The Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration

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

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Chapter 5

The Parent Success Initiative (Syracuse, NY)

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Executive Summary

Led by the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA), the Parent Success Initiative (PSI) was designed to help noncustodial parents in Onondaga County, New York (the county that includes Syracuse) to find and keep employment, increase their child support payments, and strengthen their relationships with their children. First funded in 2000 by a Welfare-to-Work grant from the Department of Labor, subsequently PSI has been supported by five different funding streams, most recently the Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration (ETJD) grant. The program included components designed to assist participants to develop employability skills, establish recent work histories, and change their attitudes about child support and work. Participants who completed a two-week job-readiness workshop were placed in fully subsidized, temporary positions on work crews at partner organizations. Other program services included case management, legal assistance for child support and other civil matters, prisoner-reentry and civic-restoration services, parenting education, and assistance in finding and retaining unsubsidized employment.

Main Findings

- **Many participants faced significant barriers to employment.** The majority of participants in the program were black men, with an average age of 35. Over one-third did not have a high school diploma or equivalent. Study participants reported limited recent employment; 59 percent had worked for less than six months or did not work at all in the three years before study enrollment, with one-third reporting no work during that period. Forty-four percent of participants had previously been incarcerated in prison and, among those, nearly half were still under community supervision at the time of enrollment.

- **CCA experienced some challenges with recruitment into PSI, but ultimately reached its sample goal for the study.** The program received fewer referrals than anticipated from several partners, including its contracted referral partner, the Center for Court Innovation. In addition to lower-than-expected referrals from partners, staff members reported that the ETJD eligibility criteria were not accounted for in initial estimates. Specifically staff members reported that the requirements related to "hard-to-employ" status and Selective Service registration affected their ability to recruit eligible participants. CCA added two new strategies in the fall of 2013 to increase enrollment (small incentives for referrals from existing participants and television advertisements).

- **Overall, the program implemented the transitional job component as intended, with a few modifications. However there were challenges with case management services and job development for most of the grant period.** The adaptations made during implementation included instituting a four-month maximum for the transitional job early in the grant period due to capacity and cost constraints. Though the program had hoped to establish crews with private employers in an array of industries that might lead to unsubsidized employment, crews were only established at nonprofit or public organizations with limited opportunities to hire participants in unsubsidized jobs. The program initially engaged two vendors to handle job development and job placement, but brought those functions in-house in the fourth year of the grant. Midway through Year 4, the program was still learning how to establish relationships with employers to identify unsubsidized employment prospects for participants.

- **A decentralized network of service-delivery and referral partners required a large investment in management and supervision.** The program's dispersed service-delivery structure (including both grantee staff members and partners under contract to provide case-management services) probably required more resources for coordination than would be associated with a more centralized effort. While most partners demonstrated strong commitment to the program and its evaluation, and a willingness to address logistical and administrative challenges, some partnerships never fully materialized as envisioned. The random assignment nature of the evaluation also may have posed challenges for some partnerships.

- **The program had positive impacts on receipt of services, and participation rates in employment-related activities were high.** Program group members reported higher levels of service receipt than control group members in almost every area. Four in five program group members (80 percent) worked in transitional jobs. Nearly all (96 percent) of the program group members reported receiving help related to finding or keeping a job, including help with job searching, job readiness, and career planning, and assistance paying job-related costs. Among control group members, 59 percent reported receiving similar forms of support. There were also impacts on receipt of child support and family relationship services. There were few differences between program and control group members in participation in education, which was not an important part of the program model.

- **Program group members had higher rates of employment and higher earnings in unemployment insurance-covered jobs.** The vast majority of program group members (90 percent) worked during the one-year follow-up period, compared with about 59 percent of control group members — an increase of over 30 percentage points. Much of this impact is due to subsidized employment.

- **There was a modest impact on child support payments.** Because the research team encountered some difficulties in acquiring data for this report, complete data on child support outcomes are available only for sample members who enrolled during the first year of the program.[1] Only small numbers of program group or control group members paid any child support in the first year following enrollment. However, there was a modest impact on paying formal child support: 37 percent of program group members paid child support compared with 30 percent of control group members. According to survey data, program group members were more likely to provide informal and noncash assistance than control group members.

- **There is little evidence of impacts on criminal justice outcomes.** There were no significant effects on arrests, convictions, or incarceration during the follow-up period.

The first section of this chapter provides background about the context in which the program operated, the intended program model, and the characteristics of study participants. The following section discusses the implementation of the program, and the third section describes the program's impacts on participants' outcomes.

[1]A separate analysis found no statistically significant differences in impacts between those who entered the program in the first year of its operation and those who entered later. (See Appendix Table D.2.)

The Parent Success Initiative

Background

The Parent Success Initiative (PSI) was designed to assist noncustodial parents who had one or more barriers to employment to "find and keep employment, increase child support payments, and strengthen relationships with their children," according to its parent organization's website.[2] PSI was conceived as a partnership among several member agencies of Greater Syracuse Works, a consortium of organizations and agencies dedicated to developing innovative methods of creating and sustaining employment for low-income Syracuse-area residents.[3] Greater Syracuse Works first implemented PSI in 2000 with funding from a U.S. Department of Labor Welfare-to-Work grant. Since that time, the initiative has been led by different Greater Syracuse Works member agencies and has been implemented nearly continuously in various forms, as funding permitted. The ETJD grant enabled PSI to add transitional jobs to the model for the first time.

The Center for Community Alternatives, a Greater Syracuse Works partner, is a community-based nonprofit organization that "promotes reintegration justice and a reduced reliance on incarceration."[4] CCA served as the lead agency for the ETJD-funded iteration of PSI. Though the agency was awarded an ETJD grant to serve noncustodial parents, many program participants also had criminal backgrounds, as CCA is a well-known service provider among formerly incarcerated individuals and parole officers. PSI was one of three ETJD programs testing a modified transitional jobs program model whereby participants were placed into fully subsidized, temporary positions at partner organizations while receiving assistance in obtaining unsubsidized employment along with various forms of social and economic support.

This section describes the context in which the program operated, its intended model, the recruitment and enrollment of study participants, and the characteristics of study participants.

Context

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Syracuse unemployment rate fluctuated between 5.7 percent and 8.6 percent between March 2011 and March 2015, largely in line with the unemployment rate in the state of New York during the same time period (which

[2]Greater Syracuse Works (2016).

[3]See Greater Syracuse Works (2016) for more information about the voluntary collaborative of member agencies.

[4]Center for Community Alternatives (2012).

fluctuated between 5.7 percent and 8.7 percent).[5] Employment declines in the local manufacturing sector began in the mid-2000s and continued throughout the grant period. Approximately 2,000 fewer people were employed in the manufacturing sector at the end of the grant period than were at its start.[6]

Staff members and partners saw limited employment opportunities in Syracuse for low-income, low-skilled individuals. During an implementation research visit for the evaluation, one partner noted that everyone who is unemployed in Syracuse is "hard-to-employ" because of the makeup and availability of local jobs. Another partner explained that the local economy during the grant period had been "stable and bad," and that newly added jobs were for highly educated workers. National retail chains hiring through temp agencies provided occasional temporary-to-permanent opportunities, but most assignments were for the short term. Staff members explained that jobs that might be good fits for participants were often located outside of the city in areas not well served by public transportation. Staff members and partners also explained that individuals with criminal backgrounds had particular difficulty finding employment, as many local employers were unaware of state laws regarding screening and hiring practices.[7]

Child support enforcement in Syracuse is handled by Child Support Services in the Onondaga County Bureau of Child Support. Child support orders are set in Family Court, which uses guidelines in the Child Support Standards Act to determine noncustodial parent contributions. The court can deviate from those standards if there are extenuating circumstances; $25 per month is the lowest possible amount for a support order. Orders must be modified through the court. Although the child support enforcement agency will not file petitions (for order modifications, etc.) on behalf of a noncustodial parent, the agency "will help them get started in the right direction," according to a Bureau of Child Support staff member. Many enforcement tools are available to the agency: It can revoke driver's licenses, freeze bank accounts, offset tax refunds, intercept insurance awards, and seize property. Though the agency was a partner in PSI, it had little latitude to make concessions administratively given state policies and actions that had to be handled through the courts. Agency staff members said they try to avoid revoking driver's

[5]See Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016b, 2016c).

[6]Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016d). The annual average number of employees in manufacturing declined from 26,100 in 2011 to 24,400 in 2014.

[7]Until early in the grant period, many local employers were using Criminal History Arrest Incident Reporting System (CHAIRS) reports to screen applicants (provided by the sheriff's office for $10, or at no cost to nonprofits). These reports included only an individual's list of arrests in the county, with no indication whether those arrests resulted in convictions or dismissals. CCA released a report in 2011 that found a majority of the CHAIRS reports it reviewed included arrests that should not have been disclosed under either state criminal laws or state fair-credit reporting laws. See Center for Community Alternatives (2011) for more detail.

licenses, as they recognize transportation challenges can make it difficult for noncustodial parents to obtain and retain employment.

As mentioned above, many study participants (44 percent) also were exposed to the criminal justice system. For formerly incarcerated individuals, employment is mandated as a condition of parole. Staff members from the Probation Commissioner for Onondaga County said in discussions with the research team that parole is shifting from enforcement toward case management. Correctional facilities develop and maintain an employability profile called a Training Achievement and Potential Employability Report for every inmate.[8] Parole leaders noted that most parole officers will send offenders leaving prison to "Ready, Set, Work!" (a New York State-developed work-readiness class) and will have them build résumés.[9] Parole officers most commonly refer reentering ex-prisoners to substance-abuse treatment providers, and also refer them to temp agencies for employment opportunities. Officers may make referrals to employment-training or vocational-readiness providers.

The final contextual factor to consider is the presence of other services in the community for this target population. Though at times during the grant other community providers offered similar services, program staff members and partners said that employment services in particular were susceptible to fluctuations in grant funds (including other services at CCA). These funding fluctuations may have limited services for control group members.[10] No other organizations in Syracuse provided subsidized employment. One partner pointed out that many of the service providers in Syracuse were involved in PSI, and therefore may have either embargoed control group members from services or reserved their spaces for program group members.

Intended Model

A Parent Success Initiative staff member explained that the program aimed to "help people move from where they are to where they want to be, and to help them stay out of the criminal justice system while helping their families. Basically ... to help people find and keep jobs and pay their child support." The program's theory of change — how it expected to achieve that goal — included components designed to assist participants to develop employability skills, establish recent work histories, and change their attitudes about child support and work. To a lesser extent, the program also sought to change attitudes in the community (even

[8]New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (2015b).

[9]New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (2016).

[10]Control group members were provided a list of services available in the community, including employment assistance available through the American Job Center and several other organizations. Control group members who were referred to PSI by a specific organization or agency were also encouraged to return to the referring agency for services.

within program partners) about participants' employment prospects and potential contributions to the workforce by having partners and employers interact with participants during the transitional job and unsubsidized employment search.

The ETJD-funded iteration of PSI was designed to capitalize on the existing Greater Syracuse Works coalition and partnerships established in previous iterations of the program. The program anticipated working closely with Family Court (with the help of the Center for Court Innovation) and the Onondaga County Bureau of Child Support to identify noncustodial parents eligible for the program.

The program model included the following components:

Case management (before, during, and after the transitional job). Participants were referred to a case manager (known as an Employment Services Specialist) as soon as they enrolled. Case managers were expected to meet with participants within two to three days after they were randomly assigned to the program group, to complete intake paperwork with them and to help them develop goals. During the transitional job, case managers were expected to meet weekly with participants to provide referrals to services they needed, and to work with participants on their job-readiness skills and job searches. Case managers were expected to continue to meet with individuals at least one to two times per month after they left their transitional jobs, until participants had retained unsubsidized employment for 90 days. CCA initially engaged three other organizations to provide case management, and also provided some case management in-house.

Two-week job-readiness workshop (before the transitional job). After enrolling, participants were required to complete a two-week, unpaid job-readiness class called Learning Expectations and Developing Employment Readiness Skills (LEADERS) before they were assigned to transitional job crews. Originally based on Ready, Set, Work!, the LEADERS curriculum had been expanded and adapted in earlier iterations of the program. Workshop topics covered conflict resolution, work readiness, the program services available to participants, an overview of child support, and the program's expectations. Participants held mock interviews and prepared résumés. The workshop was also designed to prepare participants to take the National Work Readiness assessment, a web-based assessment of situational judgment, oral language, reading with understanding, and math for problem solving.[11]

Transitional job. PSI designed the transitional job to help participants practice work skills in the relatively safe, structured, and supervised environment of a "work crew" at a

[11]For more information on the National Work Readiness Assessment and Credential see National Work Readiness Council (2016). The program required participants to take the assessment to be placed on work crews, but they were not required to score high enough to earn the National Work Readiness Credential.

nonprofit or public-sector host organization. The primary aim of the transitional job was to help participants develop and demonstrate employability skills (such as dependability, motivation, and collaboration) rather than specific occupational skills. The transitional job was 24 hours a week at minimum wage (four days a week for 6 hours a day, with one day off for "development" activities that included case management and parenting education). The grant application indicated the program would explore creating crew options at private employers in health care, business, construction, and advanced manufacturing, to give participants a wider range of transitional job opportunities that might lead to unsubsidized employment. However, the program did not expect organizations hosting crews to provide participants with permanent, unsubsidized positions. While earlier iterations of PSI did not include transitional jobs, CCA had experience implementing transitional jobs as part of an initiative led by the Center for Employment Opportunities.

Employment assistance (during and after the transitional job). The program engaged Partners in Education and Business (a Greater Syracuse Works member agency) to provide unsubsidized job development and placement assistance. Case managers were expected to share responsibility for job development and placement.

Parenting education (during the transitional job). Early in the transitional job period, participants who had not taken a similar course recently were scheduled to take a family life-skills class facilitated by the Children's Consortium (also a Greater Syracuse Works member). The classes lasted six hours over three sessions and drew on principles from curricula such as Nurturing Parents and Parents as Teachers. The classes were also designed to teach communication skills that participants could use at work, and to begin to change participants' attitudes about child support and work.

Educational opportunities (during and after the transitional job, as appropriate). The program expected to provide literacy and high school equivalency services under a contract with the Literacy Coalition of Onondaga County (another Greater Syracuse Works member agency). The program also allocated funds for forms of participant support that could include occupational training.

Retention support (after the transitional job). In addition to the extended case management mentioned above, the program planned to include financial incentives for participants who stayed in unsubsidized employment for 60, 90, and 180 days. The program also planned to offer financial literacy instruction to help participants develop and maintain good budgeting and purchasing habits.

As discussed in Chapter 1, each of the ETJD programs included components designed to enhance the basic transitional jobs model used in previously tested programs. CCA chose the following enhancement components:

Legal assistance (during and after the transitional job). CCA engaged two legal aid organizations to provide civil legal services, particularly those related to child support issues. The program needed two providers to address potential conflicts of interest — for example, if one legal aid agency represented the custodial parent on a case, the other could represent the program participant. The program could also assign cases to each provider based on the other types of civil legal assistance it offered (such as landlord/tenant issues).

A Reentry Clinic for individuals with criminal histories (during and after the transitional job, as appropriate). Program participants had access to CCA's Reentry Clinic, which works with individuals who face barriers to employment, education, and licensing as a result of incarceration or criminal convictions. Staff members develop a work plan specific to the participant that typically includes: reviewing the individual's criminal history, identifying and addressing any errors or needed corrections, helping an individual to apply for a Certificate of Relief from Disabilities or Certificate of Good Conduct, and employment counseling (covering, for example, how to talk to a prospective employer about one's criminal history).[12] Individuals could be referred to these services after they completed the two-week job-readiness workshop.

Recruitment and Study Enrollment

The target population for PSI was low-income noncustodial parents (age 18 or older) in Onondaga County, New York. To qualify, an individual had to have an active child support order or an arrears-only order in New York State. According to Department of Labor policy, males had to be registered with Selective Service. Additionally, individuals had to be unemployed and meet at least one of the following "hard-to-employ" criteria:

- No history of working full time consistently for the same employer (defined as four consecutive quarters)
- No high school diploma or equivalent
- A criminal history and an ongoing job search of at least 60 days
- Release from prison or jail less than 60 days before the time of referral

PSI anticipated referrals from three primary sources — Family Court, Greater Syracuse Works partner agencies, and the Onondaga County Bureau of Child Support — in addition to "walk-ins" to CCA. The program engaged the Center for Court Innovation, a nonprofit organization closely associated with Family Court, to refer 900 eligible noncustodial parents to the

[12]The Certificate of Relief from Disabilities and the Certificate of Good Conduct aim to reduce barriers to employment for formerly incarcerated individuals. For more, see New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (n.d.).

program during the enrollment period. (This target was later revised downward to 480.) The program received other referrals from various Greater Syracuse Works partners, including those who served as case management agencies for the program, JOBSPlus!, the New York State Division of Parole, and the Onondaga County Probation Department. Despite this array of referral partners, the primary method of recruitment was through walk-ins to CCA (929 of 1,570 total referrals, according to program records). In part, these numbers reflect overlap between the noncustodial parent population and the population with criminal histories, coupled with the fact that CCA is well-known provider of services to those leaving incarceration.

When PSI received a referral form (either from a partner or from CCA's front desk in the case of walk-ins), a program staff member called the individual to confirm the information on the form and to schedule him or her for a group orientation. About once a week a program staff member (who had been trained by the child support agency to use the agency's database) went to the child support office to verify applicants' obligation amounts, child support debts, payment frequencies, and most recent payments. These visits allowed the program to verify applicants' status as noncustodial parents before approving them to attend a program orientation. Each month the program created a new cohort (a group of participants who joined the program at the same time and moved through it together). To fill a cohort, typically the program scheduled four orientation opportunities over two to three weeks. At the end of the one-hour orientation session, if they were interested and eligible, individuals signed up for appointments to complete the informed consent process, fill out baseline forms, and be randomly assigned.

The program received fewer referrals than anticipated from several partners, including its contracted referral partner. The Center for Court Innovation referred 285 noncustodial parents to the program, approximately 32 percent of the initial referral target of 900 and 59 percent of the revised goal of 480. The Center for Court Innovation attributes this shortfall to two factors. The first was that Family Court support magistrates (who preside over child support order establishment and modification petitions) were reluctant to refer potential participants to PSI because the random assignment involved in the evaluation gave them reduced chances of receiving services. The second was the unexpected effect of two Parent Success Initiative eligibility criteria (being "hard-to-employ" and being registered with Selective Service). According to the Center for Court Innovation, these criteria were not adequately factored into initial referral estimates. Finally, Center for Court Innovation staff members pointed out that some referrals came through multiple doors (for example, they were referred by the Center for Court Innovation and also walked into CCA), and it was unclear how these referrals were counted. Neither organization felt the relationship unfolded as expected.

The orientation schedule (multiple sessions during a few weeks each month) may have also slowed referrals: Center for Court Innovation staff members also said they felt obligated to

report to the magistrate that they succeeded in engaging individuals in services that immediately advanced their job readiness and employment opportunities. They said that in some cases they referred eligible individuals to other activities when an orientation was not imminent. CCA staff members noted that applicants generally waited at most two weeks for an orientation. These delays may have also dampened interest among individuals who were referred.

CCA added two new strategies in fall 2013 to increase enrollment: small incentives for existing participants if they referred other people ($10 gift cards to a local grocery store) and television ads. Participant referrals generated 18 study participants, at a minimal cost to the program. The 15-second television spots cost approximately $12,000. The television ads were described by the staff as "wildly successful," yielding 102 inquiries and ultimately 59 study participants. On the whole, staff members explained, these participants tended to be from more suburban areas; they may have been less aware of and connected to services than city dwellers.

Despite these recruitment and referral challenges, the program ultimately exceeded its enrollment goal, with 506 individuals in the program group and 498 in the control group. Staff members indicated that the last few months of 2013 were very focused on a final recruitment push, which may have taken their attention away from other aspects of the program and service delivery.

Baseline Characteristics

This section presents the characteristics of all study participants (program and control group members) based on data gathered from baseline information forms they filled out when they enrolled and data entered into the management information system about them at that time. These data — presented in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 and Appendix Table D.1 — cover participants' demographic characteristics, family and child support characteristics, employment histories, criminal histories, public assistance and benefit histories, and mental health and substance-abuse histories.[13]

Nearly 94 percent of the sample members were male. Slightly more than three-quarters were black, non-Hispanic (78 percent). The average age of study participants was 35. Two-thirds of participants had never been married. Almost all participants (98 percent) had minor-age children (that is, children under 18). Those who had minor-age children had an average of

[13]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 5.1 and 5.2 and Appendix Table D.1 present numbers for the full Syracuse 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 5.1

Characteristics and Employment Histories of Sample Members: *Syracuse*

Characteristic	Syracuse Program	ETJD Programs Targeting Noncustodial Parents
Male (%)	93.7	93.2
Age (%)		
18-24	12.9	7.6
25-34	34.5	32.6
35-44	34.3	34.9
45 or older	18.3	24.9
Average age	35.4	37.6
Race/ethnicity (%)		
Black, non-Hispanic	77.8	82.4
White, non-Hispanic	11.7	5.5
Hispanic	6.5	7.9
Asian, non-Hispanic	0.4	1.4
Other/multiracial	3.7	2.9
Educational attainment (%)		
No high school diploma or equivalent	35.7	29.2
High school diploma or equivalent	61.3	66.0
Associate's degree or equivalent	2.3	2.6
Bachelor's degree or higher	0.7	2.3
Marital status (%)		
Never married	66.8	66.2
Currently married	8.5	8.4
Separated, widowed, or divorced	24.7	25.4
Veteran (%)	3.0	4.9
Has a disability (%)	9.5	5.4
Housing (%)		
Rents or owns	23.2	45.4
Halfway house, transitional house, or residential treatment facility	3.1	3.7
Homeless	8.8	7.9
Staying in someone else's apartment, room, or house	64.9	43.0

(continued)

Table 5.1 (continued)

Characteristic	Syracuse Program	ETJD Programs Targeting Noncustodial Parents
Employment history		
Ever worked (%)	93.6	95.6
Among those who ever worked:		
Worked in the past year (%)	40.5	49.9
Average hourly wage in most recent job ($)	9.41	11.21
Ever worked for the same employer for 6 months or more (%)	78.2	79.5
Months worked in the previous 3 years (%)		
Did not work	33.0	13.8
Fewer than 6 months	26.0	27.8
6 to 12 months	18.7	28.7
13 to 24 months	16.7	14.1
More than 24 months	5.6	15.6
Sample size	1,004	3,998

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

2.8 children. However, fewer than one in seven participants reported living with minor-age children. Ninety-two percent had current child support orders, whereas 8 percent had arrears-only orders.

Few participants had stable housing at the time they enrolled. Fewer than one in four study participants owned or rented (about half the rate for all ETJD programs targeting noncustodial parents). Most participants (65 percent) were staying in someone else's room, apartment, or house. An additional 9 percent were homeless and 3 percent were living in transitional housing, a residential treatment facility, or a halfway house.

Study participants faced barriers to employment that included limited education, intermittent work histories, involvement with the criminal justice system, and histories of substance or alcohol abuse. Thirty-six percent had not earned a high school diploma or equivalent. Most participants had employment experience (94 percent), though only slightly more than 4 in 10 had worked in the year before enrolling in the study. In Syracuse, the average hourly wage reported for the most recent job ($9.41) was considerably below the average for study participants at all programs targeting noncustodial parents; however, it exceeded the wage offered in the subsidized jobs provided by CCA ($7.25).

Table 5.2

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

Characteristic	Syracuse Program	ETJD Programs Targeting Noncustodial Parents
Parental and child support status		
Noncustodial parent (%)	100.0	100.0
Has any minor-age children (%)	97.8	93.2
Among those with minor-age children:		
Average number of minor-age children	2.8	2.5
Living with minor-age children (%)	13.5	18.1
Has a current child support order (%)	92.1	86.3
Has an order only for child support debt (%)	8.2	12.7
Criminal history		
Ever convicted of a crime[a] (%)	79.1	76.4
Ever convicted of a felony	52.5	49.2
Ever convicted of a misdemeanor	68.6	63.3
Ever incarcerated in prison[b] (%)	44.1	40.2
Among those ever incarcerated in prison:		
Average years in prison[c]	4.4	3.8
Years between most recent release and program enrollment[d] (%)		
Less than 1 year	41.9	33.2
1 to 3 years	15.9	17.5
More than 3 years	42.1	49.2
Average months since most recent release[d]	46.3	59.6
On community supervision at program enrollment[e](%)	49.4	51.6
Sample size	1,004	3,998

(continued)

Table 5.2 (continued)

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

NOTES: Measures are self-reported unless otherwise noted.
[a]Includes convictions in the state of New York 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 New York administrative records.
[c]Includes time spent in New York 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.

Study participants reported limited recent employment: 59 percent had worked for less than six months or did not work at all in the three years before study enrollment, and a third reported no work during that period, both of which are markedly below the averages for ETJD programs targeting noncustodial parents. These figures suggest participants in Syracuse may have faced a more difficult labor market or had greater barriers to employment than the average sample member for ETJD programs targeting noncustodial parents.

Approximately 80 percent of sample members had ever been convicted of a crime, and 44 percent of had ever been incarcerated in prison. More than one-third had been convicted of a violent offense (see Appendix Table D.1), which may preclude employment in certain fields. Many had been released less than a year before they enrolled (42 percent of those ever incarcerated), and nearly half were on community supervision.[14]

Program Implementation

This section provides detail about the implementation of the ETJD-funded incarnation of PSI, including adjustments made to the originally planned intervention.

Program Structure and Staffing

PSI involved many partners, which required strong coordination from CCA. The approach to staffing was based on the assumption that several partners from the Greater Syracuse

[14]Relatedly, Appendix Table D.1 shows that compared with the average rate for ETJD programs targeting noncustodial parents, up to twice as many participants in Syracuse reported ever receiving treatment for alcohol or drug abuse or for mental health problems. These comparatively high rates of service receipt may reflect participants' connections to the criminal justice system, as parole officers often refer formerly incarcerated people to these services.

Works coalition and earlier iterations of PSI would be involved to promote community-wide engagement and the quick start-up of services under the grant.

Figure 5.1 provides an overview of the roles of the main partners in PSI.[15] CCA was responsible for fiscal management and oversight of the overall program, as well as service delivery. CCA had the following staff members working on the program: CCA's deputy director, a grant-funded program director, a research coordinator responsible for recruitment and study enrollment, an operations coordinator responsible for the logistics of the work crews, job-readiness workshop instructors, case managers, a job developer (one during the final 18 months of the grant), Reentry Clinic staff members, and administrative and fiscal support personnel.

Greater Syracuse Works shared responsibility for program and data management and service coordination (contributing approximately three full-time employees to the program). Greater Syracuse Works coalition members provided family life-skills classes (Children's Consortium) and offered participants legal assistance related to child support and other issues (Hiscock Legal Aid Society and Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York). In addition to CCA, two other agencies were under contract throughout the grant to provide case management: Westcott Community Center and Catholic Charities of Onondaga County.

Three organizations hosted work crews: Syracuse Housing Authority, Catholic Charities of Onondaga County, and the Downtown Committee of Syracuse. CCA provided crew supervisors for the Syracuse Housing Authority and the Downtown Committee of Syracuse. CCA also paid for a portion of a Syracuse Housing Authority employee's time; that employee managed the work assignments of crew members for the Housing Authority's crews. Catholic Charities provided supervision for its own crew.

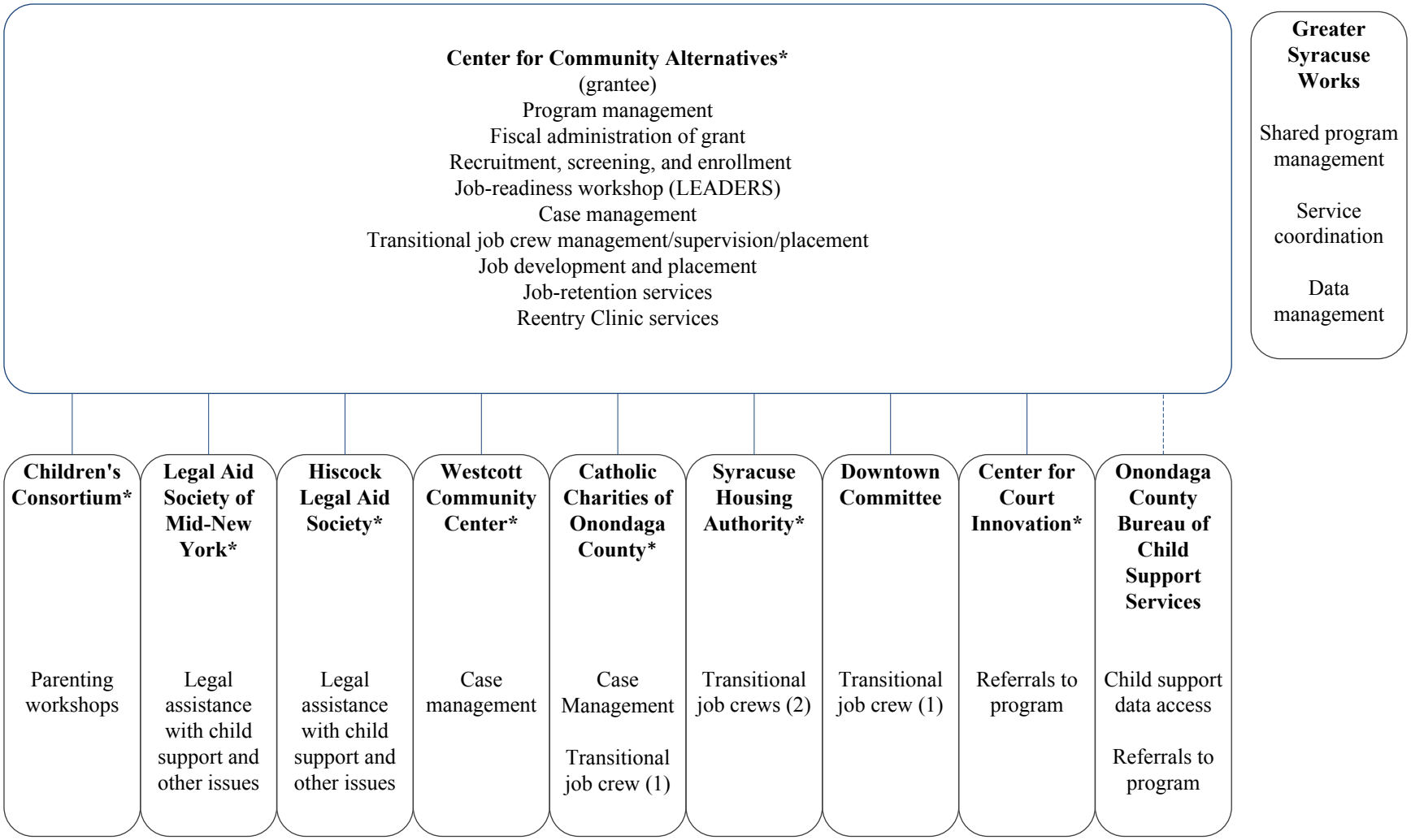
The program engaged two different vendors in succession to provide job development, before it finally brought the function in-house at CCA in September 2013 (see the discussion on job development below). Throughout the grant, case managers were expected to share responsibility for job development and placement.

Literacy services and high school equivalency preparation were supposed to be facilitated by the Literacy Coalition. Specifically, the Literacy Coalition's role was to find and coordinate services available in these arenas from other community providers. The organization

[15]The figure does not include the following contractual partners that were engaged with the program in earlier stages of the grant: Partners in Education in Business (the first job development and job placement vendor), Career Start (the second job development and job placement vendor), and Dunbar Association (an initial case management partner).

Figure 5.1

Parent Success Initiative Partnership Structure



NOTE: Solid lines represent contractual agreements with CCA as part of the ETJD grant. The dashed line represents a memorandum of agreement. Organizations marked with an asterisk (*) are also member agencies of Greater Syracuse Works.

withdrew from the partnership before the program was fully implemented because it had concerns about meeting the program's outcome goals for literacy gains. The program ultimately reallocated those funds to job placement.

This large network of partners resulted in complex management and supervisory structures (official and unofficial) that probably required more resources for coordination than would be associated with a more centralized effort. To promote coordination, the program held case conferences every week or every other week to discuss the program, participants' progress on the crews, and their overall job readiness. These meetings typically included the director of operations, the services coordinator, case managers, crew supervisors, and other staff members or leaders as appropriate. Leaders from all subcontractor and partner organizations met monthly as a planning and advisory committee. Parent Success Initiative leaders used these meetings to update attendees on various performance metrics and inform them about any changes in policies or operational procedures. Finally, PSI relied on a project-wide database funded primarily by the ETJD grant, which leaders noted contributed to coordination.

Implementation of Core Program Components

This section draws on the research team's three site visits to Syracuse (during which the team conducted interviews with staff members, partners, employers, and participants), as well as ongoing discussions with program managers about how the program implemented and modified components of its model.[16]

- **The program implemented the transitional job component largely as intended. Transitional jobs were offered in work crews through three partner organizations throughout the grant period.**

As shown in Table 5.3, approximately 80 percent of participants worked in transitional (subsidized) jobs, a figure consistent with the program's expectations as outlined in the grant application. As mentioned above, three organizations hosted work crews: Syracuse Housing Authority, Catholic Charities of Onondaga County, and the Downtown Committee of Syracuse. CCA was the employer of record for participants, and reported quarterly for the purposes of taxes and unemployment insurance.

Syracuse Housing Authority hosted the majority of participants and was the first organization to host a crew. Initially, Syracuse Housing Authority hosted one crew of 17 to 25 participants; it later expanded its participation to host three simultaneous crews (of 17

[16]The three site visits included an assessment visit to observe how the program was functioning during its early operation period, followed by two implementation research site visits.

Table 5.3

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

Measure	Program Group
Participated in any activity, including a subsidized job (%)	100.0
Worked in a subsidized job (%)	80.0
Among those who worked in a subsidized job:	
Average number of months in the program[a]	5.0
Average number of days from random assignment to first subsidized paycheck	39.8
Average number of days worked in a subsidized job[b]	37.6
Received a service other than a subsidized job (%)	100.0
Formal assessment/testing	--
Education and job training	--
Workforce preparation[c]	91.9
Work-related support	--
Child support assistance[d]	86.8
Parenting class[e]	58.5
Incentive payment	--
Other services[f]	99.8
Attended Retention Counts group meeting[g] (%)	32.8
Average number of meetings attended, among those who attended	3.9
Attended Work Opportunity Retention Club[g] (%)	15.6
Average number of meetings attended, among those who attended	2.9
Average amount paid for attendance, among those who attended[h] ($)	72.50
Sample size	506

(continued)

participants each) for most of the grant period. Participants were typically able to start the Monday after completing the job-readiness workshop. They were often paired with housing authority employees to prepare vacant apartments for new residents (by doing painting and minor maintenance, for example) and to do janitorial work in common areas. In a few instances, participants provided clerical support or grounds maintenance. CCA crew supervisors rotated

Table 5.3 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on data from the ETJD management information system and the Center for Community Alternatives' Quickbase system.

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 LEADERS and Reentry Clinic.
[d]Includes legal services related to child support, work, or family.
[e]Includes Family Life Skills class.
[f]Includes meetings with case managers.
[g]The program did not begin offering this activity until June 2013.
[h]Participants were paid $25 per meeting attended.

throughout the day to check progress and update each participant's work log, which documented cooperation with the supervisor and coworkers, effort at work, personal presentation, and work reliability.

CCA experienced some degree of turnover among work-site supervisors for the Syracuse Housing Authority crews. To ensure continuous coverage when the program was between permanent supervisors, CCA sometimes hired supervisors for a day at a time, including a former program participant. In the final six months of the work crews, the operations coordinator increased his visits to the work site to help new supervisors oversee participants the way the program expected.

In March 2012, Catholic Charities became the second organization to host a work crew. At Catholic Charities, a small crew (generally four or five participants) assisted full-time employees with maintenance and light construction at a variety of properties. Crew members received experience in plumbing, welding, masonry, and plasterwork, and were supervised by a Catholic Charities staff member. During the winter, crews assisted with salting and shoveling. Catholic Charities noted it was sometimes a challenge to find work for participants, particularly in the winter.

Beginning in May 2012, a crew of seven or eight individuals picked up litter and shoveled snow for the Downtown Committee of Syracuse, the business improvement district for the downtown corridor. (The City of Syracuse was named in the application as a potential work-site host, but it referred the program to the Downtown Committee of Syracuse.) Downtown Committee leaders were initially concerned about placing participants downtown because they would be interacting with the public and would be perceived as Downtown Committee representatives. The program therefore took care to place participants with higher levels of job readiness on this crew (sometimes rotating them in from other crews).

In the grant application, CCA said it planned to explore the potential to engage private employers for transitional job placements. Discussions with several potential hosts were unsuccessful because employers had concerns about complex crew logistics, their ability to keep crews busy, or the challenges involved in hosting participants with criminal convictions.

- **In early stages of program operations transitional job assignments could last varying lengths of time, but due to capacity constraints the program became stricter in adhering to a four-month maximum.**

Transitional jobs were available for a maximum of four months. Some members of the earliest enrollment cohorts were allowed to stay longer than the four-month limit. This practice quickly resulted in PSI facing both capacity and cost constraints, however, as crews absorbed new participants before others had left for unsubsidized employment. The program said some participants stayed longer than anticipated because they became comfortable in their positions on the crews, while others had trouble finding unsubsidized employment. In response, participants were given a one-month reminder about the four-month maximum. While the reminder was intended to reinforce an existing policy, program partners nonetheless reported that some participants who were already on crews felt they had been "fired" from their transitional jobs.

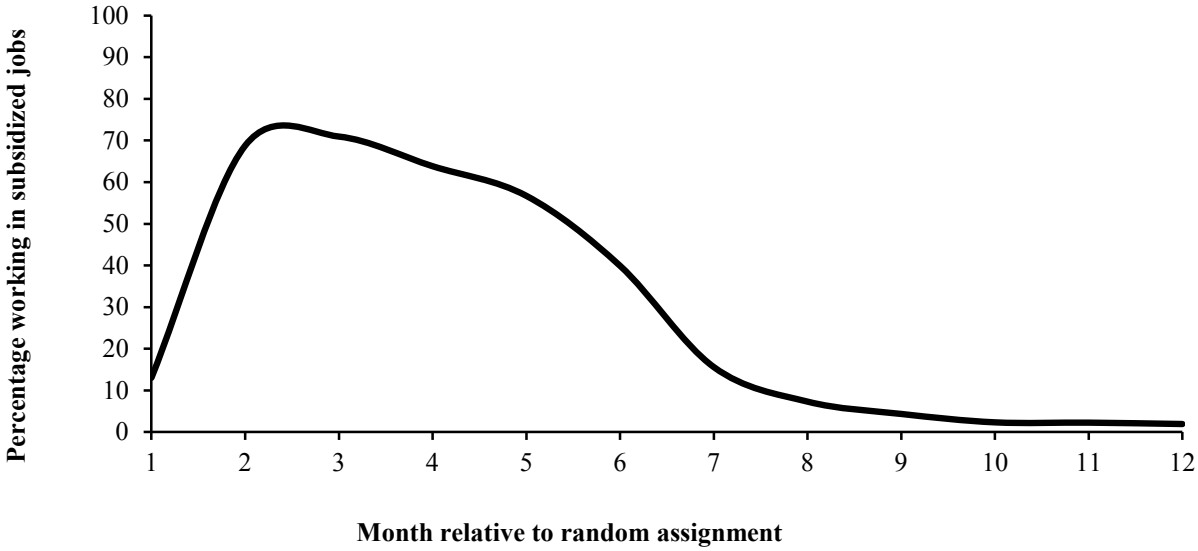
As shown in Table 5.3, among sample members who were ever placed in transitional jobs, the length of program participation (from random assignment to the last subsidized paycheck) was five months. The time from random assignment to the first paycheck was over one month, making the average time in the employment stage of the program around four months. Figure 5.2 shows the trend in transitional jobs participation. For most participants, employment began in the second or third month after random assignment, and by the seventh month after random assignment only 16 percent of the program group was working in subsidized jobs.

- **Participation rates were high in all services except occupational training and financial literacy, which were not heavily emphasized elements of the program. Most services were implemented as intended. Large numbers of participants received CCA's enhanced legal and Reentry Clinic services.**

Most participants (92 percent) attended the two-week job-readiness workshop (LEADERS), which they needed to complete before being placed on work crews. LEADERS was offered about every month and met daily for two weeks from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at CCA. The program had a strict attendance policy for the workshop: Participants were allowed one absence without notification ("no call, no show") before they were required to retake the

Figure 5.2

Subsidized Employment Over Time: *Syracuse*



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.

class with the next cohort. The policy was not meant to be punitive; the intention was for participants to be exposed to all of the course content. In winter 2014, the program made a concerted effort to reengage individuals who had not completed the workshop. Participants who did return and complete the workshop were given the opportunity to join the final work crew. Ultimately 424 of 512 participants completed the LEADERS workshop (not shown).

Most participants (87 percent) received legal assistance, primarily related to child support. Participants met with attorneys during the second week of the job-readiness workshop, and scheduled follow-up appointments at that time. The appointments ranged from 15 minutes to several hours depending upon the complexity of a participant's situation. Legal aid providers estimated to the research team that they worked on order modifications for about half of participants. Attorneys said that as much as 65 percent of a participant's first paycheck for the transitional job could be withheld for child support payments. If a child support order was set at $50 a month or less, they would not attempt to modify it. Legal aid providers said that their success in modifying orders varied by Family Court magistrate. If a participant's income had

changed by 15 percent or more since the order was established, an attorney could file a change-of-circumstance petition on behalf of the participant.

Legal aid staff members also accompanied participants to the child support enforcement agency to help them complete paperwork, which they noted was particularly important for driver's license reinstatement. They also worked with the Director of Child Support Services to request administrative concessions on a case-by-case basis (for example, vacating interest penalties on debt). Legal aid attorneys said it was the participant's decision whether to notify the child support enforcement agency if his or her earnings increased, but the agency would learn about the earnings regardless and that the client could "get out ahead of it" by notifying the agency first.

The program originally budgeted for 200 participants to receive civic-restoration services from the Reentry Clinic, but had to reallocate resources to meet higher-than-anticipated demand. The program continued to provide these services as needed to participants during their job search (and even after they were hired if they were in a probationary or trial period).

Approximately 6 in 10 participants received parenting education services. Although this proportion is lower than the program desired, it represents an increase over participation rates in earlier iterations of the program. Class sizes fluctuated between 8 and 15 participants. Both program staff members and participants mentioned that transportation to class was sometimes a challenge for participants. Some participants joined classes open to the broader community when there were not enough of them to run a class exclusively for PSI. The parenting education provider explained that the diversity in these groups may have helped Parent Success Initiative participants see that everyone faces parenting challenges.

Occupational training was not a central feature of the model, though the program did allocate resources generally for participant support, which could cover occupational training from outside providers. If a participant wanted to attend training while on a crew, the four-month clock on the transitional job paused. Work-site supervisors said some participants did not take advantage of training because they needed the wages from the transitional job. Some occupational training courses required participants to have a high school diploma or equivalent, which also may have kept some of them out. Staff members suggested they would try to provide more of these training opportunities in future iterations of the program. Some participants received Occupational Safety and Health Administration training at the Syracuse Housing Authority or the Educational Opportunity Center, or hazardous waste operations training through a partnership with an Environmental Protection Agency contractor. Neither of these is typically considered occupational training. Some participants also pursued ServSafe certification for food handlers.

- **Large caseloads combined with some degree of turnover resulted in inconsistent case management.**

As Table 5.3 indicates, nearly all participants received case management, which was typically the first service participants received as part of the program.[17] In the initial 90-minute intake appointment, the case manager worked with each participant to outline the participant's goals and service needs, assess his or her mental health, fill out immigration employment paperwork, offer help obtaining a photo identification, provide information on the work crew, conduct a substance-abuse assessment, and complete a résumé worksheet and needs checklist. Case managers met with participants regularly to provide referrals for program and community services, work on job-readiness skills, and assist with participants' job-search activities. Initially, four agencies located in different parts of the community provided case management services. By engaging multiple providers, program leaders hoped to situate services in areas convenient to participants. In practice, the program ended up assigning participants to the case managers with the lightest caseload at the time.

In the second year of the grant, the contract with one case management agency (Dunbar Association) was terminated due to administrative difficulties. The agency later closed its doors. CCA added a second case manager to its own staff for the remainder of the grant to replace the case manager at Dunbar.

Most case managers had previous experience in similar positions or with employment services before joining the program. Nonetheless, the case managers appeared to have different perspectives on what to emphasize in working with participants on job readiness (for example, working on résumés and mock interviews versus working to influence participant attitudes about being good citizens and "working within the system").

There was considerable turnover in this position — only one case manager remained throughout the full duration of the grant. Case managers also expressed concerns that other factors may have limited the intensity and consistency of their work. First, they noted that initial intake session was not always long enough to develop a relationship with the participant or to assess him or her for mental health and substance abuse issues or other barriers to participation or employment. Similarly, they observed that they had fewer case management meetings with participants while they were working in the transitional jobs and afterward. These concerns were rooted in their consistently large caseloads (a cumulative total of 506 participants distributed across four case managers), with as many as half of the people in that caseload actively

[17]In instances where a participant enrolled just before the scheduled start of a job-readiness workshop, it is possible that the individual may have proceeded directly to the workshop before meeting with a case manager.

seeking services from the program at a given time. These large caseloads often made it difficult for case managers to find the time to support every participant.

- **Participants did not reach the level of job readiness the program desired and had more difficulty with job retention than expected. These problems led the program to make adaptations to the two-week workshop and to develop additional components.**

Through the grant, program staff members said it was difficult to help participants achieve the level of job readiness the program hoped for. The program's research coordinator held focus groups with participants to identify their challenges in finding and keeping unsubsidized employment. In spring 2013, the program added a second facilitator to the job-readiness workshop to improve the tutoring and math preparation participants received before they sat for the National Work Readiness Credential. The new facilitator also enabled the program to split the large group (about 20 participants) into two smaller groups so as to better engage all participants, with the hope they would retain more of the soft skills the program aimed to teach them. The facilitators explained they also made minor modifications to the curriculum. For example, they had participants complete a blank job application, as they found participants were unable to do so properly.

In June 2013, PSI added two new components designed to address participants' job-readiness and job-retention needs. The first, known as Retention Counts! (available through the New York State Office of Probation Correctional Alternatives), took place while participants were in their transitional jobs. Participants were paid to attend class twice a month, for approximately 1.5 to 2 hours each session. About one-third of program participants attended this class. The curriculum covered money management, workplace stress management, and conflict resolution, and generally aimed to reinforce the soft skills presented during LEADERS. The curriculum was designed for formerly incarcerated people, and its facilitator pointed out it was important to be aware that not all participants were formerly incarcerated.

The second new component, called the Work Opportunity Retention Club, took place after the transitional jobs and was designed to help participants retain unsubsidized employment. Table 5.3 shows about 16 percent of participants attended one or more meetings. Offered once a month in the evening, the club was facilitated by case managers and other program staff members, but was primarily designed as a peer support group for participants to share their experiences and lessons learned with searching for, obtaining, and keeping jobs. Listings of potentially relevant job openings and application instructions were also handed out during the meetings, and employment verification was collected from people already working in unsubsidized jobs, to confirm their eligibility for the retention incentive payments mentioned earlier. Pizza was provided, and participants received a $25 American Express gift card for their

attendance. In the early months of this group, the program sent invitation mailers to participants but found it could not accommodate all of those who were interested. To keep the group size manageable while still engaging a wide range of participants, case managers began to invite only those participants who had begun unsubsidized employment.

- **The program's approach to job development evolved substantially from its initial plans. In the final months of the grant period, the program was still trying to establish relationships with employers to identify unsubsidized employment prospects for program participants.**

Initially, the program engaged outside entities to provide job development and job placement services, with case managers sharing responsibility for employment outcomes. The contract with a first vendor (Partners in Education and Business) was terminated in April 2012 due to nonperformance. Though the program experienced greater success with Career Start, the second vendor, program leaders felt Career Start focused too much on placing participants with a few employers with which it had staffing contracts. Program staff members also said that Career Start had a different organizational philosophy than PSI when it came to individuals below its desired levels of job readiness. In what was described as a mutual agreement to part ways, PSI allowed Career Start's contract to expire in mid-July 2013.

CCA decided to bring job development in-house in late September 2013, and began to broaden the pool of employers with which the program had relationships. During the two months when the program did not have a job developer, case managers were expected to work with participants on job searching and job placement (as had been the expectation throughout the grant). Given their large caseloads at the time, and given that enrollment was still in progress, case managers may not have been able to devote enough time to job placement during those months.

Participants met with a job developer when they were deemed "job-ready" by case managers, crew supervisors, and operations staff members — generally while the participant was still in a transitional job. At the time of the third site visit, the CCA job developer was attempting to spend less of his time working with participants and more on establishing employer relationships and matching openings with individuals.[18] The job developer also created the lists of job open-

[18]In 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. Slightly more than 60 percent of the job developer's time was spent on job-search activities over a two-week period, while nearly 40 percent was spent on establishing employer relationships and matching openings with individuals. Case managers reported spending from 1 percent to 24 percent of their time helping individuals search for unsubsidized jobs.

ings and application instructions that were distributed when participants picked up their transitional job paychecks and attended Work Opportunity Retention Club meetings.

As the transitional jobs ended in June 2014, the program anticipated shifting the responsibilities of several program staff members so they could focus solely on employment activities.[19] The program was also busy entering information about participants' work experience and interests into its data system, so that information would be available to support job placement and job development. This increased emphasis on employment may affect program group members' employment and earnings, particularly for participants who began the program later in the grant period. For participants whose transitional jobs ended earlier, it is unclear how well the program was able to reengage and support them in their search for unsubsidized employment.

In retrospect, program leaders suggested the program may not have provided enough resources for job development from the beginning of the grant, and they wished they had invested more in this component earlier. The first contractor was provided resources equivalent to less than one full-time employee. The program was able to increase funding for the second vendor by reallocating funds from the planned literacy services component that did not materialize. Program leaders said that an ideal arrangement would incorporate both an in-house job developer and an external staffing agency.

- **Most program partners expressed strong commitment to the program and its goals, and were willing to work through administrative burdens and logistical challenges in pursuit of those goals.**

While the majority of program partners expressed strong support for the program's leadership, goals, and implementation, a couple of partnerships appeared to be somewhat strained as the grant progressed. Some partnerships seemed hampered by the evaluation's design (using random assignment), especially the program's relationship with the Center for Court Innovation and the Family Court, which struggled with the limitation that program services could only be offered to the program group. Other concerns expressed related primarily to frustration with the referral and screening process and limited data sharing from the program regarding participants' progress. This latter issue was raised despite CCA's regularly scheduled meetings with partners, which included the sharing of participant data. The child support enforcement agency was particularly upset that CCA did not notify the agency when a participant began working on a transitional job. Because CCA reported earnings for tax and unemployment insurance purposes on a quarterly basis, unless a participant notified the child support

[19]The program anticipated redeploying the services coordinator, the case managers, the job-readiness and retention workshop facilitator, and a Jesuit volunteer working for the program to focus fully on employment services.

enforcement agency directly, that participant could have already left the transitional job before the agency could generate an income execution order.[20]

- **Organizations hosting work crews reported high levels of satisfaction with the program.**

Organizations that hosted work crews felt that program participants added to their existing workforce. Partners overcame their initial concerns about hosting crews (related to some participants' criminal histories and their uncertainty whether participants' conflict-resolution skills would be adequate to handle potentially difficult interactions with the public). Syracuse Housing Authority leaders said the partnership helped increase the agency's workforce at a time when it had been diminished drastically due to budget cuts. Staff members provided written recommendations and served as references for participants, and the organization was attempting to find opportunities to partner with CCA for future transitional jobs crews after the grant's end.[21]

A handful of participants were hired permanently by a host organization, even though this outcome was never anticipated in PSI's plans. That more weren't hired permanently appeared to have been due more to employers' financial constraints than to concerns about crew members' preparedness for employment. Leaders at the Downtown Committee of Syracuse explained that program participants had done very important work: They allowed the Downtown Committee to complete tasks more quickly and expand litter pickup to outlying areas of downtown. One host organization said that the community as a whole benefited merely because crew members became more civic-minded citizens. All hosts agreed they would participate in the program again or a similar program.

- **Some participants reported mixed experiences with the program.**

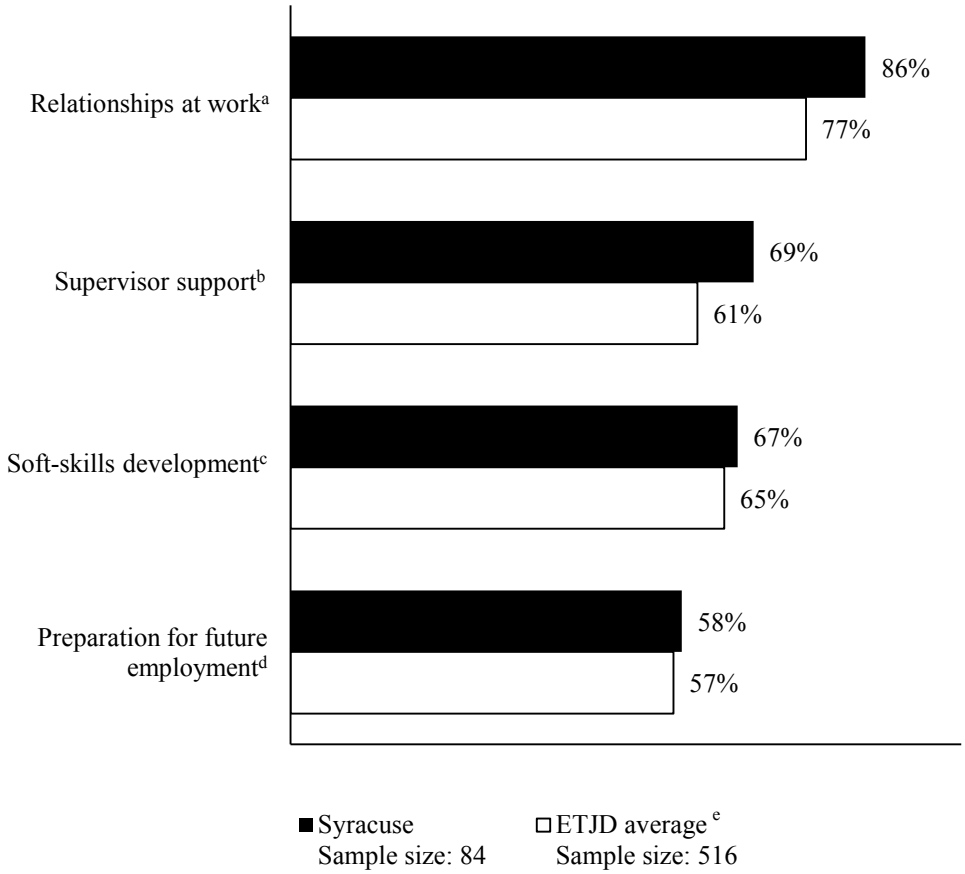
A total of 84 participants were asked to complete a questionnaire about their experiences in the program, while they were still working in transitional jobs (44 in March 2012 and

[20]An income execution order sets in motion a process by which child support payments are automatically deducted from a noncustodial parent's wages or other income source by the noncustodial parent's employer or other income payer. See New York State Department of Child Support Enforcement (2016). While CCA acknowledged that this concern was legitimate, it also pointed out that it was in the unique position of being both program operator and employer. As an employer, it would have been inappropriate to share new hire information with the child support enforcement agency. As a program operator, however, CCA actively communicated to participants that they had an obligation to notify the agency about their employment.

[21]The Syracuse Housing Authority subsequently awarded CCA two contracts to continue the transitional jobs model on a smaller scale.

Figure 5.3

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



(continued)

40 in March 2013).[22] Figure 5.3 shows that 86 percent viewed their relationships at work positively. About two-thirds felt they were improving their soft skills. A smaller percentage,

[22]These respondents are not representative of all participants, since those surveyed were still involved with the program and thus may have been more satisfied with it than their counterparts who had stopped participating.

Figure 5.3 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on the ETJD participant questionnaire.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

though still a majority, felt the transitional job was preparing them for future employment (58 percent).

In individual interviews and focus groups, participants said they enjoyed being in the workforce again. They appreciated the schedule and routine of the transitional job and took pride in their work, and also said they had built good relationships with staff members. However, participants also mentioned aspects of the transitional job where they were dissatisfied, including a lack of skills training, minimal oversight from crew supervisors, a scarcity of transportation options to and from program activities, and a feeling of being shuffled around among various staff members whose roles were sometimes unclear to them.

Additionally, some participants who worked alongside full-time Syracuse Housing Authority employees learned of their wages and subsequently felt “used” as a result of the pay

differential. Perhaps the largest source of frustration raised by participants related to their struggles to find unsubsidized jobs. Participants thought they would receive unsubsidized jobs automatically or that jobs would be sorted out for them while they were on a work crew, and seemed to be confused about how much of the onus of finding a job was on them. This confusion may mean that the program could have done a better job of communicating with participants. Participants also believed they would be hired by their transitional job host organizations, even though program staff members emphasized that the work crew was a temporary learning and training experience and only a handful of participants had been hired permanently. When participants learned that only a few participants were hired directly from the transitional job, some questioned the effectiveness of the program. Box 5.1 describes one participant's motivation to enroll and his experiences with the program.

Some participants felt the job-readiness workshop was too long and was "a waste of time," while others felt they learned a lot and appreciated the feedback they received from the mock interviews. Participants also had mixed feelings regarding staff members' commitment to the program and participants; some thought program staff "genuinely cared" about participants and appreciated that staff members had experienced some of the same issues they were going through, while others felt they were "only there for their paycheck." Some participants felt staff members were working with too many individuals, and complained about having to remind case managers that they were still waiting for things to be done.

Impacts on Participant Outcomes

Participation and Service Receipt Outcomes

The recruitment and screening process for study enrollment resulted in two research groups that included similarly hard-to-employ individuals seeking employment-related services. Although those assigned to the control group were not eligible for the grant-funded transitional job, they could seek services from other providers in the community. Table 5.4 presents information on participation in employment-related activities for both research groups, from a follow-up survey conducted about 12 months after random assignment.

- **Although control group members had high rates of participation in employment-related activities, program group members reported higher rates of participation in almost all types of services.**

Nearly all program group members reported receiving help related to finding or keeping jobs, including help with job searching, job readiness, and career planning, and assistance paying for job-related costs. Among control group members, 59 percent reported receiving similar forms of support.

Box 5.1

Parent Success Initiative Participant Profile

"Robert," a black man in his 50s, was familiar with CCA's services before joining PSI. He had come to CCA a few years earlier hoping to be in the Second Chance Works program, but learned he was ineligible because he had not been in jail.* A couple of years later he was incarcerated, and upon his release he returned to CCA and went through the lottery for PSI. Robert says he entered the program with the goal of owning a business, and did not need the program's child support assistance since he had already secured a child support modification. He explains, "I know where I need to go and what I need to do. Certain services I don't really need or I'm not going to use. I don't want to waste my time or their money if I don't really need that service. That's how I am. I only want to take what I can actually benefit from." Instead, he was interested in the transitional job.

Robert describes the program as "a stepping stone." He explains, "The money [from the transitional job] sucks, okay. This is the worst of the worst as far as pay, but it keeps you off the streets. It keeps you in a positive light, and you meet different connections. It'll work, if you utilize it in the right way." In his own words, Robert echoes the program's aim for the transitional job. He explains the transitional job is about "getting people not used to working or having certain skills, getting them prepared for a real job. 'Cause a lot of some of the guys that come to work now, if it had been a real job, they'd have been fired already." Robert feels he didn't learn many occupational skills on the transitional job — "What can you learn cleaning a floor?" — but says he did a good job at it.

The program helped Robert obtain occupational training and obtain a license related to his goal of owning a business. He tells other participants about the training resources and to take advantage of all the program offers, but says that it's up to participants to put in effort, too. He explains the program "connects you to a lot of resources that normally you just don't have.... You got your own job counselor. But they're going to do as much as you want them to do. If you don't put nothing in, they're not going to slap no job on you."

Robert says the program staff members he encountered were "genuinely concerned" about participants and provided a lot of support. The program provided an alternative to the bleak situation he describes for some transitioning offenders, explaining, "When you just get out of jail and you ain't got no family, it's hard to get back up. You get out of jail and you got to be transitioned again, you got no place to stay, and you got no money. You're going right back to what got you in jail from the very beginning. That's the only option out there. Here [in the program] you meet people, hear different stories.... [I try to tell others to] just keep walking straight, you know what I mean? Jails, prisons, rehabs, and the morgues and the graveyards — they all full, but they're gonna make room for you.... I try to, you know, talk to people that I know and give them some information [and tell them], 'Man, you ain't gotta do what I did.'"

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*Second Chance Works was a program for parolees operated by CCA in 2011.

Table 5.4

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

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Employment support				
Received help related to finding or keeping a job	96.4	59.4	37.0***	[32.4, 41.5]
Job search, job readiness, and career planning[a]	95.7	57.3	38.3***	[33.7, 43.0]
Paying for job-related transportation or equipment costs	72.0	18.4	53.6***	[48.3, 58.8]
Education and training				
Participated in education and training	42.8	26.6	16.2***	[10.5, 21.8]
ESL, ABE, or high school diploma or equivalent[b]	18.0	14.1	3.9	[-0.6, 8.4]
Postsecondary education leading to a degree	4.9	4.9	0.0	[-2.7, 2.7]
Vocational training	27.3	11.6	15.7***	[10.9, 20.6]
Received high school diploma or equivalent	3.4	2.8	0.6	[-1.5, 2.8]
Earned professional license or certification (not including OSHA or forklift)[c]	13.4	9.7	3.6	[-0.4, 7.7]
Earned OSHA or forklift certification	10.2	4.0	6.3***	[3.0, 9.5]
Other support and services				
Among those identified as formerly incarcerated at enrollment:[d]				
Received help related to past criminal convictions	97.0	28.7	68.3***	[61.6, 75.1]
Handling employer questions about criminal history	94.9	26.4	68.5***	[61.5, 75.5]
Legal issues related to convictions	87.4	15.2	72.2***	[64.9, 79.4]
Received help related to child support, visitation, parenting or other family issues	84.4	21.7	62.8***	[57.9, 67.6]
Modifying child support debts or orders	73.0	12.8	60.2***	[55.3, 65.1]
Setting up visitation with child(ren)	28.6	6.6	22.0***	[17.4, 26.7]
Parenting or other family-related issues	62.8	12.5	50.2***	[45.0, 55.5]
Received advice or support from a staff member at an agency or organization	79.0	31.8	47.2***	[41.8, 52.7]

(continued)

Table 5.4 (continued)

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Received mentoring from a staff member at an agency or organization	73.6	26.0	47.6***	[42.1, 53.1]
Received mental health assistance	21.4	22.6	-1.2	[-6.3, 3.9]
Sample size	377	334		

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 = 146; control group = 127; total = 273).

Program group members were more likely to have participated in vocational training, which probably reflects participation in Occupational Safety and Health Administration certification courses. Outside of those courses, there was only a small and not statistically significant difference between the two groups in attainment of professional licenses or certificates. There was no difference in participation in postsecondary education, and only a small and not statistically significant difference in participation in secondary or general education. As mentioned earlier, providing resources for occupational training was not a central feature of the model, and although literacy and high school equivalency services were originally part of the program model, after the intended partner withdrew from the program the funds were ultimately reallocated to other activities.

- **Nearly three-quarters of program group members reported receiving help modifying child support debt or orders, and there were large impacts on the receipt of these services.**

As described above, most concessions in child support were those that could be applied administratively, such as reinstatement of driver's licenses suspended due to failure to pay;

order modifications required judicial action. Among the control group, only 13 percent received these services, compared with 73 percent of program group members. Nearly two-thirds of program group members reported having received help with parenting or other family-related issues. Only 13 percent of control group members reported receiving these services.

Among formerly incarcerated program group members, nearly all received help related to their past criminal convictions. Around 29 percent of control group members who had been incarcerated reported receiving these services.

Employment and Earnings Outcomes

Table 5.5 and Figure 5.4 present information on employment and earnings-related outcomes using unemployment insurance data from the National Directory of New Hires and data from the 12-month follow-up survey.[23]

- **There were large impacts on employment and earnings in the first year; most of this impact was due to employment in transitional jobs.**

As shown in Table 5.5, 90 percent of program group members ever worked during the one-year follow-up period, compared with 59 percent of control group members, an increase of over 30 percentage points. For program group members, this measure of employment includes the transitional jobs provided by CCA; approximately 80 percent of program group members participated in transitional jobs during this period. In addition, program group members were employed for more time and had slightly higher earnings than control group members.

- **Although there is a statistically significant impact on employment in the first quarter of the second year of follow-up, it appears to be in large part the result of participation in transitional jobs.**

As shown in Figure 5.4, transitional jobs accounted for most of the increase in employment for program group members during the early part of the follow-up period, and the employment rate for program group members declined by Quarter 3 as these jobs ended. Although the impact on employment was still statistically significant in the first quarter of the second year of follow-up, more than half of this 7 percentage point difference appears to be due to sample members working in transitional jobs. Impacts on earnings follow the same pattern, with bigger effects early in the follow-up period while program group members were working

[23]Survey response rates were 75 percent in the program group and 67 percent in the control group. The analysis presented in Appendix H finds no evidence that these differences in response rates biased the results of the impact analysis.

Table 5.5

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

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Primary outcomes *(based on administrative data)*				
Employment[a] (%)	90.0	58.7	31.4***	[27.2, 35.5]
ETJD subsidized employment (%)	78.7	--		
Number of quarters employed	2.4	1.4	1.1***	[0.9, 1.2]
Average quarterly employment (%)	60.6	33.8	26.8***	[23.6, 30.1]
Employment in all quarters (%)	21.3	10.2	11.1***	[7.5, 14.7]
Total earnings ($)	3,901	2,928	973***	[516, 1,430]
ETJD subsidized earnings ($)	1,301	--		
Total earnings (%)				
$5,000 or more	23.6	20.6	3.0	[-1.1, 7.2]
$7,500 or more	14.9	14.0	0.9	[-2.6, 4.5]
$10,000 or more	8.6	9.3	-0.7	[-3.5, 2.1]
Employment in the first quarter of Year 2 (%)	43.3	36.4	6.9**	[2.0, 11.8]
ETJD subsidized employment in the first quarter of Year 2 (%)	3.9	--		
Sample size [b]	505	498		
Self-reported outcomes *(based on survey data)*				
Ever employed in Year 1 (%)	76.2	59.4	16.7***	[11.0, 22.5]
Currently employed (%)	49.1	36.6	12.5***	[6.4, 18.7]
Currently employed in transitional job program (%)	1.3	0.3	1.0	[-0.2, 2.2]
Type of employment (%)				
Not currently employed	51.8	64.8	-13.0***	[-19.2, -6.7]
Permanent	31.4	23.8	7.6**	[1.9, 13.2]
Temporary, including day labor and odd jobs	16.5	11.1	5.4**	[0.9, 9.8]
Other	0.3	0.3	0.1	[-0.6, 0.7]

(continued)

Table 5.5 (continued)

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Among those currently employed:[c]				
Hours worked per week	30.6	30.9	-0.4	
Hourly wage ($)	10.6	9.8	0.8	
Hours worked per week (%)				
More than 20 hours	34.7	27.3	7.4**	[1.5, 13.2]
More than 34 hours	21.9	15.6	6.3**	[1.4, 11.2]
Hourly wage (%)				
More than $8.00	31.4	22.9	8.5**	[2.8, 14.2]
More than $10.00	13.5	7.5	6.0**	[2.1, 9.9]
Sample size	377	334		

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]One sample member is missing a Social Security number 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.

in transitional jobs, and smaller effects toward the end. Impacts estimated from the survey also showed statistically significant positive effects on employment.

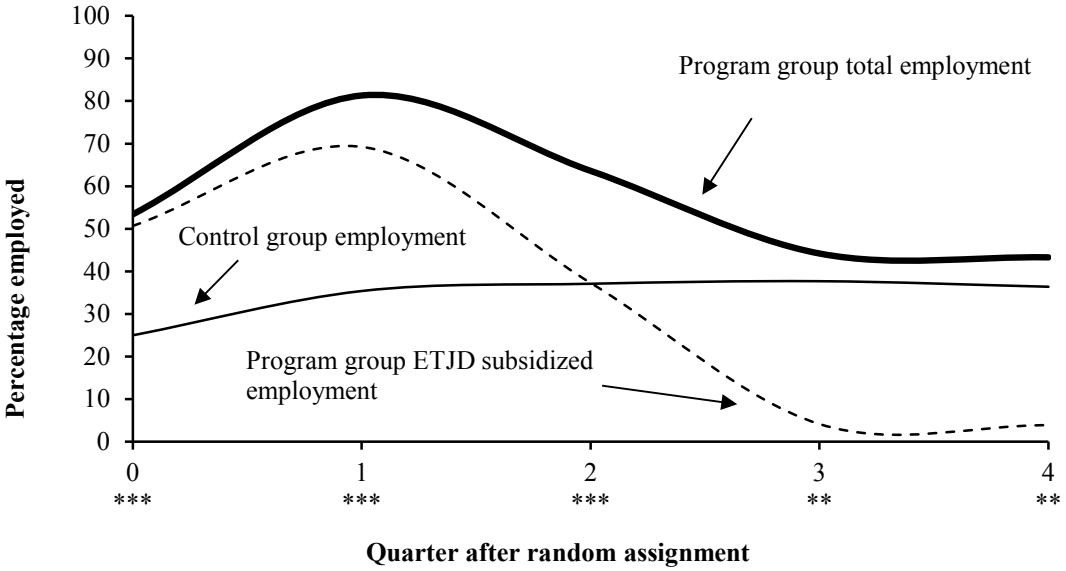
- **Impacts on employment and earnings were largest among those with no recent work experience.**

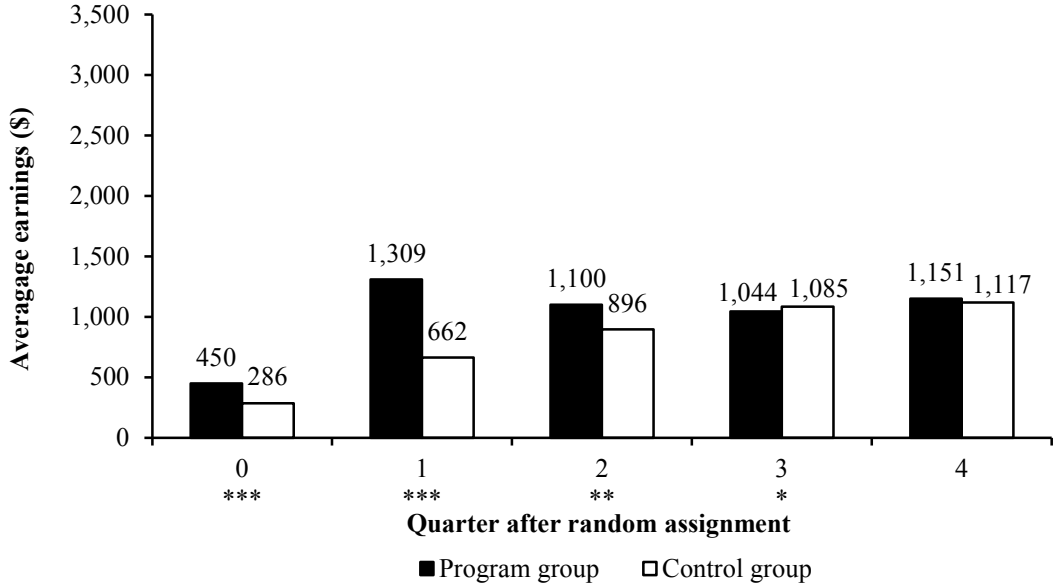
Prior research suggests that employment programs may be more or less effective for certain subgroups of people.[24] ETJD is based on the hypothesis that the programs may be more effective for people who are the least "employable" and who are therefore unlikely to find jobs on their own, without assistance from a program. The research team therefore examined the

[24]Zweig, Yahner, and Redcross (2010).

Figure 5.4

Employment and Earnings Over Time: *Syracuse*





(continued)

Figure 5.4 (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 include both ETJD subsidized jobs and all other jobs covered by unemployment insurance.

program's impacts on employment among subgroups of people who had more or less recent work experience when they enrolled in the program. Individuals who had been employed for at least one quarter in 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 5.6, 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, 87 percent of program group members were employed at some point during the year after random assignment, compared with just 42 percent of the control group. Program group members in this subgroup earned about $1,200 more than their control group counterparts during the follow-up period.

An additional subgroup analysis was also conducted examining whether there were differences between the impacts for participants who enrolled in the program in its first year and those who enrolled in its second year. As described earlier, the program evolved over time, with some features being added later in the grant period. It is possible that the added job-readiness components and changes in the approach to job development could have led to differences in impacts for those who enrolled later. However, Appendix Table D.2 shows that impacts on employment and earnings outcomes did not differ by time of program entry.

Child Support and Family Relations Outcomes

The main reason the program might have effects on child support payments would be because it caused changes in employment and earnings. In this case, impacts on employment were expected to occur if only because the program group members received transitional jobs. However, the jobs lasted a very short time and participants may not have reported the employment to the child support agency, so it is possible that income withholding may not have been

Table 5.6

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

Outcome	Did Not Work in Prior Year				Worked in Prior Year				Difference Between Subgroup Impacts[a]
	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval	
Employment[b] (%)	87.2	42.3	44.9***	[38.9, 50.9]	92.8	77.1	15.8***	[10.2, 21.3]	†††
ETJD subsidized employment (%)	79.3	--	--		77.5	--	--		
Total earnings ($)	3,074	1,841	1,232***	[711, 1,754]	4,871	4,178	693	[-196, 1,583]	
Average quarterly employment (%)	54.1	22.7	31.4***	[27.0, 35.8]	67.7	46.9	20.8***	[15.7, 25.9]	††
Employment in the first quarter of Year 2 (%)	30.6	26.6	4.0	[-2.5, 10.4]	58.6	47.9	10.8**	[2.9, 18.6]	
Sample size	283	258			222	240			

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.

implemented in a timely way. If that were the case, the transitional jobs would have had a smaller effect on child support payments.

- **There was a modest impact on paying formal child support for sample members who enrolled during the first year of the program, and that impact occurred at roughly the same time as the transitional jobs.**

Due to resource constraints, the state child support agency was not able to provide complete administrative data on child support outcomes for all sample members in time for this report. As a result, the analysis includes only those sample members who enrolled during the first year of the program.[25] As shown in Table 5.7, only about a third or fewer sample members in the program and the control group paid any child support in the first year following enrollment. However, there was a modest impact on paying formal child support — 37 percent of program group members paid child support compared with 30 percent of the control group. A comparison of the line graphs in Figures 5.4 and 5.5 reveals that although the magnitude of the impact on child support payments does not correspond with the impact on employment, the timing of the impact roughly corresponds with employment in the transitional jobs.

On the 12-month survey, both the program and the control group reported providing informal child support at higher levels than formal child support. Program group members were more likely to report having provided informal child support than control group members. More than half of the sample reported seeing their children at least a few times per week. There were no statistically significant differences between program and control group members in how frequently they saw their children during the three months before the survey was administered.

Criminal Justice Outcomes

Although PSI targeted noncustodial parents, CCA's history in the community as a program serving formerly incarcerated people meant that many of the noncustodial parents who enrolled had criminal backgrounds. As noted earlier, a little under half of sample members had ever been incarcerated before enrolling in the study. Of them, a large proportion (42 percent) had been released in the previous year. PSI might therefore be expected to affect criminal justice involvement, particularly among sample members who had been incarcerated recently.

[25] An analysis of the data that were available for all participants found no statistically significant differences between those who entered the program in the first year of its operation and those who entered later. See Appendix Table D.2.

Table 5.7

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

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Primary outcomes *(based on administrative data)*[a]				
Paid any formal child support[b] (%)	36.6	29.6	7.0*	[1.1, 12.9]
Among those who paid child support:				
Months from random assignment to first payment[c]	4.4	4.5	-0.1	
Months of formal child support paid	1.7	1.4	0.3	[0.0, 0.6]
Amount of formal child support paid ($)	337	206	131	[-127, 389]
Sample size	272	268		
Self-reported outcomes (%) *(based on survey data)*				
Currently a noncustodial parent of a minor-age child	81.4	80.3	1.0	[-3.8, 5.9]
Provided informal cash support or noncash support in the past month	62.8	54.3	8.6**	[2.5, 14.6]
Informal cash support	47.3	37.0	10.3***	[4.3, 16.4]
Noncash support	60.2	52.2	8.0**	[2.0, 14.1]
Owing child support affects willingness to take jobs	21.4	19.4	2.0	[-3.1, 7.1]
Incarcerated for not paying child support	1.6	2.4	-0.8	[-2.5, 0.9]
Among those with minor-age children:[d]				
Frequency of contact with focal child in the past 3 months				
Every day or nearly every day	31.4	31.2	0.2	
A few times per week	25.0	22.1	2.9	
A few times per month	11.7	12.0	-0.3	
Once or twice	6.7	6.2	0.4	
Not at all	25.2	28.4	-3.2	
Sample size	377	335		

(continued)

Table 5.7 (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]Due to incomplete data, child support measures based on administrative data only include sample members who were randomly assigned during the first year of the program (by December 31, 2012).
[b]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).
[c]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.
[d]This measure is calculated among those who reported having a minor-age child at the time of 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.

- **The program had little impact on arrests, convictions, or incarceration.**

Administrative data on criminal justice outcomes are from state arrest and conviction records, and from the state prison system (jail data were not available). As shown in Table 5.8, around 20 percent of both the program and control groups were arrested during Year 1. While slightly more program group members were convicted of crimes, this difference was not statistically significant. The administrative and survey data both show the program caused a small (not statistically significant) decrease in incarceration during the follow-up period. Although both sources show a reduction in the number of days incarcerated, the survey-based impact is a little larger, and is statistically significant. The differences between the results from the two data sources probably reflect the fact that the administrative data do not cover incarceration in jail, only New York State prison, or incarceration in different jurisdictions. Survey respondents were asked to report on both prison and jail incarceration, in any jurisdiction.

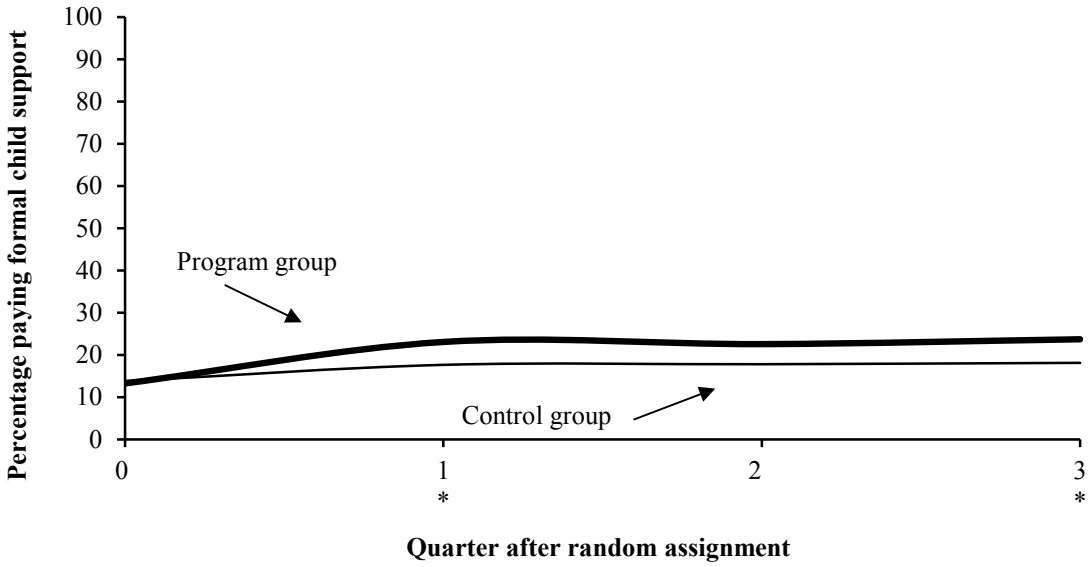
Economic and Personal Well-Being Outcomes

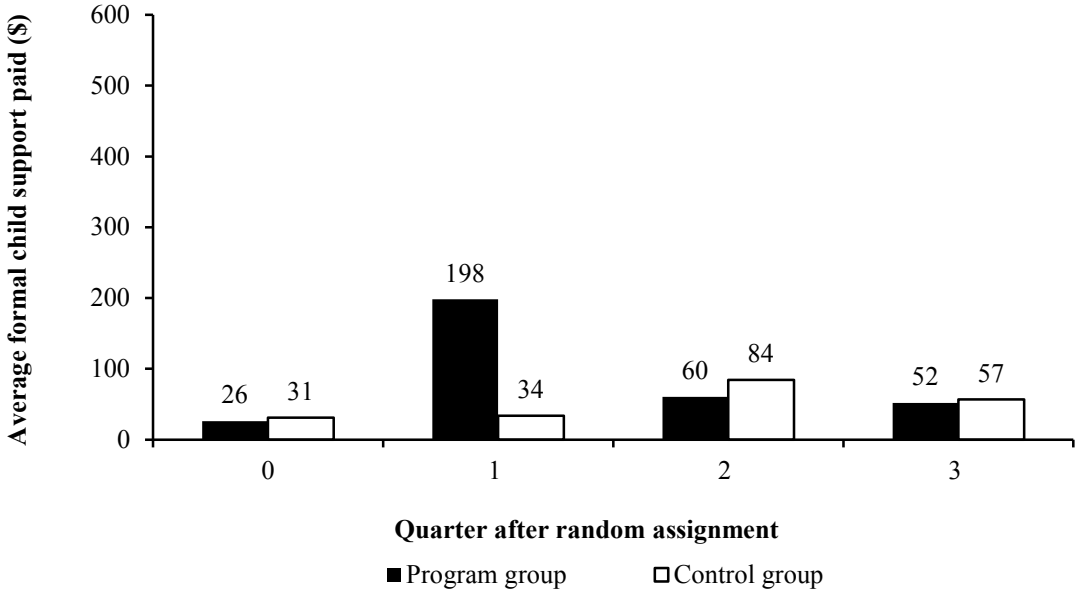
- **There were few statistically significant impacts on self-reported personal well-being. Program group members were more likely to report being in good health and were less likely to have experienced serious psychological distress.**

Table 5.9 presents information on a number of measures of economic and personal well-being. There were few differences between the program and control groups. More than two-thirds of sample members had experienced a financial shortfall in the previous year, and over a quarter of both research groups had had insufficient food in the previous month. On

Figure 5.5

Formal Child Support Payments Over Time: *Syracuse*





(continued)

Figure 5.5 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support agency data.

NOTES: Results in this figure are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics.
Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.
Due to incomplete data, child support measures based on administrative data only include sample members who were randomly assigned during the first year of the program (by December 31, 2012).
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 5.8

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

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Primary outcomes *(based on administrative data)*				
Arrested (%)	20.1	21.2	-1.1	[-5.2, 3.0]
Convicted of a crime (%)	18.2	15.4	2.8	[-1.0, 6.7]
Incarcerated in prison (%)	3.7	4.6	-0.9	[-3.0, 1.2]
Total days incarcerated in prison	4.0	6.7	-2.7	[-5.9, 0.5]
Arrested, convicted, or admitted to prison (%)	22.4	24.0	-1.5	[-5.8, 2.7]
Sample size	506	498		
Self-reported outcomes *(based on survey data)*				
Incarcerated (%)	21.4	25.5	-4.1	[-9.2, 1.1]
Total days incarcerated[a]	20.4	30.3	-9.8*	[-18.8, -0.8]
On parole or probation (%)	31.1	33.6	-2.5	[-8.0, 3.0]
Sample size	377	334		

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.

Table 5.9

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

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Experienced a financial shortfall in the past 12 months	68.4	69.4	-1.0	[-6.8, 4.8]
Could not pay rent or mortgage	50.8	49.4	1.4	[-4.8, 7.6]
Evicted from home or apartment	12.5	13.0	-0.5	[-4.7, 3.7]
Utility or phone service disconnected	46.2	46.0	0.2	[-6.0, 6.5]
Could not afford prescription medicine	26.9	26.0	0.9	[-4.6, 6.5]
Had insufficient food in the past month	26.4	29.0	-2.6	[-8.1, 3.0]
Housing in the past month				
Rented or owned own apartment or room	39.1	37.9	1.1	[-4.8, 7.0]
Lived with family or friends[a]	53.1	53.3	-0.2	[-6.3, 5.8]
Homeless or lived in emergency or temporary housing	4.8	5.7	-0.9	[-3.7, 1.9]
Incarcerated, on work release, or living in a halfway house	2.3	2.8	-0.5	[-2.5, 1.4]
Other	0.8	0.3	0.5	[-0.4, 1.4]
Is currently in good, very good, or excellent health	73.1	66.9	6.1*	[0.5, 11.7]
Had health insurance coverage in the past month	59.2	57.4	1.8	[-4.2, 7.9]
Health coverage was employer-based	7.4	4.7	2.7	[-0.3, 5.7]
Experienced serious psychological distress in the past month[b]	15.2	21.4	-6.2**	[-11.0, -1.5]
Sample size	377	334		

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.

average, program group members' small increase in earnings did not reduce their likelihood of experiencing these problems. However, program group members were more likely to report being in good health, and were less likely to have experienced psychological distress in the past month.

Conclusion

PSI was designed to help noncustodial parents develop employability skills, establish recent work histories, and change their attitudes about child support and work. After they completed a two-week job-readiness workshop, participants were placed in fully subsidized, temporary positions on work crews at partner organizations. This transitional employment experience was enhanced with other program services including case management, legal assistance for child support and other civil matters, Reentry Clinic services, parenting education, and assistance in finding and retaining unsubsidized employment.

PSI succeeded in meeting its sample enrollment targets, although it did face and address challenges along the way. Most notably, several expected sources of referrals did not generate the number of prospective applicants anticipated. Ultimately, this required CCA to rely on broader outreach and marketing efforts. Television advertising during the last year of the grant proved to be particularly effective, as was the use of gift card rewards for participants who made referrals to the program.

Overall, the program was implemented as designed. Among those who were randomly assigned to the program, the vast majority attended the two-week job-readiness workshop (92 percent) and entered transitional jobs (80 percent). Nearly all program group members needed and received legal assistance. Several areas required ongoing attention and oversight, however. Although the program had four case managers and a network of partner organizations to help with case management, caseloads were large, particularly during the second half of the grant, and this strained the teams' ability to provide individual support. The program also had to refine its approach to unsubsidized job development and placement over time. After unsuccessful experiences with two job development and placement vendors, the CCA eventually brought these functions in-house in the fourth year of the grant.

As suggested by the implementation analysis, the program was successful in providing services to program participants, increasing participation in services related to employment, child support, and criminal justice. The program group also worked more and had higher earnings than the control group in the year following random assignment, largely because of high rates of participation in subsidized employment. These large increases in employment and earnings during the first year did not translate directly to sizable impacts on child support, however; there were only modest impacts on child support payments. There were few differ-

ences between program and control group outcomes related to criminal justice and overall well-being. It is not possible at this point to determine whether the program produced long-term impacts. Further follow-up is required to determine whether the impacts observed will continue beyond the first year. A 30-month follow-up report is planned.