	53.3	54.9	-1.6	[-7.6, 4.3]
Permanent	26.0	20.7	5.3*	[0.3, 10.4]
Temporary, including day labor and odd jobs	20.5	23.3	-2.8	[-7.7, 2.1]
Other	0.2	1.1	-0.9	[-1.8, 0.1]

(continued)

Table 3.5 (continued)

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Among those currently employed:[c]				
Hours worked per week	33.5	31.0	2.5	
Hourly wage ($)	10.3	9.6	0.7	
Hours worked per week (%)				
More than 20 hours	38.8	30.5	8.4**	[2.8, 14.0]
More than 34 hours	25.4	22.0	3.4	[-1.7, 8.5]
Hourly wage (%)				
More than $8.00	27.4	26.7	0.8	[-4.6, 6.1]
More than $10.00	12.5	8.6	3.8*	[0.1, 7.6]
Sample size	403	388		

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

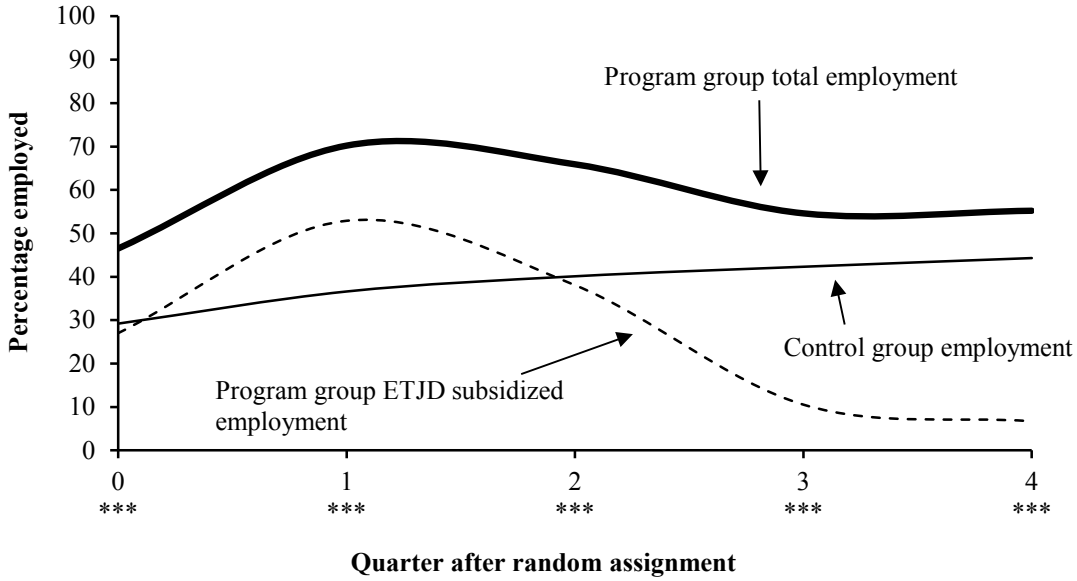
NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.
Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.
[a]Employment rates and earnings include both ETJD subsidized jobs and all other jobs covered by unemployment insurance.
[b]Two sample members are missing Social Security numbers and therefore could not be matched to employment data.
[c]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.

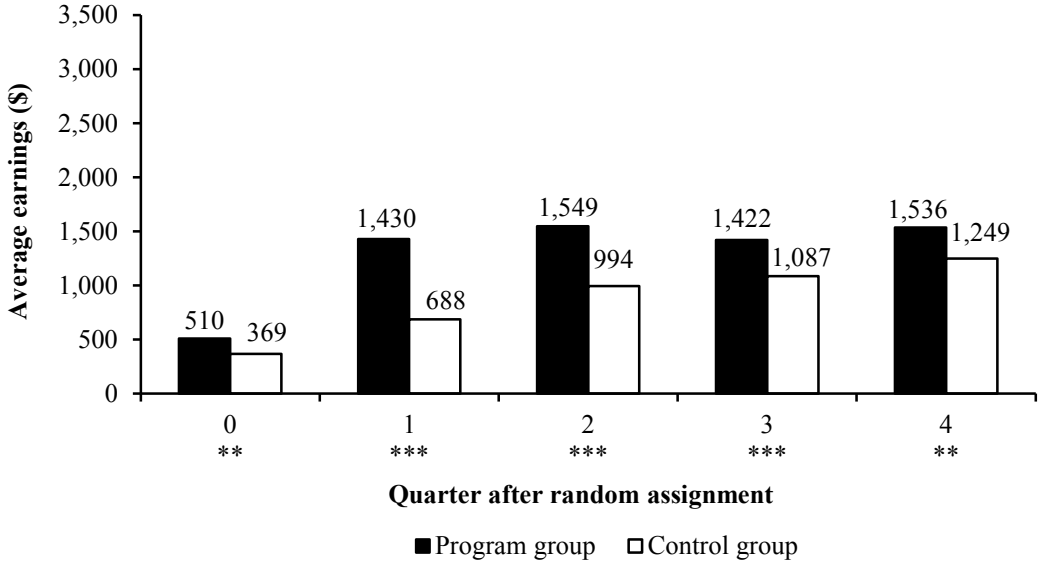
The last two rows in the top panel of Table 3.5 present earnings and transitional employment during the first quarter of Year 2, by which time most program group members should have completed their transitional jobs. Although there is still a large and statistically significant impact on employment during this quarter (11 percentage points), much of this impact is probably explained by the fact that almost 7 percent of program group members were still in transitional jobs. It is therefore unclear whether the program's impact on employment will persist after all program group members have left their transitional jobs.[16] Figure 3.3 likewise shows earnings and employment by quarter for the quarter of random assignment and

[16]It is impossible to know whether these program group members would have been employed if they did not have subsidized jobs.

Figure 3.3

Employment and Earnings Over Time: *Milwaukee*





(continued)

Figure 3.3 (continued)

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

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.

Employment rates and earnings cover both ETJD subsidized jobs and all other jobs covered by unemployment insurance.

the subsequent four quarters. While program group earnings and employment exceed control group earnings and employment by a statistically significant margin in each quarter, the difference between the two appears to be shrinking over time. It is not clear whether a substantial difference will remain beyond the first year.

The bottom panel of Table 3.5 shows the corresponding impacts measured using data from the follow-up survey. The program's impacts on survey-reported earnings and employment are smaller than the corresponding impacts measured using unemployment insurance data. In particular, survey respondents in the program group were only somewhat more likely to report having being employed during the first year than respondents in the control group (78 percent versus 73 percent). This 5 percentage point impact is much smaller than the 26 percentage point impact measured using unemployment insurance data.

In the first quarter of Year 2, program group members were somewhat less likely to report being employed than the unemployment insurance measure would suggest, while control group members were somewhat more likely to do so. These discrepancies suggest that control group members were more likely than program group members to be employed in jobs that were not covered by unemployment insurance. The program's impact on current employment among survey respondents is small and not statistically significant.

The two other groups of outcomes in Table 3.5 demonstrate that survey respondents in the program group were more likely to have worked more than half time than respondents in the control group, and somewhat more likely to report having earned more than $10 per hour than respondents in the control group. Among those currently employed at the time of the 12-month survey, program group members worked an average of 34 hours per week, compared with 31 for the control group. The results in the bottom section of Table 3.5 confirm that at the time of the survey, some study participants in the program group were still in transitional jobs, as were a smaller number in the control group. The difference in transitional jobs between the program and control groups is just over 3 percentage points.

Finally, the research team tested to see whether the program had different effects on participants who enrolled during the first year of random assignment than it did on those who

enrolled during the second year. These results are presented in Appendix Table B.2. Although the program's impact on employment was larger for the first-year participants, there were no significant differences between the impacts for first- and second-year participants on total earnings, average quarterly employment, or employment during the first quarter of Year 2.

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

Prior research suggests that employment programs may be more or less effective for certain subgroups of people. ETJD is based on the hypothesis that the programs may be most effective for people who are the least "employable" and who are therefore unlikely to find jobs on their own without assistance.[17] The research team therefore 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 3.6, levels of employment and earnings are lowest among those who did not work at all in the previous year, suggesting that prior-year employment is a fairly good predictor of employment in the year after random assignment.

Consistent with the ETJD theory, the program's impacts on employment and earnings in the first year 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, 78 percent of program group members were employed at some point during the year after random assignment compared with just 43 percent of the control group, an estimated impact of 35 percentage points. Program group members in this subgroup earned about $1,800 more than their control group counterparts during the follow-up period. Among those who had worked in the previous year, 93 percent of program group members worked at some point during the year after random assignment and 75 percent of control group members also worked, an estimated impact of only 17 percentage points, though the estimated impact on earnings is slightly larger for this subgroup, at around $2,200.

Child Support and Family Relations Outcomes

Transitional jobs may affect child support by affecting program participants' financial health and ability to comply with child support orders. The program may have also affected child support outcomes through the support services it offered, specifically the child support assistance that was available from DCSS and Legal Action of Wisconsin. As noted above, many sample members said they were more interested in the child support aspects of the program than the employment aspects.

[17] Butler et al. (2012).

Table 3.6

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

Outcome	Did Not Work in Prior Year: Program Group	Did Not Work in Prior Year: Control Group	Did Not Work in Prior Year: Difference (Impact)	Did Not Work in Prior Year: Ninety Percent Confidence Interval	Worked in Prior Year: Program Group	Worked in Prior Year: Control Group	Worked in Prior Year: Difference (Impact)	Worked in Prior Year: Ninety Percent Confidence Interval	Difference Between Subgroup Impacts[a]
Employment[b] (%)	77.9	42.8	35.0***	[28.0, 42.1]	92.8	75.4	17.4***	[12.4, 22.4]	†††
ETJD subsidized employment (%)	62.0	--	--		59.9	--	--		
Total earnings ($)	3,631	1,847	1,785***	[1,190, 2,379]	6,200	4,013	2,188***	[1,273, 3,102]	
Average quarterly employment (%)	48.9	24.1	24.8***	[19.7, 29.9]	67.8	47.8	20.0***	[15.2, 24.8]	
Employment in the first quarter of Year 2 (%)	42.9	36.7	6.2	[-1.4, 13.8]	65.5	50.9	14.6***	[7.7, 21.5]	
Sample size	236	220			264	281			

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

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.

- **Program group members were more likely to have paid child support, paid more on average, and paid for more quarters than their counterparts in the control group. The program had no impact on informal or noncash support.**

Table 3.7 and Figure 3.4 show that the program had a large impact on child support outcomes: Program group members were substantially more likely to have paid child support, paid for more months, and paid a larger average amount than control group members. The top panel in Table 3.7 presents child support outcomes measured using child support agency data. The top row indicates that program group members were substantially and significantly more likely to have paid any child support during the 12-month follow up period: Almost 87 percent of program group members paid at least some support, compared with about 64 percent of the control group. Sample members in the program group also made their first payments approximately one month earlier, on average, than those in the control group and paid support for significantly more months: an average of five months in the program group compared with three months in the control group. Table 3.7 also shows that program group noncustodial parents paid significantly more in total: $1,003 in the program group and $636 in the control group.

Figure 3.4 indicates that while the largest impact on child support payments occurred during the first two quarters — when the highest proportion of participants would have been in transitional jobs — a significant impact persists for at least three quarters after random assignment for both the percentage paying child support and the average amount paid.

Outcomes measured using the 12-month follow-up survey (reported in the second panel of Table 3.7) indicate that the program did not have a significant effect on informal or noncash support. It likewise did not significantly affect the proportion of participants who were incarcerated for not paying child support or the proportion of participants who said that owing child support affected their willingness to take a job. Finally, the last group of outcomes in Table 3.7 shows that the program only trivially affected the frequency of contact with the "focal child" (defined in table note c); a majority of both the program and control groups reported that they had contact at least a few times per week.

As with employment outcomes, the research team tested to see whether the program had different effects on participants who enrolled during the first year of random assignment than it did on those enrolled during the second year. There were no statistically significant differences in this area between first- and second-year participants (see Appendix Table B.2).

Table 3.7

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

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Primary outcomes *(based on administrative data)*				
Paid any formal child support[a] (%)	86.7	63.8	22.9***	[18.8, 27.0]
Among those who paid formal child support:				
Months from random assignment to first payment[b]	3.1	4.0	-0.9	
Months of formal child support paid	5.0	3.0	2.1***	[1.8, 2.4]
Amount of formal child support paid ($)	1,003	636	367***	[227, 507]
Sample size	502	501		
Self-reported outcomes (%) *(based on survey data)*				
Currently a noncustodial parent of a minor-age child	74.8	72.0	2.8	[-2.2, 7.8]
Provided informal cash support or noncash support in the past month	60.4	59.2	1.2	[-4.3, 6.7]
Informal cash support	45.0	42.6	2.3	[-3.4, 8.0]
Noncash support	57.7	56.8	0.9	[-4.6, 6.5]
Owing child support affects willingness to take jobs	17.3	20.0	-2.7	[-7.3, 2.0]
Incarcerated for not paying child support	2.8	4.1	-1.4	[-3.5, 0.8]
Among those with minor-age children:[c]				
Frequency of contact with focal child in past 3 months				
Every day or nearly every day	31.7	33.3	-1.6	
A few times per week	26.5	27.0	-0.6	
A few times per month	15.0	16.2	-1.2	
Once or twice	5.4	4.5	0.8	
Not at all	21.5	18.9	2.6	
Sample size	403	388		

(continued)

Table 3.7 (continued)

SOURCES: 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.

Criminal Justice Outcomes

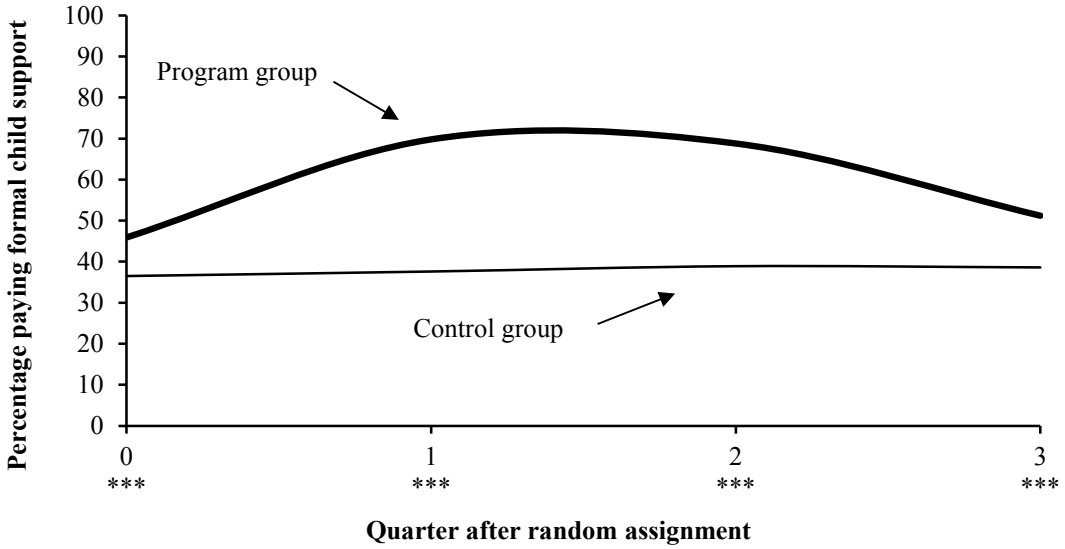
Although the STFW program targeted noncustodial parents, some participants were referred by corrections-related sources such as the Community Corrections Employment Program. Overall, 55 percent of sample members had previously been incarcerated, of whom 29 percent had been released from prison within the last year. Case managers provided formerly incarcerated program participants with direct support for criminal justice issues such as removing erroneous records from their criminal background reports. Transitional jobs may have also helped reduce recidivism among this group indirectly by reducing the incentive to commit crimes, connecting the formerly incarcerated to more positive social networks and daily routines, and helping to ease their transition into the community after leaving prison.

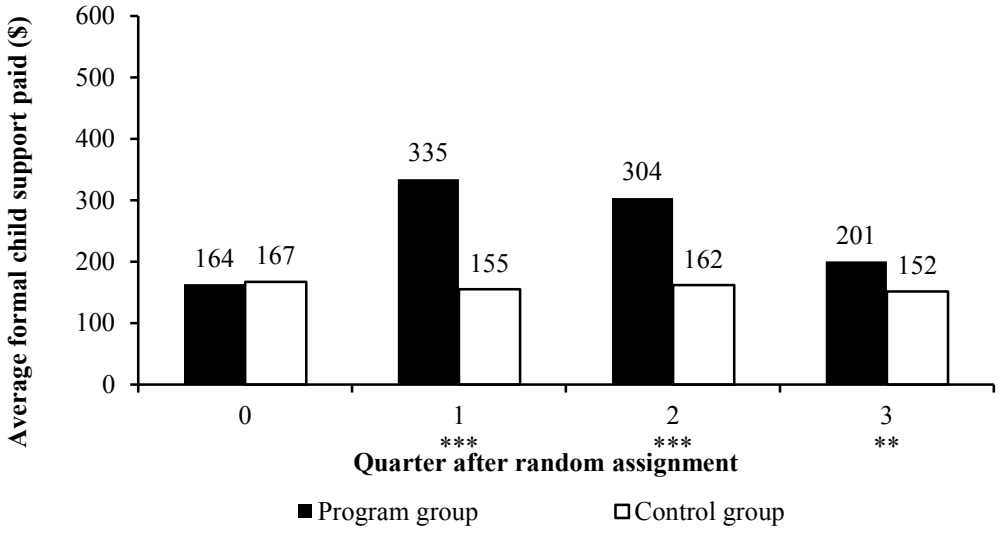
- **Both program and control group members had low rates of involvement with the criminal justice system. The program did not have a significant impact on most criminal justice outcomes.**

Table 3.8 presents the program's impacts on criminal justice outcomes for the 12-month follow-up period based on administrative and survey data. Neither program nor control group members had much involvement with the criminal justice system; fewer than 20 percent of sample members were arrested during the follow-up period. The top panel in Table 3.8 shows that the program had no statistically significant effect on rates of arrests, incarcerations in prison, or time incarcerated in prison. The program did have a statistically significant impact on the rate of convictions: Program group members were slightly more likely to be convicted of a

Figure 3.4

Formal Child Support Payments Over Time: *Milwaukee*





(continued)

Figure 3.4 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support agency data.

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.
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 3.8

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

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Primary outcomes *(based on administrative data)*				
Arrested (%)	19.5	18.1	1.4	[-2.6, 5.4]
Convicted of a crime (%)	9.8	6.9	2.9*	[0.1, 5.8]
Incarcerated in prison (%)	8.7	8.7	0.0	[-2.8, 2.8]
Total days incarcerated in prison	7.7	5.8	1.8	[-1.5, 5.1]
Arrested, convicted, or admitted to prison (%)	23.2	22.4	0.8	[-3.4, 5.0]
Sample size	502	501		
Self-reported outcomes *(based on survey data)*				
Incarcerated (%)	15.5	16.1	-0.6	[-4.8, 3.6]
Total days incarcerated[a]	13.9	17.4	-3.5	[-11.0, 4.0]
On parole or probation (%)	26.7	25.6	1.1	[-3.6, 5.8]
Sample size	403	388		

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.

crime than control group members (10 percent versus 7 percent). The reasons for this effect are unclear.[18]

The 12-month survey asked respondents to report their personal experiences with incarceration, parole, and probation. These data may cover criminal justice events not available from criminal justice system administrative records, such as incarceration in jail or criminal behavior in other states. However, unlike administrative data, these responses are subject to respondent recall and reporting errors. The bottom panel of Table 3.8 shows that the program had no significant effect on any of these outcomes.

There were no statistically significant differences in this area between first- and second-year participants (see Appendix Table B.2).

Economic and Personal Well-Being Outcomes

This section presents the effects of the program on a range of other outcomes such as experience with financial difficulties, food insufficiency, housing insecurity, and health. The section uses data from the 12-month follow-up survey. The program could have affected these outcomes indirectly, by increasing employment, and directly through support services such as advice, mentorship, and other forms of support provided by case managers.

- **There were few differences between the program and control groups in measures of personal well-being.**

Table 3.9 shows that there were few differences between the program and control groups in measures of personal well-being. Program group members were more likely to report that they could not pay the rent or mortgage than control group members (64 percent in the program group versus 57 percent in the control group). However, the program had no significant impact on the three other measures of financial hardship reported in Table 3.9. Program group members were slightly less likely to be homeless or live in emergency or temporary housing than control group members: 8 percent of control group members reported living in such circumstances compared with about 4 percent of the program group. The program did not have a significant impact on other measures of well-being such as food insecurity, health, health insurance, or psychological distress.

[18]There is some risk that this finding could be due to chance. Taken as a whole, the evidence from administrative measures in Table 3.8 suggests little to no impact on criminal justice involvement.

Table 3.9

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

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Experienced a financial shortfall in the past 12 months	78.1	73.2	4.9	[-0.1, 9.9]
Could not pay rent or mortgage	64.3	57.0	7.3**	[1.6, 13.1]
Evicted from home or apartment	12.9	13.3	-0.3	[-4.3, 3.6]
Utility or phone service disconnected	53.9	50.1	3.8	[-2.1, 9.6]
Could not afford prescription medicine	39.0	35.9	3.0	[-2.7, 8.7]
Had insufficient food in the past month	32.2	32.1	0.1	[-5.4, 5.6]
Housing in the past month				
Rented or owned own apartment or room	29.3	28.1	1.2	[-4.0, 6.5]
Lived with family or friends[a]	64.8	61.3	3.5	[-2.1, 9.0]
Homeless or lived in emergency or temporary housing	4.2	7.7	-3.5**	[-6.3, -0.7]
Incarcerated, on work release, or living in a halfway house	1.4	1.9	-0.5	[-2.0, 1.0]
Other	0.3	1.0	-0.7	[-1.7, 0.2]
Is currently in good, very good, or excellent health	62.1	61.5	0.6	[-5.1, 6.3]
Had health insurance coverage in the past month	38.1	40.9	-2.7	[-8.3, 2.8]
Health coverage was employer-based	5.8	6.1	-0.3	[-3.2, 2.5]
Experienced serious psychological distress in the past month[b]	25.9	23.9	2.0	[-3.1, 7.1]
Sample size	403	388		

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.

Conclusion

The YWCA implemented the intended model of the SFTW program with mixed success. It succeeded in implementing several core aspects of the program largely as anticipated: It identified employers to host transitional jobs placements, provided child support assistance, and administered an earnings supplement for individuals who got unsubsidized jobs with low wages. However, the YWCA also faced a number of significant challenges with program recruitment and staff turnover that affected some aspects of service delivery, including unsubsidized job development and some of the planned staff meetings with employers and participants during the transitional jobs. The program did not meaningfully implement one potentially promising enhancement: occupational training for a large fraction of participants.

The program did succeed notably in providing child support assistance. The seamless integration of a Legal Action attorney into the client flow and the availability of an on-site child support agency representative meant that child support assistance was received by most participants, and this assistance was well regarded by program staff members and participants alike. The YWCA's good relationship with DCSS also enabled the program to arrange for some forgiveness of interest on debt for some of its participants.

Program recruitment was one of YWCA's principal challenges, and this challenge affected implementation in a number of ways. Ultimately, the program succeeded in reaching its target sample size. However, it did so in part by loosening eligibility criteria partway through the enrollment period and by conducting extensive outreach efforts in later months. There is some indication that these factors may have modestly affected the characteristics of the sample enrolled later: Members of the sample enrolled during the last three months of enrollment were somewhat older, were more likely to have disabilities, and had less work experience than individuals enrolled earlier. Comments from transitional jobs employers and training providers about the skill levels and job readiness of participants suggest that the group who ultimately enrolled may have been challenging for them. Further, the staff spent more time than anticipated on recruitment and ended up enrolling a different population than originally anticipated; these two factors together may have affected staff members' ability to focus on other services.

Program participation dropped off at various stages, and ultimately only 63 percent of participants actually received transitional jobs. Further, a substantial delay preceded many of the transitional job placements. While the program began to emphasize rapid placements in transitional jobs later on, doing so may have come at the expense of its ability to tailor placements and services to individual circumstances. Attrition was also one of several reasons that fewer than 10 percent of participants received one of the later services, the earning supplement.

The impact analysis shows that the program increased participants' receipt of services related to employment by a small amount, and substantially increased their receipt of services related to child support and criminal justice issues. In the year following random assignment, program group members also had higher rates of employment and earnings in unemployment insurance-covered jobs than control group members. Most of this impact appears to be the result of subsidized employment, and it is therefore not possible at this point to determine whether the SFTW program will produce employment impacts in the long term. Possibly as a result of their higher earnings, program group members were more likely to pay child support and paid a larger amount than control group members. There were few differences between the program and control groups in outcome measures related to criminal justice or personal and financial well-being.

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