The Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration

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

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Chapter 7

RecycleForce, Inc. (Indianapolis, IN)

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Executive Summary

RecycleForce, a social enterprise in Indianapolis, provides workforce training to formerly incarcerated individuals. Before the Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration (ETJD) grant, RecycleForce had an established transitional jobs program that included up to 35 hours of paid time, occupational and soft-skills training, peer mentorship from formerly incarcerated individuals on staff, and formal and informal case management. As described in Chapter 1, RecycleForce enhanced the basic transitional jobs model by providing peer mentoring and additional support. The grant also enabled RecycleForce to build on its existing model by adding job-development activities and child support-related assistance, and by engaging two other social enterprises — New Life Development Ministries and The Changed Life — as additional program providers. Participants could hold transitional jobs for up to four months.

Main Findings

- **Most study participants were black men in their 30s; most had worked in the past, but they had limited recent work experience and other disadvantages.** The average age of the 998 study participants was 34. More than 80 percent of study participants had worked in the past and two-thirds had held a single job for six months or more. However, only 10 percent of the study participants had worked for a year or more in the past three years, presumably because they had been incarcerated. Close to two-thirds of participants had minor-age children. One-quarter did not have a high school diploma or equivalent. More than 90 percent of the participants were staying in someone else's home or living in a transitional facility such as a halfway house.

- **There was a high rate of participation in program services.** All participants worked in transitional jobs, almost 95 percent participated in education and job training, and over 90 percent received work-related support. Participants reported high satisfaction with all program services. For example, 84 percent had very favorable views of their relationships at work and 77 percent had very favorable views of their preparation for future employment. Among the noncustodial parents in the program group (about half of the sample), over 70 percent received child support assistance, including debt compromise and driver's license reinstatement.

- **The two partner organizations experienced difficulty implementing central program elements.** Two social enterprises were engaged to provide the

full array of program services to 200 program group members. (These services included transitional jobs, development time, case management and other forms of support to help participants stay employed, and employment services.) While these enterprises implemented many components of the program, it proved difficult for them to replicate peer mentoring from formerly incarcerated individuals.

- **Many participants received extensions in the time-limited transitional job.** Although transitional jobs were designed to last four months, most participants requested and were granted extensions if they had not found unsubsidized work or were deemed unready for unsubsidized employment. Fifty percent of participants were in the program for more than four months.

- **Participants had multiple barriers to employment, which had implications for program services and unsubsidized employment.** Senior program managers suggested that individuals with multiple barriers to employment might benefit from more structured case management than the program's informal, participant-initiated approach provided. Staff members also said that while a full-time, unsubsidized job was the ultimate goal for participants, it may not have been a realistic expectation for them after four months in the program. Many participants transitioned to temporary jobs, which give workers the flexibility to attend to the requirements of probation and parole while continuing to develop workplace skills.

- **The program had positive impacts on receipt of services related to employment, child support, criminal justice issues, mentorship, advice or support from staff members, and mental health assistance in the first year of the follow-up period.** For example, the program increased the proportion of study participants who reported receiving help finding or keeping a job by 30 percentage points. It more than doubled the proportion receiving help related to criminal convictions, and also more than doubled the proportion who reported that they got advice or support from staff members. For the more than half of participants who were noncustodial parents, RecycleForce more than tripled the proportion receiving child support-related services.

- **The program group had higher rates of employment and earnings in unemployment insurance-covered jobs.** During the first year after enrollment, the program had statistically significant impacts on employment and earnings. Ninety-six percent of program group members had earnings from unemployment insurance-covered jobs, compared with 62 percent of the con-

trol group. Total average earnings during the first year more than doubled, from $2,830 to $6,034. Most of this impact is from subsidized employment, which accounted for $3,260 of the program group's earnings.

- **Impacts on criminal justice involvement occurred early in the follow-up period, while program group members were active in the program; these impacts faded during the second half of the year, resulting in little impact overall on criminal justice involvement.** There were no differences in arrests during the full first year, but program participants were less likely to be convicted of a felony (4 percent of participants in the program group versus 10 percent in the control group). However, the program significantly affected several criminal justice outcomes during the first six months after random assignment, when many participants were active in transitional jobs at RecycleForce or one of its partners. For example, during the first six months, about a third fewer of the program group's members were arrested than control group members (9 percent versus 15 percent), just over half as many were convicted of crimes (6 percent versus 11 percent), and only a quarter as many were admitted to prison for new crimes.

- **The program had substantial impacts on child support outcomes.** The proportion of noncustodial parents in the sample who paid child support increased by more than 17 percentage points. Program group noncustodial parents also paid child support for more than twice as many months as control group noncustodial parents and paid more than twice as much, on average.

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. The chapter ends with a conclusion.

RecycleForce, Inc.

Background

RecycleForce is a social enterprise that provides recycling services and workforce training to formerly incarcerated individuals in Indianapolis.[1] As a social enterprise it has three interconnected goals: (1) To help formerly incarcerated men and women successfully reenter society by providing paid employment and training along with social services; (2) to keep as much material out of landfills as possible; and (3) to fund its operations as much as possible from the sale of recycled materials.[2] RecycleForce was one of three ETJD grantees testing a modified transitional jobs program model, wherein participants were placed into fully subsidized, temporary positions at RecycleForce while receiving various forms of social and economic support and assistance in obtaining unsubsidized employment. This chapter is divided into three parts. This section describes the context in which the program operated, the intended model, the recruitment and enrollment of study participants, and study participants' characteristics.

Context

At the time study enrollment began, the unemployment rate for the Indianapolis-Carmel-Anderson metropolitan statistical area was 8.6 percent.[3] The unemployment rate declined steadily over the study period, from 8.0 percent in 2012 to 7.3 percent in 2013, to 5.7 percent in 2014.[4] Although the unemployment rate declined during the study period, staff members said that the unemployment rate has little effect on employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals and that the incentives available to hire this group, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit,[5] do not outweigh the cost of liability insurance for employers.

The largest employment sectors in the Indianapolis area are "office and administrative support" (15 percent of employed individuals), "sales and related" (10 percent), "transportation and material moving" (10 percent), "production" (7 percent), and "healthcare practitioners and technical" (7 percent).[6] Program staff members said that in some of these sectors (for example,

[1]The organization was founded in 2006 under the name Workforce, Inc.

[2]Revenue from recycling operations covers some program costs. Generally about 50 percent of costs are covered. This figure ranges from 35 percent to 60 percent depending on commodity pricing.

[3]U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016a). These are annual figures, not seasonally adjusted.

[4]Sample enrollment ended in 2013, but RecycleForce's ETJD program services continued through 2014.

[5]The Work Opportunity Tax Credit is a federal tax credit offered to employers that hire people with significant barriers to employment (including people with criminal records). See U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (2016).

[6]U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015a).

health care), felony convictions limit opportunities. (As described below, a felony conviction was an eligibility requirement for the program.) Program staff members also indicated that there is a spatial mismatch between the residences of formerly incarcerated individuals (in Indianapolis proper) and many of the jobs that program staff members flagged as being good prospects for their participants (for example, warehouse jobs), which were often located in the suburbs. Interviewees cited the lack of good public transportation options as an obstacle to employment after they left the program. Additionally, many formerly incarcerated individuals do not have their own vehicles, or have suspended driver's licenses due to unpaid traffic tickets or unpaid child support, or are barred from operating motor vehicles under the conditions of their supervision. As mentioned below, these environmental factors affected the program's approach to post-transitional job employment.

Every year from 2010 to 2014, about 3,500 adults were released to community supervision in Marion County (the county that includes Indianapolis).[7] Most individuals convicted of a felony serve about half of their sentences in the community. Once released, they are supervised by probation or parole and must adhere to certain conditions (see Box 7.1). Failure to abide by the conditions of supervision may result in administrative sanctions, such as increased reporting to parole/probation or mandated treatment. More severe violations are met with increasingly severe sanctions that are laid out in a graduated schedule customized to a person's risk level for reoffending. Probation or parole officers may exercise discretion in the sanctions they impose, but repeated violations or severe violations such as being arrested or traveling out of state without permission typically result in a technical rule violation. Technical rule violations normally lead to a revocation of community supervision and reincarceration.

Looking for and obtaining employment is a condition of release, and those on probation (unlike parole), need earnings to pay for supervision fees.[8] According to staff members in the Marion County Superior Court Probation Department, probationers in Marion County pay about $1,000 in fees on average over the course of a year of supervision.[9] Yet many parolees

[7]Indiana Department of Correction (2016). The number of adults released annually decreased over the course of the study, from about 4,200 in 2010 to 2,700 in 2014. Program staff members pointed out that the figure for Marion County is low because it only includes individuals released from Marion County institutions who reside in Marion County after they are released. Individuals incarcerated at facilities in other counties also often return to Marion County after they are released.

[8]Probation is distinct from parole. Whereas the Department of Corrections sets the terms of parole, courts set the terms of probation at the time of the original sentencing (for example, the sentence might be six years in prison followed by one year on probation). Individuals on probation are required to pay fines or fees as a condition of supervision.

[9]For example, probationers with a felony conviction pay $30 per month to be on probation. They might also be ordered to pay other fees, for example $100 for public defender services, $250 for treatment services, or $100 for administration.

Box 7.1

Basic Conditions of Release to Parole/Probation

- Report to parole or probation
- Maintain a single, verifiable residence approved by supervising agent
- Seek and maintain employment
- Do not leave the state without permission
- Do not use illegal drugs (submit to drug screening and participate in treatment as directed)
- Do not engage in criminal conduct
- Do not possess a dangerous weapon
- Submit to searches of person, vehicle, or property at any time
- Do not associate with anyone in violation of the law or with a felony conviction
- Participate in programs as directed by parole or probation officer
- Support dependent children and abide by court orders for support (probation only)
- Pay all court-ordered fines, costs, fees, and restitution (probation only)
- Obtain permission to apply for or renew a license to operate a motor vehicle
- Obtain permission to purchase or lease a motor vehicle (parole only)

and probationers also need flexible work schedules to accommodate regular drug screenings and meetings with probation or parole officers.

As described below, half of the RecycleForce study participants were noncustodial parents. State child support guidelines are used to set child support order amounts and any debt owed. If a noncustodial parent is incarcerated, the order amount can be modified to zero, reflecting the parent's inability to work and pay support. However, the parent needs to start the modification process and file a petition with the court, which is difficult for a number of reasons. The parent may not know an order modification is possible or the steps for requesting one. If the parent knows a modification is possible, he or she might not have access to the needed documents. Finally, orders are modified in court, so an inmate would need to make arrangements to participate over the phone or be transported to court.[10] As a result of these policies, many individuals leave prison having accrued considerable child support debt.[11]

[10]At the time of the implementation study in November 2013, both the county and state were making efforts to facilitate order modifications for people in prison.

[11]RecycleForce's child support consultant received data on debts owed to custodial parents and debts owed to the state. The debts owed to custodial parents ranged from a low of $1,000 to over $65,000, while debts owed to the state ranged from $0 to over $37,000. A few participants owed in excess of $80,000 in child support debt. The data do not indicate what percentages of these debts accumulated during incarceration.

Finally, few services in Indianapolis other than RecycleForce specifically target formerly incarcerated individuals. None provides transitional jobs. WorkOne Indy is the local American Job Center and provides services such as career assessments, job-search workshops, assistance with résumés, and training and education (although the costs of that training and education may not be covered). Many other community-based organizations offer assistance with basic needs (such as clothing, food, and housing), legal services, and job-readiness services.

Intended Model

The RecycleForce program aims to help formerly incarcerated individuals learn skills and behaviors that will ultimately result in permanent jobs, and to help participants reintegrate into the community through connections to children, families, and positive peer groups. RecycleForce enhanced the basic transitional jobs model primarily through its peer mentoring component. The RecycleForce transitional jobs program was operational before the ETJD grant and peer mentoring was part of its original model. RecycleForce proposed to use the ETJD grant to add a number of components to its existing transitional jobs program: support for the transition to unsubsidized employment; child support consultation services for noncustodial parents; and a transitional job pathway with a city agency. It added two partners to provide the additional service components: (1) Educational Data Systems, Inc. (EDSI) to handle employment placement, verification, and unsubsidized job retention, and (2) Child Support Consulting of Indiana to assist program participants who were noncustodial parents with child support issues.

RecycleForce needed to increase the number of formerly incarcerated individuals it served in order to meet the ETJD goal of enrolling 500 people into the program group. To build that capacity, it used the grant to engage two additional transitional jobs providers in Indianapolis and required them to run their models using the RecycleForce approach.[12] Each of these two social enterprises — New Life Development Ministries and The Changed Life — had a grant agreement to serve 100 participants and to permanently hire 10. The Indianapolis Mayor's Office on Reentry was to provide extended transitional jobs that led to unsubsidized work to an additional subset of participants. The mayor's office was expected to engage 50 participants in extended transitional jobs and connect them afterward to public-sector jobs, primarily in the Department of Public Works.

The new transitional jobs providers were expected to offer the same services as RecycleForce (the original program and the new components) and to adhere to the RecycleForce

[12]RecycleForce staff described social enterprises as the "minor league" of employment, serving as a bridge between prison and unsubsidized jobs.

philosophy of "continuous approximations" — that is, participant outcomes such as unsubsidized employment and reduced recidivism are achieved incrementally and not necessarily in a linear fashion. Multiple failures may occur before success is ultimately achieved. The idea is that little by little, through engagement with the staff (including formerly incarcerated individuals on staff), program participants will learn not only job skills but also workplace and life skills such as how to be punctual, how to interact with colleagues and supervisors, and how to behave appropriately in the workplace (for example, by not texting on the job). A component of this philosophy is unconditional support for participants. Infractions on the job are teachable moments and not cause for immediate dismissal.[13] Staff members aim to develop participants' motivation to change past behaviors.

All components of the program, from the transitional job to training and case management, support work because RecycleForce believes that work reduces participants' likelihood of reoffending. Program staff members note that people who work have less time to commit crimes and a less urgent need to make fast cash. RecycleForce promotes "work is therapy," a term used to help new participants develop their "work muscle." On-staff peer mentors, all formerly incarcerated individuals, model positive work practices and appropriate communication. Case managers (known at the program as Employment Assistance Representatives or EARs) focus on support for work. The program is self-paced and participants determine the number of hours they work (there are no negative consequences for working less than a full workweek, or less than a full day), take training modules at their own pace, and initiate meetings with case managers as needed. The specific program components are:

Development of job skills. The cornerstone of the RecycleForce program is the transitional job. Participants were paid $9 per hour for up to 35 hours per week.[14] In the grant-supported version of the program the transitional job could last at least four months, consecutively or nonconsecutively (for example, if someone were reincarcerated that person could come back to the program job upon release). RecycleForce's model also includes Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) training and soft-skills training.

Development time. Participants are allotted a minimum of five hours of unpaid, excused time each week for nonwork activities such as drug screenings, court hearings, and meetings to address child support-related issues. The grant included funds to pay for drug

[13]Staff members first deliver this message during orientation. They stress three principles: (1) The staff understands that there will be mistakes. The goal is for participants to learn from their mistakes and understand the natural consequences that come from them. (2) When participants continue to "do the next right thing," RecycleForce will be their strongest advocate with the criminal justice oversight system. (3) RecycleForce has a responsibility to that oversight system to report their attendance and other issues related to work.

[14]Wages increased to $10.10 in March 2014. RecycleForce (2014).

testing required as a condition of probation or parole, bus passes, and other forms of support as needed.

Support to help individuals stay in the program and address their employment needs. RecycleForce provides formal and informal case management. In the grant-supported version of the program, case managers were to meet with participants during orientation, at specified milestones (30, 60, and 90 days into the program), and informally as needed. Peer mentors were to supervise participants, teach job-related skills, and model appropriate work-place behavior. Peer mentors and case managers were to meet thrice weekly to share impressions and discuss concerns that need to be addressed individually or for the group of participants. Depending on the issue, the resolution might involve reaching out to a participant informally, scheduling a one-on-one session, or addressing the issue anonymously in Circle (discussed below).

The first case manager contact came on the day of random assignment. It involved developing a Plan of Action that articulated participants' short- and long-term goals and barriers to reaching those goals. Generally participants were expected to address barriers on their own, although case managers did work with groups experiencing a common barrier (for example, the need for photo identification) to facilitate a solution (in this example, driving a group of participants to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles).

Finally, the daily Circle of Trust ("Circle"), another original program component, is the first activity of every day at RecycleForce. It is an opportunity to reflect on and share successes and challenges. Participants are on the clock. A formerly incarcerated person on staff leads the session and generally offers a topic and then facilitates a discussion. For example, if individuals were moving slowly or putting limited effort into searching for jobs, the Circle facilitator would start a conversation by asking all participants what they do not like about looking for work, and what holds them back from putting 100 percent effort into the task. A participant might raise concerns about how to talk about a felony conviction during an interview, and the facilitator or another participant could offer advice based on their own interviewing experiences. Case managers attend daily to learn about issues that are developing and to get a sense of whether they need to check in with any participants. Circle also provides a forum for case managers and peer mentors to raise with all participants issues they heard about through informal or formal channels.

Employment and retention services. Under the grant, EDSI was engaged to develop unsubsidized job leads and prepare job-ready program participants for interviews. EDSI was also expected to verify employment and provide retention services to participants in unsubsidized jobs.

Child support services. Under the grant, Child Support Consulting of Indiana was to provide assistance with child support issues such as order and arrears modifications and driver's license reinstatement.

Recruitment and Study Enrollment

- **RecycleForce collaborated closely with criminal justice system partners, including probation and parole agencies, and successfully met its sample goal earlier than anticipated.**

The recruitment and enrollment process remained largely consistent throughout the study enrollment period. The main referral partners were Marion County Probation, Indianapolis Parole District 3, Duvall Residential Center (a work-release facility), and Marion County Reentry Court. Although RecycleForce had a long-standing relationship with a number of probation officers, it had to develop partnerships with new criminal justice partners for the study.[15] In January 2012 RecycleForce hosted open houses that enabled potential referral partners to observe physical plant operations, see formerly incarcerated individuals at work, and learn about program services. Staff members said that these open houses secured the cooperation of criminal justice system partners. RecycleForce had a steady stream of referrals and met its study enrollment goal (1,000 participants) more than two months earlier than required.

To refer an individual, criminal justice partners completed a one-page referral form confirming the individual's eligibility for the program and e-mailed or faxed it to Keys to Work, a subgrantee responsible for study intake. Keys to Work then scheduled the individual for the next available weekly orientation session. Nearly all of the eligible people referred were scheduled for an orientation, and about two-thirds of them reported to the orientation. To be eligible for the program, individuals had to be 18 or older and meet the following criteria, some adopted by RecycleForce and some required by the Department of Labor (DOL):

- **Score medium to high on the Indiana Risk Assessment System.** All criminal justice system partners already used this assessment before a person's release to determine his or her risk of reoffending (low, medium, or high), which made it easy for them to identify prospective program participants.

[15]Before the grant, most program participants had been convicted of sex offenses and the primary referral partner was the Marion County Probation staff working exclusively with this population. Because the Department of Labor prohibited programs working with formerly incarcerated individuals from spending funds on services to sex offenders, RecycleForce needed to build partnerships with new criminal justice system staff members, including different Marion County probation officers.

- **Not be in violation of supervision.** As mentioned above, individuals who do not comply with the conditions of supervision are subject to technical rule violations. Depending on the sanction level, they may be reincarcerated, and thus be unable to participate in the program.

- **Meet DOL grant-related requirements.** The DOL grant required that participants must:

    - Have been released from a federal or state prison within the past 120 days.

    - Have no recent history of working consistently. RecycleForce defined "recent history of working consistently" as having a history of working four quarters with the same employer.

    - Never have been convicted of a sex offense.

    - Have been convicted of a crime as an adult under federal or state law.

Aside from satisfying all criteria, referred individuals did not undergo additional assessments or other screening activities before random assignment.

Keys to Work facilitated two-day orientations to the study and the program each week. On day one (a Monday), potential participants learned about the program and the study in a group orientation session. Those interested in enrolling in the study were scheduled for one-on-one meetings the following day to complete intake paperwork. On average, about 90 percent of individuals who attended the first day of orientation returned the second day. During the second-day appointment, Keys to Work collected the study informed consent form and gathered study-specific "baseline" information from the individual. The staff then used an online tool created by the evaluation team to conduct random assignment. Control group members received a list of alternative resources in the community;[16] program group members were escorted to RecycleForce, which shared a building with Keys to Work, for program orientation.[17] Keys to Work then reported attendance and research group assignment to the referring office (for example, probation or parole).

[16]The alternate services list included employment-related services (for example, American Job Centers, which are sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor and provide a full range of services to job seekers, including training referrals, career counseling, and job listings); child support services (for example, the Marion County Child Support Division); and organizations that provide food assistance, clothing, housing services, health services, and legal assistance.

[17]At this time, participants were formally on the clock and started receiving wages.

RecycleForce noted that giving Keys to Work responsibility for all recruitment and intake activities allowed the RecycleForce staff to focus on service delivery. Keys to Work managed communication with about 35 parole and probation officers and with referred participants, notifying them of the orientation date, sending reminders, and rescheduling orientation dates as needed. The separation of intake and program functions also helped ensure that control group members did not come into contact with the RecycleForce staff and were not inadvertently exposed to program components.

Baseline Characteristics

RecycleForce collected baseline data on study participants before they were randomly assigned to the program group or control group. Tables 7.1 and 7.2 and Appendix Table F.1 presents participant demographic characteristics, criminal histories, employment histories, family and child support information, histories of public assistance and benefits, and health information.[18] Box 7.2 includes a profile of a program group participant.

Demographically, sample members in Indianapolis were similar to those for other ETJD programs targeting formerly incarcerated individuals. On average, Indianapolis sample members also had levels of education close to the average for other programs targeting the same population: About one-fourth of sample members lacked a high school diploma or equivalent, while the remainder had earned at least that credential.

As Table 7.1 shows, less stable housing conditions were common. Most Indianapolis study participants (64 percent) were living at the home of a friend or family member when they enrolled in the study, higher than the average for the three ETJD programs targeting formerly incarcerated people (57 percent). Another 30 percent were living in a halfway house, transitional house, or in a residential treatment facility.[19]

The same table shows that although most of the Indianapolis sample had worked at some point in the past (83 percent), only 31 percent had worked in the past year (largely because most had been in prison during the previous year, reflecting the eligibility criterion that participants had to have been released from incarceration in the previous 120 days). Sixty-seven percent reported having worked for the same employer for six or more months at some point

[18]The Programs Targeting Formerly Incarcerated People column includes study participants (program and control groups) from Indianapolis, Fort Worth, and New York City. For a detailed comparison of the baseline characteristics of program group members and control group members across the ETJD programs, see Appendix I.

[19]Most of these study participants lived in one of the secure work-release facilities that referred residents to the program.

Table 7.1

Characteristics and Employment Histories of Sample Members: *Indianapolis*

Characteristic	Indianapolis Program	ETJD Programs Targeting Formerly Incarcerated People
Male (%)	96.0	94.1
Age (%)		
18-24	21.2	17.0
25-34	39.5	34.9
35-44	21.6	25.2
45 or older	17.6	22.9
Average age	33.6	35.5
Race/ethnicity (%)		
Black, non-Hispanic	81.5	67.4
White, non-Hispanic	15.1	16.2
Hispanic	1.9	14.5
Asian, non-Hispanic	0.0	0.2
Other/multiracial	1.5	1.6
Educational attainment (%)		
No high school diploma or equivalent	24.4	24.7
High school diploma or equivalent	69.4	71.9
Associate's degree or equivalent	4.1	2.2
Bachelor's degree or higher	2.1	1.3
Marital status (%)		
Never married	77.3	70.2
Currently married	7.4	9.0
Separated, widowed, or divorced	15.4	20.8
Veteran (%)	4.0	3.7
Has a disability (%)	0.5	3.1
Housing (%)		
Rents or owns	5.0	11.8
Halfway house, transitional house, or residential treatment facility	30.0	25.6
Homeless	1.2	5.8
Staying in someone else's apartment, room, or house	63.8	56.9

(continued)

Table 7.1 (continued)

Characteristic	Indianapolis Program	ETJD Programs Targeting Formerly Incarcerated People
Employment history		
Ever worked (%)	83.4	81.1
Among those who ever worked:		
Worked in the past year (%)	31.3	19.9
Average hourly wage in most recent job ($)	9.25	10.11
Ever worked for the same employer for 6 months or more (%)	67.2	72.9
Months worked in the previous 3 years (%)		
Did not work	21.0	46.6
Fewer than 6 months	51.8	30.5
6 to 12 months	16.7	12.9
13 to 24 months	7.8	6.7
More than 24 months	2.7	3.2
Sample size	998	3,002

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

before program entry. Almost three-quarters (73 percent) either had not worked or had worked for less than six months during the previous three years. The average hourly wage at the most recent job was slightly in excess of the transitional job wage ($9.25).

About 94 percent of the sample had been convicted of a felony (see Table 7.2). All Indianapolis study participants had served time in prison. Their most recent release from incarceration was about two months before program entry, on average. Almost all study participants in Indianapolis were under some form of community supervision when they entered the program. As Table 7.2 shows, the largest share of the sample was under parole supervision (41 percent) followed by probation and other or court supervision (29 percent each). Across the three programs targeting formerly incarcerated people, three-quarters of study participants were on parole.

Table 7.2 shows that 63 percent of the sample had minor-age children; half were noncustodial parents. One-quarter of the full sample (about half of the noncustodial parents in the sample) reported having current child support orders. By way of comparison, fewer of the three-program sample members were noncustodial parents (42 percent), had minor-age children (half), or had current support orders (15 percent).

Table 7.2

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

Characteristic	Indianapolis Program	ETJD Programs Targeting Formerly Incarcerated People
Parental and child support status		
Noncustodial parent (%)	50.5	42.1
Has any minor-age children (%)	62.5	51.5
Among those with minor-age children:		
Average number of minor-age children	2.3	2.1
Living with minor-age children (%)	19.3	14.0
Has a current child support order (%)	25.2	15.2
Has an order only for child support debt (%)	1.6	0.7
Criminal history		
Ever convicted of a crime[a] (%)	100.0	96.3
Ever convicted of a felony	94.2	91.0
Ever convicted of a misdemeanor	66.5	65.2
Ever incarcerated in prison (%)	100.0	100.0
Average years in jail and prison[b]	3.9	4.8
Average months since most recent release[c]	1.9	1.5
Status at program enrollment (%)		
Parole	41.1	75.5
Probation	29.2	11.9
Other criminal justice/court supervision	29.3	9.6
None of the above	0.4	2.9
Sample size	998	3,002

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 Indiana as recorded in administrative records. Does not include federal convictions or convictions from other states.

[b]Includes time spent in Indiana state prisons and Marion County jails according to administrative records. Does not include time spent in federal prisons or prisons in other states.

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

Box 7.2

RecycleForce Participant Profile

"Steve" is a black man in his late 40s. He was most recently released from prison after serving 9.5 years for dealing drugs and a firearms violation. His involvement with the criminal justice system began when he was 20, with an arrest for burglary. He has been arrested seven times and served time in prison on four occasions. He has multiple felony convictions. At the time he started the RecycleForce program he was required to meet with his probation officer, complete random drug tests, and pay $55 per month in court fees. He heard about RecycleForce from his probation officer and decided to learn more because he "needed a job." He thinks he can honor the conditions of supervision so long as he remains employed. From the program he hopes to gain "good working skills" and sees "a lot of benefits" from participating, including assistance with child support issues.

Steve has three adult children aged 19 to 23, as well as grandchildren. He reports positive relationships with his children but says it has been somewhat difficult to reconnect with them since his release because, "I'd been out of their lives so long, they'd grown up without me." Still, he says that he sees them often. He was not paying child support at the time he entered the RecycleForce program but thinks he owes about $5 per month.* He notes that his driver's license is suspended due to nonpayment of child support and hopes that the program will help him get it back. He currently lives with his girlfriend and expects to keep doing so.

Steve earned a high school equivalency credential in prison and also took other classes offered, including parenting and training for reintegration into society. He has had "a number of jobs" in his life, most recently working a forklift in a warehouse near the Indianapolis airport. He left this job to attend to a sick parent. He hopes to find a permanent job by the time he leaves the program, but would like RecycleForce to hire him permanently, saying, "I am a very hard worker, and they can tell it, too." He sees his felony convictions as a significant barrier to permanent employment.

He describes his old associates as a "bad influence" and no longer sees them. He states that he cannot get another felony; if he does, he will go to prison "all day." Steve says, "I have been through so much in my life, I could write a book." He would call it *Hood Life*. His family supports his participation in the program: "They're happy I am off the streets and working, they are glad for me."

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*Given the age of the children, it is likely that the monthly support payment is for debt only. The interview notes do not specify the nature of the payments, however.

Program Implementation

As mentioned above, RecycleForce planned to operate the program in conjunction with two other social enterprises, New Life and Changed Life. RecycleForce expected both to adhere to its overall program philosophy and to adopt all service components as well as its staffing structure. This section first describes staffing at RecycleForce and its subgrantees. Next, it

outlines eligibility requirements, the recruitment process, and the random assignment of individuals to the program group and the control group. It then describes the program model as implemented. Findings are based largely on three site visits. The first was an early assessment of operations in February 2012. The second two visits (January 2013 and November 2013) focused on program implementation.

Staffing and Structure

RecycleForce had a small management team composed of a president, a vice-president of operations, and a finance manager. According to a time study analysis, the president spent about one-fourth of his time on ETJD grant-related activities.[20] The grant funded a program manager, who oversaw daily program operations and managed subgrantees; an evaluation coordinator responsible for all study-related tasks; and a database manager to compile and enter program data. A site coordinator oversaw participants in their transitional jobs and also supported job development. Employee management tasks such as payroll, benefits, and workers' compensation were handled by an outside company, Managepoint. (Managepoint also conducted OSHA training.)

RecycleForce is supervised and staffed by permanent and transitional workers. The color of a worker's hardhat reveals his or her role. Permanent workers can have a white hat (supervisors, full-time staff members, and peer mentors), a red hat (safety officers and managers), or a blue hat (team leaders, full-time staff members, and peer mentors). Transitional workers have yellow hats. Box 7.3 describes these roles in more detail.

As covered above, peer mentorship from formerly incarcerated staff members is a central component of the program. Not only do peer mentors supervise production, they also help transitional job participants learn workplace skills and behaviors. At the time of the grant there were about 40 peer mentors who had started in transitional jobs (before the grant) and then worked their way to being permanent employees in supervisory positions. Peer mentors at RecycleForce convened monthly and collaborated with case managers to address participants' issues.

The grant funded three RecycleForce case managers, who helped participants engage in work through one-on-one meetings and informal communication. Case managers did not have assigned caseloads; the assumption was that they should be able to work with anyone who

[20]In the fall of 2013 the evaluation team conducted a time study that asked staff members to report the proportion of their time they spent on each component of the program during a specified period. This analysis is useful in understanding the allocation of staff resources to various program activities.

Box 7.3

RecycleForce Order of Ranking

Ranking	Roles and Qualifications
White hat	A white hat denotes a supervisory role and a department head. All white hat wearers are formerly incarcerated people who came through the transitional job program and showed significant progress as leaders. The white hats are the top peer mentors. They have production responsibility and help promote the philosophy that "work is therapy." White hats report to case managers on transitional job participants' activities, including attendance.
Red hat	The safety director and the operations director wear red hats. A red hat is a management role; a red hat does not need to be a formerly incarcerated individual who came through the transitional jobs program.
Blue hat	Blue hats are second-in-charge in a department and work hand in hand with a white hat, like an assistant. They are also peer mentors.
Yellow hat	Yellow hats are transitional jobs participants. They are assigned to various departments.

walked into the room and needed assistance. The grantee noted that case management was not a major part of the program model. One of the three case managers was dedicated to orienting new participants and communicating participants' daily attendance status to referring partners.

A number of roles were specific to the grant. In addition to the program manager, evaluation coordinator, and database manager, the grant funded three Keys to Work staff members who managed the study intake process. Keys to Work also functioned as a staffing agency that temporarily employed RecycleForce participants (see below). A former Marion County Child Support Division staff member who had moved on to Child Support Consulting of Indiana assisted participants with child support issues. EDSI was added to provide job development services and was also responsible for making contact with participants after their transitional jobs to determine whether they were working, whether their jobs were going well, and whether they needed any assistance.

During the time the organizations were involved in the project, New Life and Changed Life each had a grant-funded case manager and a site coordinator, who was the primary liaison

with RecycleForce. In addition, both subgrantees were expected to assign peer mentors, who would be trained by RecycleForce. The child support consultant and EDSI also provided services to participants at New Life and Changed Life.

Implementation of Core Program Components

Before the ETJD grant, the RecycleForce program already included peer mentoring, Circle, OSHA and related training, and case management. Using the grant RecycleForce added two new components: employment services and child support consulting. New Life and Changed Life were supposed to implement all components uniformly.

However, the full set of services was implemented inconsistently across all providers. RecycleForce merely had to continue its existing services while revising its approach to some program elements (employment services and child support consulting) and overseeing new partners. New Life and Changed Life needed to adopt new program components (peer mentoring and Circle), as well as a new way of interacting with participants.

- **Program group members participated in transitional jobs and educational and training services at high rates; they also received work support at a high rate.**

A number of elements were implemented universally. One hundred percent of participants worked in transitional jobs. Participants started on the clock the day of random assignment (every Tuesday). Those placed at RecycleForce started with 30 days of "phase training," in which they rotated through each station of the plant (learning tools, demanufacturing, and logistics and inventory) before being assigned to work in one. Although participants could work up to 35 hours per week in the transitional job, most worked fewer hours due to other obligations such as home detention, parole appointments, or drug testing — the high-risk nature of the population meant that many participants were subject to extensive parole or probation monitoring. Table 7.3 indicates the average participant worked in a transitional job for about 72 days total.[21] While this average suggests that participants worked about 85 percent of the days available (a four-month period would have about 85 working days), participants frequently received extensions beyond four months. Participants spent an average of five months in the program.[22] Figure 7.1 shows the percentage of program group members working in transitional jobs in each month following random assignment.

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

[22]This span is the duration between the first day in the program and the last day of services. It includes time in a transitional job and time receiving other services such as employment preparation and case management. The time in the program also reflects, for some participants, stops and starts due to incarceration.

Table 7.3

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

Measure	Program Group
Participated in any activity, including a subsidized job (%)	100.0
Worked in a subsidized job (%)	100.0
Worked at New Life Developmental Ministries	13.0
Worked at The Changed Life	12.8
Among those who worked in a subsidized job:	
Average number of months in the program[a]	5.3
Average number of days from random assignment to first subsidized paycheck	3.8
Average number of days worked in a subsidized job[b]	71.8
Received a service other than a subsidized job (%)	99.8
Formal assessment/testing[c]	3.2
Education and job training[d]	96.4
Workforce preparation[e]	68.1
Work-related support[f]	92.0
Child support assistance, among noncustodial parents	70.5
Parenting class, among noncustodial parents	--
Incentive payment	--
Other services[g]	33.5
Arrears modification to $1 during subsidized job, among noncustodial parents (%)	52.0
Driver's license reinstatement assistance, among noncustodial parents (%)	28.3
Sample size	501

(continued)

As shown in Table 7.3, 96 percent of participants received education and job training services, mainly from Managepoint. Training at RecycleForce occurred every Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in one of the OSHA modules (listed in Box 7.4) or one of three soft-skills modules (prohibited harassment, dealing with conflict in the workplace, or customer service). The curriculum was standardized, but the trainer tried to adapt it through stories to match the participants' literacy levels. Most modules included a PowerPoint lecture, exercises, and a quiz.

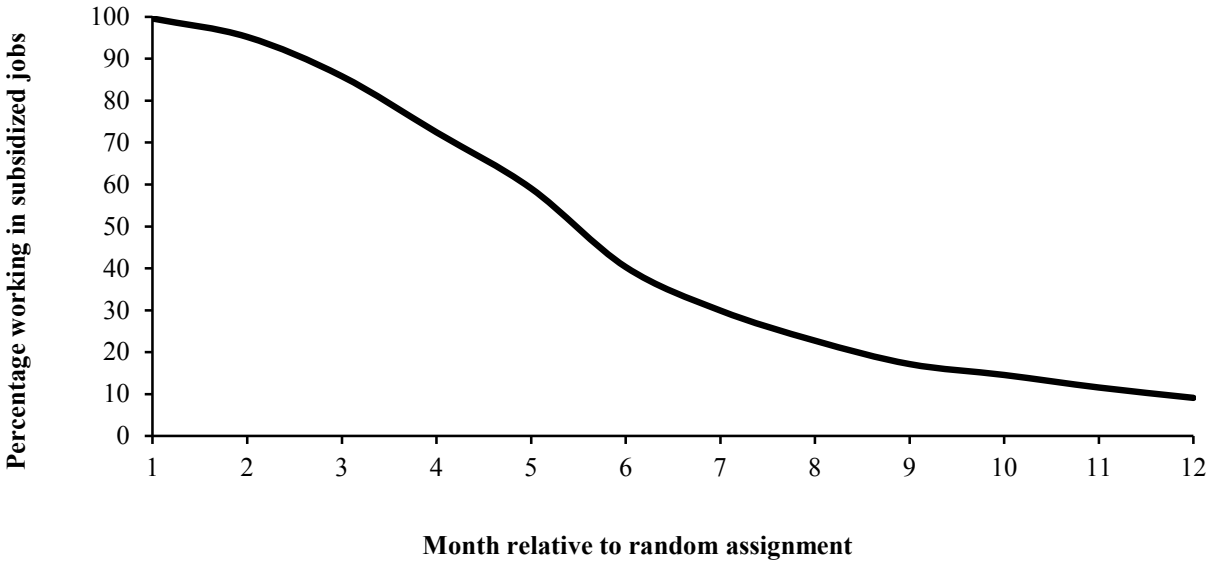
Table 7.3 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on data from the ETJD management information system and RecycleForce's data management 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 only assessments conducted by outside partner organizations. Assessments conducted by RecycleForce were not recorded in the management information system. Includes Department of Labor Occupational Information Network (O*NET) career exploration and assessment tools.
[d]Includes material handling, forklift driving, refrigeration, and warehouse safety.
[e]Includes résumé writing workshop, anger management class, job leads, and job fairs.
[f]Includes drug testing, glasses, bus passes, gas cards, and clothing.
[g]Includes health care plan selection and meeting with benefits consultant.

Figure 7.1

Subsidized Employment Over Time: *Indianapolis*



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.

At the end of each training session, each participant received a printed certificate, which he or she could keep in a portfolio to show to prospective employers. Participants said they learned useful skills and staff members added that employers particularly valued forklift certification, which can cost up to $300. Among program group members who received training from RecycleForce, 71 percent received forklift training (not shown).[23]

Box 7.4

OSHA Training Offered by Managepoint

- Machine Guarding
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Warehouse Safety
- Hazard Communication
- Bloodborne Pathogens
- Material Safety Data Sheets
- Material Handling
- Basic First Aid for Medical Emergencies
- Slips, Trips, and Falls
- Lockout-Tagout
- Emergency Action and Fire Prevention
- Forklift Operator Safety

The table also shows that 92 percent received forms of work-related financial support like payments for drug testing, bus passes, or gas cards. Criminal justice partners said that this financial support and the program's work-schedule flexibility (designated development time) helped participants comply with supervision requirements such as regular drug testing, meetings with probation or parole officers, and court appearances. RecycleForce permitted officers to conduct check-ins with their clients on-site, saving participants a trip to their offices.

- **Case management was implemented as planned.**

Case management was implemented universally. Participants were required to check in with case managers less and less often over the life of the program. Initially, case managers had one-on-one meetings with participants three times (at 30 days, 60 days, and 90 days into the program) to assess their progress toward their goals and to help them develop new ones. In early 2013, this schedule changed; case managers met with participants at 45 days and at program exit. Case managers said that little changed between the meeting at enrollment and the one at 30 days, and that they had a great deal of informal contact with participants through conversations following Circle, in hallways, and during impromptu visits participants made to their office. The program also eliminated the 90-day appointments, which staff felt added an unnecessary administrative burden and yielded limited measurable gains.

- **Noncustodial parents used the child support assistance offered by RecycleForce.**

[23]Based on data from a survey administered about a year after random assignment.

Each week the child support consultant reviewed cases of new participants with child support orders, to determine whether a modification was appropriate (in practice, most orders were set correctly) and to identify participants' other needs, such as driver's license reinstatement.[24] As shown in Table 7.3, about 71 percent of noncustodial parents received child support services. Per an agreement with the Marion County Child Support Division, wages withheld for child support debt payments could be reduced to $1 per pay period (weekly) while participants were in the program, under the assumption that they would be more likely to make current support payments if they were not overwhelmed with debt, many of which accrued while the parent was in prison.[25] According to RecycleForce data, the consultant worked with 173 individuals, resulting in 15 order modifications, 132 child support debt modifications, 107 driver's license reinstatements, and 3 paternity establishments. The consultant could not advocate on behalf of a participant in court, but she could help the individual fill out pro se paperwork for modifications.

- **Peer mentoring — RecycleForce's enhancement to the standard transitional jobs model and a central program component — was not replicated by partners as intended.**

The RecycleForce theory of change posits that the intervention can affect a formerly incarcerated individual's motivation to alter his or her behavior. Peer mentoring is a central program component designed to bring about that change. All peer mentors at RecycleForce were formerly incarcerated and had started at the organization in transitional jobs, so they could relate to program participants in a different way than a supervisor without similar experience could. They worked side-by-side with participants (not in offices), which the program believed broke down barriers between mentor and mentee and provided ample opportunities for interaction.

In addition to job skills, peer mentors addressed participants' attitudes and workplace behaviors. Peer mentors said that many participants had issues with authority, had worked only sporadically in the past, and were not used to the structure of a work environment. They helped participants learn positive behaviors such as coming in on time, staying on task during work hours, and not letting personal issues affect work time or performance. Peer mentors said that they were "sounding boards"; that is, they did not instruct so much as present options in an

[24]The consultant received details on each case from a dedicated staff person at the Marion County Child Support Division, including the order amount, debt owed to the custodial parent and the state, the last payment made, pending court dates (if any), and license suspensions.

[25]Debts owed to the state and the custodial parent could be reduced. The approval of the custodial parent was needed to reduce debt owed to that person. Debt owed to the state increased to a maximum of $10 per pay period once the participant exited the program, so long as current support continued to be paid. Debt owed to the custodial parent reverted to the previous payment amounts.

informal manner. If they sensed an issue in the course of a workday, they addressed it at the time rather than simply referring a participant to the case managers. Peer mentors also spoke regularly (formally and informally) with case managers, and let them know if there were issues that needed their attention.

Peer mentoring proved difficult to replicate at New Life and Changed Life. Both organizations identified mentors who then received training at RecycleForce. Although New Life and Changed Life incorporated the element into their programs, it is not clear the spirit of the component — that peer mentors accept participants where they are and bring them along through "continuous approximations" — was implemented. Staff members from New Life and Changed Life said that their cultures were different from RecycleForce's, in that they were stricter and less forgiving of mistakes. Moreover, the practice of peer mentors working side-by-side with participants and providing occupational skills and other instruction was not adopted by either provider. Mentors were not necessarily production supervisors and it was not clear that all production sites had mentors present. At Changed Life, for example, the office manager served as a peer mentor to participants assigned to off-site microbusinesses. RecycleForce leaders acknowledged that RecycleForce could have provided more guidance and oversight to the subgrantees in this area.

Only at RecycleForce did peer mentors and case managers meet three times a week and informally in between to discuss issues that affected participants' work.[26] At New Life and Changed Life there was less collaboration between case managers and peer mentors.

- **Some program elements were not implemented as planned.**

RecycleForce did not establish the intended partnership with the Mayor's Office of Reentry for 50 transitional jobs that would ultimately lead to public-sector jobs. The mayor's office identified a site coordinator and worked out logistics for identifying candidates and the duration of transitional jobs (two to four weeks). Ultimately, however, the mayor's office could not promise a permanent position with the city, only a letter of reference. When the mayor's office legal team reviewed the contract, they raised a number of concerns regarding Worker's Compensation and liability that they thought would make it necessary for the participant to be hired by the city before starting the transitional job. In July 2012, about eight months after the start of ETJD study enrollment, RecycleForce stopped pursuing the relationship.

Although transitional jobs extensions were not available through the mayor's office, in practice, most individuals extended their transitional jobs beyond four months. Starting in spring 2012, RecycleForce and its two partners began providing 30-day extensions to partici-

[26]Conversations with staff members at New Life and Changed Life suggest that while case managers and supervisors interacted, they did so less regularly.

pants who needed extra time to prepare for unsubsidized work or who could not find jobs. Each participant had to develop a new Plan of Action that focused on searching for a job. According to the staff, participants did not focus on job searching until the end of the 30-day period. The staff was also concerned that the possibility of an extension distracted participants from job-search activities. Staff members surmised that participants felt comfortable at RecycleForce and did not want to leave (one staff member noted the "real world" can be a shock, whereas RecycleForce is forgiving). Some participants also hoped to obtain employment at RecycleForce, either on the permanent staff or on a large special work contract.[27]

In an effort to get participants searching for jobs more quickly, starting in spring 2013 RecycleForce reduced extensions to two weeks. RecycleForce eliminated extensions entirely on July 1, 2013 (study enrollment ended in November 2013).

Employment and retention services were restructured as the study progressed. RecycleForce and EDSI had expected to collaborate on employment-related services. RecycleForce helped participants register at WorkOne Indy (the local American Job Center), worked with them to develop their résumés, and conducted mock interviews. About 68 percent of participants received these services. EDSI was to provide job development: identifying jobs, spending time in the field talking with employers, discussing the benefits of hiring a RecycleForce participant (for example, they are prescreened and they have forklift certification and other certifications), and describing incentives to hire such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and the Federal Bonding Program.[28] ESDI was also to verify that participants who were hired were at their jobs at specified milestones (30 days, six months, nine months, and one year after they were hired).

In practice, RecycleForce did much of the job development and verification work. EDSI used an out-of-state call center to verify participants' employment and to provide retention services (determining how participants were doing in their jobs and whether they needed any assistance). The retention services did not work as planned because the phone center was unable to reach participants. RecycleForce suspected participants did not answer calls from an unrecognizable area code. RecycleForce ended its work with EDSI on June 28, 2013.

The end of the EDSI subgrant was part of a larger shift in RecycleForce's thinking about participants' employment after the transitional job. RecycleForce staff members said that

[27]About 100 participants were employed after their transitional jobs to complete work on a large project (demanufacturing recalled dehumidifiers). The work lasted for about a year.

[28]The Work Opportunity Tax Credit is a federal tax credit available to employers for hiring individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. The Federal Bonding Program provides Fidelity Bonds that guarantee honesty for "at-risk," hard-to-place job seekers during the first six months of employment.

participants were often unsuccessful in unsubsidized jobs, perhaps because they needed a "buffer" between RecycleForce and full-time, private-sector work. Many were not ready for full-time work, and others needed flexible schedules to attend to personal matters (such as court dates and drug testing). RecycleForce began focusing on temporary jobs as a way to ease participants into the private sector. The EDSI job developer, already knowledgeable about RecycleWorks, moved to the EDSI staffing organization (Ascend) to help RecycleWorks participants get such temporary placements.

Keys to Work, also a staffing agency, won a two-year Department of Public Works temporary staffing contract in 2013. Public Works used contractors to fill staffing gaps in its refuse-collection department, and on any given day up to 15 employees were out due to scheduled time off and sick days. According to Public Works, RecycleForce participants placed through Keys to Work were good temps because they had OSHA certification and other certifications. Temps were paid $9 per hour (with no benefits). If they had driver's licenses, they were eligible to apply for permanent jobs after six months of Public Works temporary work experience. As of September 2015 (nearly two years after the last person enrolled in the study), DPW had hired six participants full time. Ascend and Keys to Work also placed participants in catering jobs, warehouse jobs, and community centers (for example, as receptionists).

Circle, an original component of the RecycleForce program, was implemented inconsistently at New Life and Changed Life. At RecycleForce, participants take part in Circle on the clock. At Changed Life and New Life, Circle was part of unpaid development time and was infused with religious messages. The Circle facilitators also did not collaborate with peer mentors or case managers on discussion topics.

Finally, neither New Life nor Changed Life had the capacity to serve 100 participants. Ultimately, New Life served 64 participants and Changed Life worked with 65. Both partners also failed to permanently hire any program participants. RecycleForce ended its grant agreements with both in summer 2013.[29]

- **New, unplanned elements were implemented.**

In 2013, RecycleForce added a new case management process with the goal of preventing technical rule violations. Twice per month probation officers and staff members from Duvall Residential Center (a work-release facility) met at RecycleForce with case managers to review cases and address problems if needed. For example, if a probation officer had not been aware that a participant was not working for most of the week, these representatives would discuss how to get him back on track. Participants understood that the staff reported about them

[29]Participants who had not completed their transitional jobs with these subgrantees transferred to RecycleForce.

to their probation officers. Participants supervised by probation officers and Duvall work-release facility residents signed a release form to allow the probation officers and RecycleForce case managers to discuss their cases. Peer mentors reinforced the importance of these "joint staffings" to participants.[30]

- **RecycleForce would make changes in the future.**

RecycleForce intentionally allocated the majority of its ETJD grant funds to support participants (including money for transitional job wages, direct forms of work support such as bus passes, and drug screening), while devoting substantially less to case management.[31] Staff members said that an additional case manager would have helped them handle the many problems that participants faced and to interact with referral partners who needed to confirm that their probationers or parolees were following through on their work and job-search requirements. Staff members added that the participant-initiated approach to case management may not have been enough for the target population, given how many barriers to employment they faced.

- **Participants viewed the program favorably.**

Data from participant questionnaires, one-on-one interviews, and focus groups indicate that participants generally had positive experiences in the program. Among the 129 RecycleForce participants who completed the questionnaire, 84 percent viewed their relationships at work positively (see Figure 7.2). Seventy-three percent felt supported by their supervisors. Three-quarters indicated they were developing soft skills, and 77 percent felt better prepared for future employment.

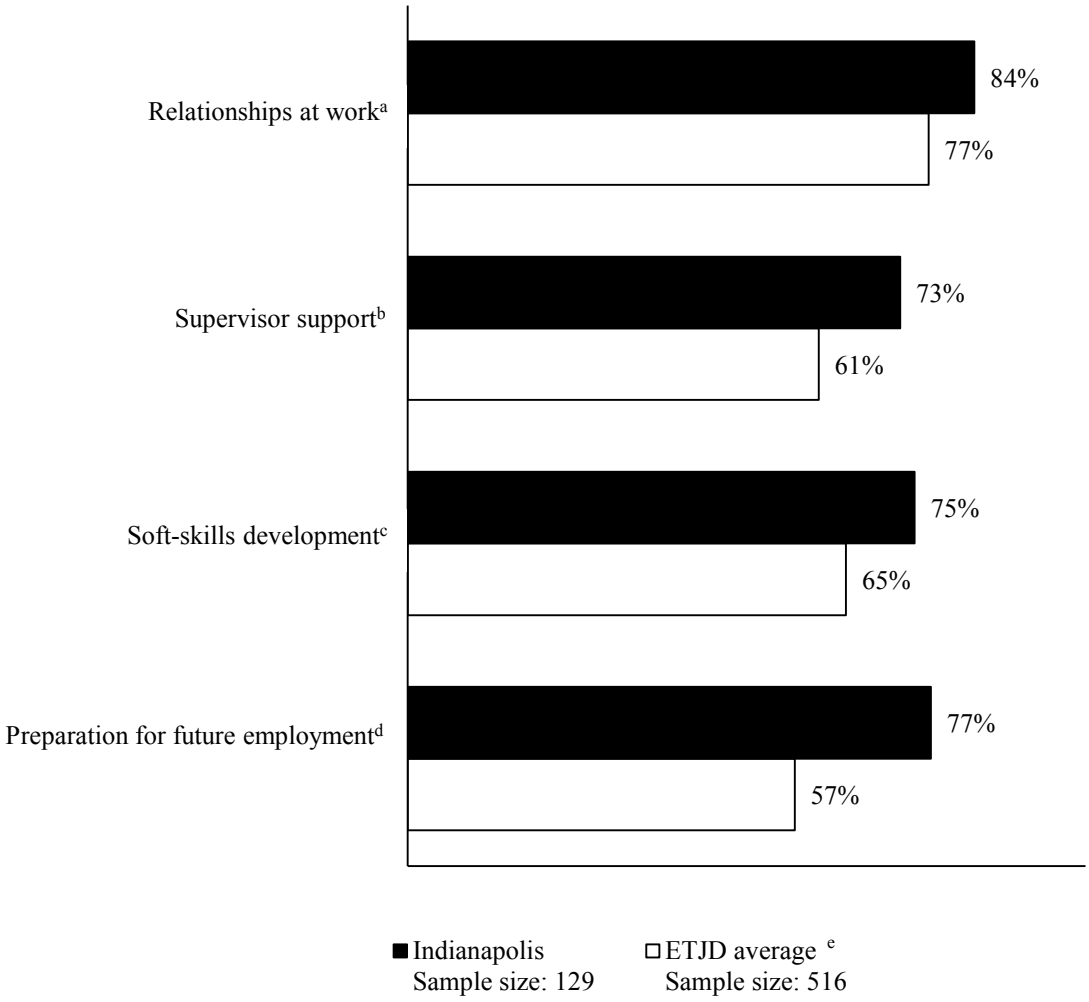
In eight in-depth interviews, participants generally revealed similar sentiments. Overall, participants reported positive relationships with staff members. One said, "They appreciate my hard work; it's like a family." Although help was available, some said that participants had to ask for it: "They all try to help you, but you have to ask for help, open your mouth." Participants appreciated and were encouraged by the fact that their supervisors shared similar backgrounds and experiences. As one said, "If he can make it, I can make it." And while they reported positive relationships with their peer mentors, they were aware of a hierarchy of supervisors and program participants; one said that supervisors sometimes disregarded the ideas of program participants, which he described as disheartening. Participants had very positive impressions of the RecycleForce leadership team and case managers, though they did not have much in general

[30]Peer mentors explained that "they're not watching you to nail you, they're watching you to keep you nailing."

[31]According to the program, $4.8 million of the $5.6 million grant "went to participants."

Figure 7.2

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



(continued)

Figure 7.2 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on the ETJD participant questionnaire.

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

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

[a]Based on agreement with the following statements: *I understand what is expected of me on the job*; *I know 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.

to say about case management. Participants did often mention the training and certifications they received from Managepoint; participants said that these would be useful in the job market. One said of his certifications, “I want my portfolio to look like a storybook.”

Participants said they were motivated to work as a result of the program. Some said that learning how to collaborate and work as part of a team were important skills they had learned in the transitional job. Some said they viewed themselves as leaders among their peers. Two described themselves as mentors to new program participants. Three of the eight participants interviewed hoped to be hired permanently at RecycleForce.

RecycleForce Program Impacts

This section describes the program's impacts on participation in program services, employment, recidivism, child support payments, and economic and personal well-being. Each table in this section presents the program group mean outcome, the control group mean outcome, and the difference between the two as the program impact. All estimates are regression-adjusted. Unless otherwise indicated, all results discussed in the text are statistically significant with $p < 0.10$.

Participation and Service Receipt Outcomes

As discussed above, in addition to transitional employment, RecycleForce provided support services to program participants such as case management and peer mentoring, employment and retention services, child support services such as debt compromise and driver's license reinstatement, and assistance paying for bus passes and required drug testing. Only the program group was offered services from RecycleForce, but control group members received an alternate services list following random assignment and may have sought and received services from other providers in the community. This section uses results from a survey administered an average of 14 months after random assignment to describe the program's impacts on participation and service receipt, compared with the "business-as-usual" condition of the control group.[32]

- **Program group members had substantially higher rates of service receipt than control group members in many areas including employment support, education and training, help with criminal justice and child support issues, and mentorship. The program had a smaller but still significant effect on the receipt of mental health assistance.**

Table 7.4 shows that program group members had substantially higher rates of service receipt than control group members in many areas. Program group members were significantly and substantially more likely to have received help finding or keeping a job: 93 percent of the program group and 63 percent of the control group reported receiving such assistance. This impact is reflected in all areas of employment support: program group members were significantly more likely than control group members to have received assistance with job searching, job readiness, and career planning (92 percent versus 62 percent) and more likely to have received help paying job-related transportation or equipment costs (63 percent versus 21 percent).

[32]Survey response rates were 80 percent in the program group and 77 percent in the control group. An analysis of nonresponse bias found no evidence that these differences in response rates biased the results of the impact analysis. See Appendix H.

Table 7.4

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

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Employment support				
Received help related to finding or keeping a job	93.0	62.5	30.5***	[25.9, 35.1]
Job search, job readiness, and career planning[a]	92.3	61.8	30.4***	[25.8, 35.1]
Paying for job-related transportation or equipment costs	63.1	21.3	41.8***	[36.5, 47.1]
Education and training				
Participated in education and training	65.2	30.7	34.5***	[29.0, 40.1]
ESL, ABE, or high school diploma or equivalent[b]	12.9	9.7	3.2	[-0.5, 6.9]
Postsecondary education leading to a degree	11.6	13.4	-1.8	[-5.7, 2.1]
Vocational training	55.8	13.4	42.4***	[37.4, 47.5]
Received high school diploma or equivalent	3.8	2.2	1.6	[-0.4, 3.6]
Earned professional license or certification (not including OSHA or forklift)[c]	24.3	5.4	18.9***	[14.9, 22.9]
Earned OSHA or forklift certification	32.4	4.5	27.9***	[23.6, 32.2]
Other support and services				
Received help related to past criminal convictions	76.8	36.9	40.0***	[34.6, 45.3]
Handling employer questions about criminal history	75.6	35.5	40.1***	[34.8, 45.5]
Legal issues related to convictions	43.9	15.5	28.4***	[23.3, 33.5]
Among those identified as noncustodial parents at enrollment:[d]				
Received help related to child support, visitation, parenting, or other family issues	64.1	20.0	44.1***	[36.6, 51.5]
Modifying child support debts or orders	50.8	10.8	40.1***	[33.2, 46.9]
Setting up visitation with child(ren)	26.1	6.9	19.2***	[13.2, 25.3]
Parenting or other family-related issues	38.7	12.8	26.0***	[18.9, 33.0]
Received advice or support from a staff member at an agency or organization	74.0	32.5	41.5***	[36.2, 46.8]

(continued)

Table 7.4 (continued)

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Received mentoring from a staff member at an agency or organization	65.0	23.6	41.3***	[36.1, 46.6]
Received mental health assistance	17.5	12.4	5.2**	[1.0, 9.3]
Sample size	401	400		

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 noncustodial parents at study enrollment (program group = 205; control group = 193; total = 398).

Providing vocational training and certifications, including OSHA and forklift certification, was an explicit part of the RecycleForce program model. Not surprisingly, the table shows that program group members were more than twice as likely as control group members to have participated in education and training (65 percent versus 31 percent). This statistically significant difference is largely the result of program group members' receipt of vocational training, which the program increased from 13 percent in the control group to 56 percent in the program group. As expected, more program group participants received OSHA or forklift certifications (32 percent) than control group members (5 percent). Likewise, program group members were significantly more likely to report having received other professional licenses or certifications: 24 percent in the program group and 5 percent in the control group. In addition to OSHA and forklift, program group members also commonly reported receiving certifications in HazMat (handling hazardous materials). Program group members were not significantly more likely than control group members to have engaged in secondary or

postsecondary education, which is not surprising since basic and postsecondary education were not major parts of the program model.

Program group members were significantly more likely than control group members to report receiving services in areas related to criminal justice and child support as well. Because RecycleForce targeted formerly incarcerated individuals, it is not surprising that many program group participants received help related to criminal convictions (77 percent of program group members compared with 37 percent of the control group). RecycleForce also engaged a consultant to assist participants with child support-related services. A majority of program group members identified as noncustodial parents at enrollment — 64 percent — reported that they received help related to child support, visitation, parenting, or other family issues, compared with only 20 percent of the control group noncustodial parents. Program group noncustodial parents were significantly more likely than those in the control group to have received help with child support modifications, setting up visitation, and other parenting issues. The RecycleForce child support consultant also helped participants reinstate licenses that had been suspended for nonpayment of child support, which could directly affect their ability to find and keep jobs (not shown in the table).

Finally, Table 7.4 shows that survey respondents in the program group were significantly more likely than those in the control group to report having received other support services from program staff members. A large proportion — 74 percent — of program group members reported receiving advice or support from a staff member compared with about 33 percent of the control group, and 65 percent of program group members reported receiving mentorship from a staff member compared with only 24 percent of the control group. These increases are in line with a program model in which peer mentors provided the majority of supervision. Program group members were significantly more likely to receive mental health services than control group members, although only a small fraction received such services in either group: almost 18 percent in the program group and 12 percent in the control group. These small fractions are not surprising, as mental health services were not a core part of the RecycleForce program model.

Employment and Earnings Outcomes

This section presents RecycleForce's 12-month impacts on employment and earnings using data from the National Directory of New Hires, supplemented by data from a survey of study participants. The survey was administered to participants just under 14 months after random assignment, on average. Using data from the National Directory of New Hires it is possible to precisely describe employment and earnings in jobs that are reported to the unemployment insurance system. The survey provides participant-reported information on jobs, whether reported to unemployment insurance or not, as well as richer information on job

characteristics. Chapter 1 of this report provides a fuller description of the differences between these two sources of data.

- **Program group members had higher rates of employment and earnings in unemployment insurance-covered jobs. Much of this impact is likely to be from subsidized employment, as program group earnings from transitional employment are equivalent to the entire difference in earnings between program and control group members.**

Table 7.5 and Figure 7.3 present RecycleForce's impacts on employment, earnings, and job characteristics. The top panel of Table 7.5 shows one-year impacts estimated using unemployment insurance data, while the bottom panel shows impacts based on survey data. A majority of control group members — 62 percent — worked in an unemployment insurance-covered job during the 12 months after random assignment. However, program group members were even more likely to have worked during this time, with more than 96 percent having had unemployment insurance-covered employment, which includes employment in the transitional job. Program group members were also employed in almost twice as many quarters as control group members (an average of 2.5 quarters versus 1.3 quarters) and were more than twice as likely to have been employed in all four quarters (22 percent versus 8 percent). These differences are all statistically significant.

Program group members earned more than twice as much as control group members, on average: Program group members earned an average of $6,034 while control group members earned an average of $2,830. However, the entire difference in earnings between the program and control groups can be accounted for by earnings in transitional employment, an average of $3,260.

The last two rows in the top panel of Table 7.5 present employment during the first quarter of Year 2, by which time most program group members should have completed their transitional jobs. Although there is still a large and statistically significant impact on employment during this quarter (13 percentage points), much of this impact is probably explained by the fact that more than 9 percent of program group members were still in transitional jobs.[33] It is therefore unclear from these results whether the program's impact on employment will persist

[33]This last figure is based on data from DOL's management information system, which reports subsidized employment only. It does not imply that any participants had more than 12 months of transitional employment. Some program group members may have left and reentered employment due to incarceration or for other reasons.

Table 7.5

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

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Primary outcomes *(based on administrative data)*				
Employment[a] (%)	96.4	62.0	34.4***	[31.0, 38.2]
ETJD subsidized employment (%)	99.1	--		
Number of quarters employed	2.5	1.3	1.2***	[1.1, 1.3]
Average quarterly employment (%)	62.5	32.4	30.1***	[27.1, 33.1]
Employment in all quarters (%)	21.9	8.3	13.6***	[10.2, 17.1]
Total earnings ($)	6,034	2,830	3,204***	[2,747, 3,662]
ETJD subsidized earnings ($)	3,260	--		
Total earnings (%)				
$5,000 or more	45.3	17.6	27.6***	[23.2, 32.1]
$7,500 or more	31.6	12.3	19.3***	[15.2, 23.3]
$10,000 or more	19.4	8.2	11.1***	[7.7, 14.5]
Employment in the first quarter of Year 2	44.1	30.8	13.3***	[8.3, 18.3]
ETJD subsidized employment in the first quarter of Year 2	9.3	--		
Sample size[b]	500	496		
Self-reported outcomes *(based on survey data)*				
Ever employed in Year 1 (%)	83.9	67.0	16.9***	[11.9, 21.9]
Currently employed (%)	51.4	38.5	12.9***	[7.2, 18.6]
Currently employed in transitional job program (%)	13.4	0.3	13.1***	[10.2, 15.9]
Type of employment (%)				
Not currently employed	50.0	64.4	-14.4***	[-20.2, -8.7]
Permanent	28.1	19.2	9.0***	[4.0, 14.0]
Temporary, including day labor and odd jobs	20.8	16.2	4.7*	[0.0, 9.3]
Other	1.0	0.2	0.8	[-0.1, 1.8]

(continued)

Table 7.5 (continued)

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Among those currently employed:[c]				
Hours worked per week	38.7	36.0	2.7	
Hourly wage ($)	10.4	9.5	0.9	
Hours worked per week (%)				
More than 20 hours	47.2	33.9	13.3***	[7.6, 18.9]
More than 34 hours	39.9	25.7	14.1***	[8.8, 19.5]
Hourly wage (%)				
More than $8.00	40.1	24.9	15.2***	[9.7, 20.6]
More than $10.00	18.2	7.0	11.3***	[7.4, 15.1]
Sample size	401	400		

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

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

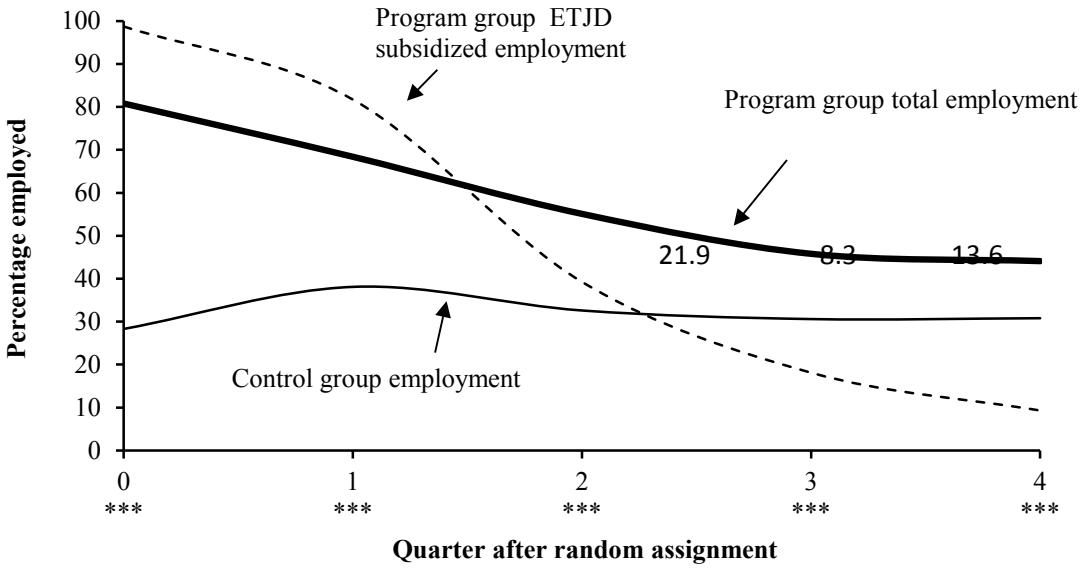
after all program group members have left their transitional jobs.[34] Figure 7.3 shows earnings and employment by quarter. While program group earnings and employment exceed control group earnings and employment by a significant margin in each quarter, the difference between the two appears to be shrinking over time, as the proportion of program group members working in transitional jobs is declining (shown as the dashed line in Figure 7.3). It is not clear whether a substantial difference will remain in Quarter 5.

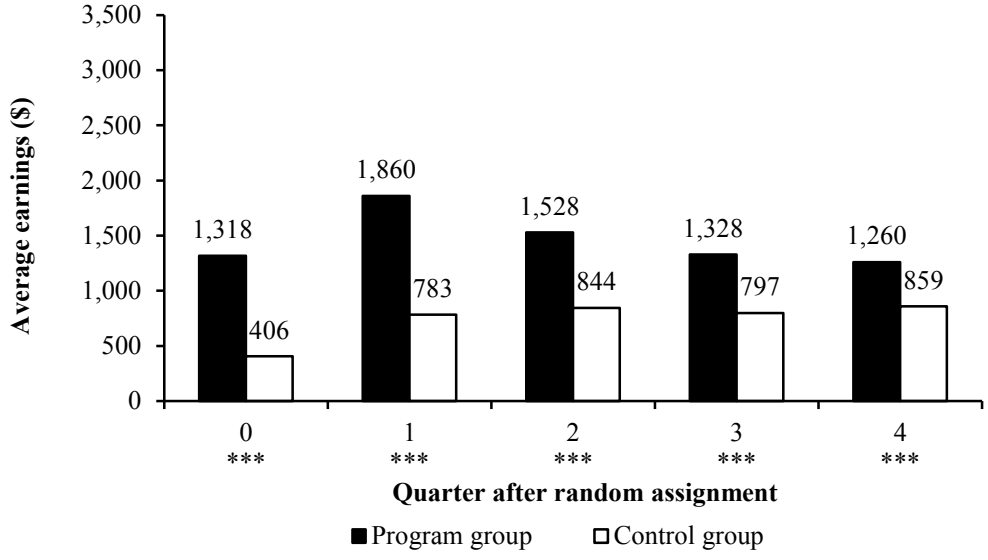
The bottom panel of Table 7.5 shows that positive and statistically significant impacts on employment outcomes were also observed in survey data, although the estimated impacts

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

Figure 7.3

Employment and Earnings Over Time: *Indianapolis*





(continued)

Figure 7.3 (continued)

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

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

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

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

Although the Indiana ETJD program reported ETJD subsidized employment and earnings to the unemployment insurance system, ETJD subsidized employment rates among program group members based on payroll records appeared higher than total employment reported in unemployment insurance wage records during the quarter of random assignment. It is possible that timing differences in reporting and payroll periods contributed to this discrepancy.

were somewhat smaller than similar impacts estimated from unemployment insurance data. In particular, the second row of the bottom panel shows the impact on current employment at the time of the survey, which should be comparable to the impact on employment in the first quarter of Year 2 estimated from unemployment insurance data. These two impacts are close to the same size, although the proportion employed in both the program and control groups are higher in the survey data, probably because the survey captures types of employment not recorded in unemployment insurance data.[35]

The outcomes reported at the bottom of Table 7.5 demonstrate that survey respondents in the program group worked more hours per week and earned higher hourly wages than respondents in the control group. Among those employed at the time of the survey, program group members worked an average of 39 hours per week, compared with 36 for the control group, and earned an average wage of $10.40 per hour, compared with $9.50 in the control group.[36] The previous row in Table 7.5 confirms that at the time of the survey, some program group members were in transitional jobs, probably participants who returned to transitional jobs after temporarily leaving the program for a variety of reasons, including incarceration.

As described above, a number of operational changes occurred in RecycleForce during the second year of program operations, so it is possible that the program's impacts for those

[35]One concern about using unemployment insurance data to measure employment outcomes is that an impact might be observed if the program steered participants into unemployment insurance-covered jobs, even if the program had no impact on the total number of employed participants. The fact that the impacts shown in unemployment insurance and survey data are comparable alleviates this concern.

[36]Because the group of study participants who were employed at the time of the survey is endogenously defined (that is, membership in this group could be affected by the intervention), these differences are not tested for statistical significance.

enrolled later could differ from those who enrolled earlier. The research team therefore assessed whether RecycleForce's impacts on employment for those enrolled during the first year of random assignment (the "first-year cohort") were different from the impacts for those enrolled during the second year (the "second-year cohort"). These results are presented in full in Appendix Table F.2. In brief, the program's impacts on total earnings and average quarterly employment were both significantly larger for the first-year cohort. The impact on earnings was more than 50 percent larger for the first-year cohort, while the impact on average quarterly employment was about a third larger. There were no significant differences between cohorts for employment during the first year or employment during the first quarter of Year 2.

Criminal Justice Outcomes

RecycleForce targeted formerly incarcerated individuals who had been released within the previous four months, aiming to help them successfully reenter society by providing paid employment and training, along with supportive services. The underlying theory of programs like RecycleForce is that employment could reduce the incentive to commit crimes, and may also connect the formerly incarcerated to more positive social networks and daily routines, helping to ease their transition into the community after leaving prison.

- **There are some small impacts on criminal justice outcomes in the first year. Program group members were somewhat less likely to be convicted of a felony than control group members. In the first six months after random assignment, when many program group members would still have been engaged in the program, there are significant impacts on arrests, convictions, and admissions to prison for new crimes.**

Table 7.6 presents RecycleForce's impacts on measures of recidivism for the 12-month follow-up period. The data provide a comprehensive picture of convictions and incarcerations in both prisons and jails. The top panel in Table 7.6, which is based on criminal justice system administrative data on arrests and convictions in jails and prisons, shows that recidivism rates were fairly high for both the program and control groups — as would be expected for a sample of individuals at moderate to high risk of reoffending — and that the program had no statistically significant effect on most measures of recidivism, including the rates of arrests, incarcerations, or prison admissions, or total days incarcerated. There was also no overall impact on the number of new convictions. There was one statistically significant difference: Program group members were somewhat less likely to have been convicted of a felony than control group members (4 percent compared with almost 10 percent). However, taken as a whole, the evidence from administrative measures in Table 7.6 suggests little to no impact on recidivism during the first year.

Table 7.6

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

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Primary outcomes *(based on administrative data)*				
Arrested[a] (%)	20.1	23.9	-3.8	[-8.8, 1.2]
Convicted of a crime[b] (%)	13.9	16.1	-2.2	[-6.5, 2.1]
Convicted of a felony	3.9	9.5	-5.6***	[-8.5, -2.6]
Convicted of a misdemeanor	7.6	6.5	1.1	[-2.1, 4.2]
Convicted of a violent crime (%)	2.5	2.1	0.4	[-1.4, 2.3]
Incarcerated (%)	49.8	52.6	-2.7	[-7.9, 2.4]
Incarcerated in jail	48.2	50.6	-2.4	[-7.5, 2.8]
Incarcerated in prison	15.8	19.5	-3.8	[-7.8, 0.2]
Prison admission reason (%)				
Admitted to prison for a new crime	2.1	2.9	-0.8	[-2.4, 0.9]
Admitted to prison for a parole or probation violation	13.9	16.2	-2.4	[-6.1, 1.4]
Total days incarcerated	47.0	55.5	-8.5	[-17.8, 0.9]
Jail	27.8	33.2	-5.4	[-11.7, 0.8]
Prison	19.2	22.2	-3.1	[-8.7, 2.6]
Arrested, convicted, or admitted to jail or prison (%)	50.8	54.6	-3.8	[-8.9, 1.4]
Months 1 to 6	33.2	37.2	-4.0	[-9.0, 0.9]
Months 7 to 12	35.5	36.4	-0.9	[-5.9, 4.1]
Sample size	501	497		
Self-reported outcomes *(based on survey data)*				
On parole or probation (%)	81.2	77.2	4.0	[-0.7, 8.7]
Received a technical violation of parole or probation (%)	28.4	30.4	-2.0	[-7.3, 3.4]
Received a sanction for a technical parole violation (%)	23.2	25.8	-2.6	[-7.7, 2.5]
Score on personal irresponsibility scale[c] *(range of 10 to 50, where higher scores indicate higher levels of personal irresponsibility)*	22.5	22.9	-0.3	[-1.1, 0.4]
Sample size	401	400		

(continued)

Table 7.6 (continued)

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. Estimates of arrest and conviction are weighted by age, lifetime months in prison prior to random assignment, and program-versus-control ratios.

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

[a]Arrest and conviction measures exclude sample members for whom no records could be retrieved due to limitations of the criminal justice data. Data are weighted as noted above to account for these missing records.

[b]The dates for conviction measures shown in this table are set equal to the arrest dates; actual conviction dates were unavailable. This measure therefore undercounts the number of convictions resulting from arrests that occurred in the year after random assignment, as prosecutions of some of these arrests had not yet resulted in dispositions by the date on which the data were obtained.

[c]This scale is based on responses to six scale questions in the Texas Christian University Criminal Thinking Scales, which assess how strongly a respondent agrees or disagrees with statements about having been in jail or prison (*You were locked up because you had a run of bad luck*; *The real reason you were locked up is because of your race*; *Nothing you do is going to make a difference in the way you are treated*; *You are not to blame for everything you have done*; *Laws are just a way to keep poor people down*; and *You may have committed crimes, but your environment is to blame*). Responses of "strongly disagree" were coded as 1, "disagree" as 2, "neither agree nor disagree" as 3, "agree" as 4, and "strongly agree" as 5. If a respondent answered at least three questions, a sum was then produced using the values of all nonmissing items. The sum was divided by the number of items included, and this average was multiplied by 10.

RecycleForce hypothesized that keeping participants in transitional employment would keep them out of jail by removing opportunities to reoffend, generating an impact on criminal justice outcomes during the transitional employment period — that is, during the first several months after random assignment. Table 7.7 shows impacts on criminal justice outcomes broken down by time period, separating the impacts that occurred in the first six months after random assignment from those in the subsequent six months. It reveals there are in fact significant impacts on arrests, convictions, and incarcerations for new crimes during the first six months after random assignment, which suggests that the program had its intended effect during the time period when many participants were active in the program. These impacts largely disappear during months 7 through 12, although during this period program group members were still less likely than their control group counterparts to be convicted of a felony, to be admitted to prison for a parole or probation violation, or to be incarcerated in prison.

To supplement the administrative data measures of recidivism, the 12-month survey asked respondents to report their personal experiences with parole violations, and assessed respondents' personal irresponsibility using a scale constructed from six questions in the Texas Christian University Criminal Thinking Scales. The bottom panel of Table 7.6 shows that RecycleForce had no significant effect on any of these outcomes.

Table 7.7

One-Year Impacts on Criminal Justice Outcomes, by Follow-Up Time Period: *Indianapolis*

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Months 1 to 6				
Arrested[a] (%)	9.2	15.1	-5.8**	[-9.7, -1.9]
Convicted of a crime[b] (%)	6.0	10.8	-4.8**	[-8.1, -1.4]
Convicted of a felony	2.6	6.2	-3.6**	[-6.1, -1.1]
Convicted of a misdemeanor	2.8	4.6	-1.9	[-4.2, 0.4]
Convicted of a violent crime (%)	0.3	1.3	-1.0	[-2.1, 0.1]
Incarcerated (%)	32.2	36.2	-4.0	[-9, 0.9]
Incarcerated in jail	31.6	34.8	-3.2	[-8.1, 1.7]
Incarcerated in prison	8.1	8.8	-0.7	[-3.6, 2.2]
Prison admission reason (%)				
Admitted to prison for a new crime	0.4	1.6	-1.3**	[-2.3, -0.2]
Admitted to prison for a parole or probation violation	7.5	6.9	0.6	[-2.1, 3.3]
Total days incarcerated	15.2	19.2	-4.0*	[-7.9, -0.2]
Jail	10.4	13.3	-2.9	[-5.8, 0.1]
Prison	4.8	5.9	-1.2	[-3.3, 1]
Arrested, convicted, or admitted to jail or prison (%)	33.2	37.2	-4.0	[-9, 0.9]

(continued)

- **There is little evidence that the program had different impacts on recidivism for those at higher or lower risk of recidivism.**

Research has shown that best practices in reducing recidivism are based on the principle of providing services appropriate to an individual's needs and risk of recidivism.[37] Specifically, intensive services should not be provided to people at low risk of recidivism; instead they

[37]Petersilia (2004); Solomon et al. (2008).

Table 7.7 (continued)

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Months 7 to 12				
Arrested[a] (%)	12.3	11.2	1.1	[-2.9, 5]
Convicted of a crime[b] (%)	8.2	6.4	1.7	[-1.5, 4.9]
Convicted of a felony	1.4	3.6	-2.3**	[-4.1, -0.4]
Convicted of a misdemeanor	2.8	4.2	-1.4	[-3.7, 0.8]
Convicted of a violent crime	2.2	0.8	1.5	[0, 3]
Incarcerated (%)	34.1	33.5	0.6	[-4.3, 5.6]
Incarcerated in jail	29.9	28.2	1.7	[-3.1, 6.4]
Incarcerated in prison	8.3	11.5	-3.2*	[-6.4, 0]
Prison admission reason (%)				
Admitted to prison for a new crime	1.8	1.4	0.3	[-1, 1.6]
Admitted to prison for a parole or probation violation	6.6	9.9	-3.3*	[-6.2, -0.4]
Total days incarcerated	31.8	36.3	-4.5	[-11.1, 2.2]
Jail	17.4	19.9	-2.5	[-6.9, 1.8]
Prison	14.4	16.3	-1.9	[-6.3, 2.5]
Arrested, convicted, or admitted to jail or prison (%)	35.5	36.4	-0.9	[-5.9, 4.1]
Sample size	501	497		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on criminal justice data.

NOTES: Results in this table are regression-adjusted, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics. Estimates of arrest and conviction are weighted by age, lifetime months in prison prior to random assignment, and program-versus-control ratios.

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

[a]Arrest and conviction measures exclude sample members for whom no records could be retrieved due to limitations of the criminal justice data. Data are weighted as noted above to account for these missing records.

[b]The dates for conviction measures shown in this table are set equal to the arrest dates; actual conviction dates were unavailable. This measure therefore undercounts the number of convictions resulting from arrests that occurred in the six months or year after random assignment, as prosecutions of some of these arrests had not yet resulted in dispositions by the date on which the data were obtained.

should be reserved for people assessed to be at higher risk of recidivism using validated risk-assessment tools (such as the Indiana Risk Assessment System described earlier). Prior rigorous research supports the risk-need-responsivity guidelines and has found that transitional jobs programs are more effective at reducing recidivism among those who are at a higher risk of recidivism.[38] Study participants were categorized as being at lower, medium, and higher risk of recidivism using statistical modeling based on their baseline characteristics and criminal histories.[39] Table 7.8 compares the program's impact on several criminal justice outcomes for lower- and moderate-risk participants with its impact for higher-risk participants. The table suggests that the impacts on criminal justice outcomes were not significantly different between risk subgroups. The impacts on employment and earnings, however, were significantly different: The impacts on total earnings in the first year after random assignment and on average quarterly employment were larger among the higher-risk group than they were among the lower- and moderate-risk group.

- **There is little evidence that participants who entered the program at different times experienced different criminal justice impacts.**

The research team explored whether the program had a different impact on criminal justice outcomes for the first-year cohort than it did for the second-year cohort. There were no such statistically significant differences in impacts on arrests, incarcerations in jail, or incarcerations in prison. However, the program's impact on convictions was significantly larger for the first-year cohort than the second-year cohort. See Appendix Table F.2 for detailed findings.

Child Support and Family Relations Outcomes

Although the program did not explicitly target them, just over half of program participants were noncustodial parents and more than 25 percent of all participants had current child support orders. As described above, to mitigate the potentially negative impact that child support enforcement actions could have on employment prospects and earnings, RecycleForce engaged a former employee of the child support agency as a consultant to review current orders for potential modification, help with paperwork to reduce debt to $1 (per RecycleForce's agreement with the child support agency), and help with driver's license reinstatement. This program component appears to have been well implemented, and according to the management information system, 35 percent of participants in the program group (and 70 percent of those who were noncustodial parents) received child support assistance through RecycleForce.

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

[39]For more information on the analytic methods used to define risk of recidivism, please see Appendix J.

Table 7.8

One-Year Impacts on Criminal Justice and Employment Outcomes, by Recidivism Risk: *Indianapolis*

	Lower Risk				Higher Risk				
Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval	Difference Between Subgroup Impacts[a]
Criminal justice (%)									
Arrested	14.9	17.1	-2.2	[-7.8, 3.4]	29.2	36.2	-7.0	[-16.9, 2.9]	
Convicted of a crime	9.5	12.2	-2.8	[-7.5, 2.0]	21.7	22.5	-0.8	[-9.6, 8.0]	
Convicted of a violent crime	3.1	1.0	2.1	[0.0, 4.3]	1.7	3.8	-2.1	[-5.7, 1.4]	†
Incarcerated	45.5	47.1	-1.6	[-7.6, 4.4]	62.8	68.2	-5.4	[-15.5, 4.7]	
Arrested, convicted, or admitted to jail or prison	46.0	49.1	-3.2	[-9.2, 2.9]	65.5	70.3	-4.8	[-14.7, 5.2]	
Months 1 to 6	28.4	33.2	-4.8	[-10.4, 0.8]	47.4	49.0	-1.7	[-12.3, 9.0]	
Months 7 to 12	31.8	30.7	1.1	[-4.5, 6.7]	46.6	52.8	-6.2	[-17.1, 4.7]	
Employment and earnings									
Employment[b] (%)	96.1	63.1	33.0***	[0.3, 0.4]	98.4	57.2	41.2***	[0.3, 0.5]	
ETJD subsidized employment (%)	99.4	--			98.4	--			
Total earnings ($)	5,808	2,921	2,886 ***	[2,350, 3,421]	6,765	2,517	4,248***	[3,364, 5,132]	††
Average quarterly employment (%)	58.2	32.6	25.6***	[22.2, 29.1]	76.2	31.4	44.8***	[38.7, 51.0]	†††
Employment in the first quarter of Year 2 (%)	0.4	0.3	0.1***	[0.1, 0.2]	0.4	0.3	0.1**	[0, 0.2]	
Sample size	379	366			122	131			

(continued)

Table 7.8 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on criminal justice data and 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.
See Appendix J for details on how the recidivism risk subgroups were defined.
[a]When comparing impacts between two subgroups, an H-statistic is generated. The H-statistic is used to assess whether the difference in impacts between the subgroups is statistically significant. Statistically significant differences across subgroups are indicated as: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.
[b]Employment rates and earnings include both ETJD subsidized jobs and all other jobs covered by unemployment insurance.

- **Program group noncustodial parents were substantially more likely to have paid child support than those in the control group, paid for more months, and paid a larger average amount.**

The top panel in Table 7.9 presents child support outcomes, measured using child support agency administrative data, for program and control group members who were noncustodial parents. The top row indicates that program group members were substantially and significantly more likely to have paid any child support during the 12-month follow-up period: Almost 45 percent of program group noncustodial parents paid at least some support, compared with about 27 percent of noncustodial parents in the control group. Noncustodial parents in the program group also made their first payments almost three months earlier, on average, than those in the control group. Program group noncustodial parents paid more than twice as many months of support as those in the control group (three months versus a little over one month) and paid more than double the dollar amount ($734 in the program group and $351 in the control group).

Figure 7.4 shows that a significant impact persists through the third quarter after random assignment (the last quarter for which administrative data are available) on both the percentage paying child support and the average amount paid. It is too early to determine whether the impact will persist after all participants have left their transitional jobs. Figure 7.4 does reveal that the impact on the percentage paying child support declined in Quarter 3, though the impact on the average amount paid did not. This pattern of findings may be related to the fact that while debt payments were reduced to $1 per pay period while participants were in their transitional jobs, they lost this benefit when they left the program.

Outcomes measured using the 12-month follow-up survey, reported in the second panel of Table 7.9, tell a more nuanced story. Program group members were significantly less likely

Table 7.9

One-Year Impacts on Child Support and Family Relations Among Those Identified as Noncustodial Parents at Enrollment: *Indianapolis*

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Primary outcomes *(based on administrative data)*				
Paid any formal child support[a] (%)	44.7	27.4	17.3***	[10.9, 23.7]
Among those who paid formal child support:				
Months from random assignment to first payment[b]	2.2	5.0	-2.8	
Months of formal child support paid	2.9	1.2	1.7***	[1.2, 2.1]
Amount of formal child support paid ($)	734	351	383***	[225, 542]
Sample size	254	250		
Self-reported outcomes (%) *(based on survey data)*				
Currently a noncustodial parent of a minor-age child	66.3	78.1	-11.8**	[-19.4, -4.2]
Provided informal cash support or noncash support in the past month	43.1	57.7	-14.6***	[-23.1, -6.1]
Informal cash support	36.1	45.3	-9.2*	[-17.6, -0.8]
Noncash support	39.8	55.2	-15.4***	[-23.8, -7.0]
Owing child support affects willingness to take jobs, among those required to pay child support[c]	20.8	30.4	-9.5	
Incarcerated for not paying child support	0.4	0.6	-0.1	[-1.3, 1.1]
Among those with minor-age children:[d]				
Frequency of contact with focal child in the past 3 months				
Every day or nearly every day	26.9	26.5	0.4	
A few times per week	18.7	21.7	-3.0	
A few times per month	11.7	12.8	-1.1	
Once or twice	4.7	5.6	-0.9	
Not at all	38.1	33.4	4.7	
Sample size	205	193		

(continued)

Table 7.9 (continued)

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

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

to report that they provided informal support than control group members: 58 percent of control group members provided either cash or noncash support, compared with only 43 percent of program group members. The increase in formal child support payments induced by the program appears to have come at the expense of informal payments.

It is more difficult to explain why program group members are significantly less likely to have reported *having* a child but not custody than control group members.[40] It is possible that this finding reflects improved family situations among program group members (for example, regaining custody of children). Members of the program group did not have contact with their "focal children" markedly more or less often than control group members, however, which tends not to support that theory.[41] It is possible that this difference in the rate of reporting having children explains part of the difference in informal support described in the last paragraph, since the analysis assumed that respondents without children provided no informal support.

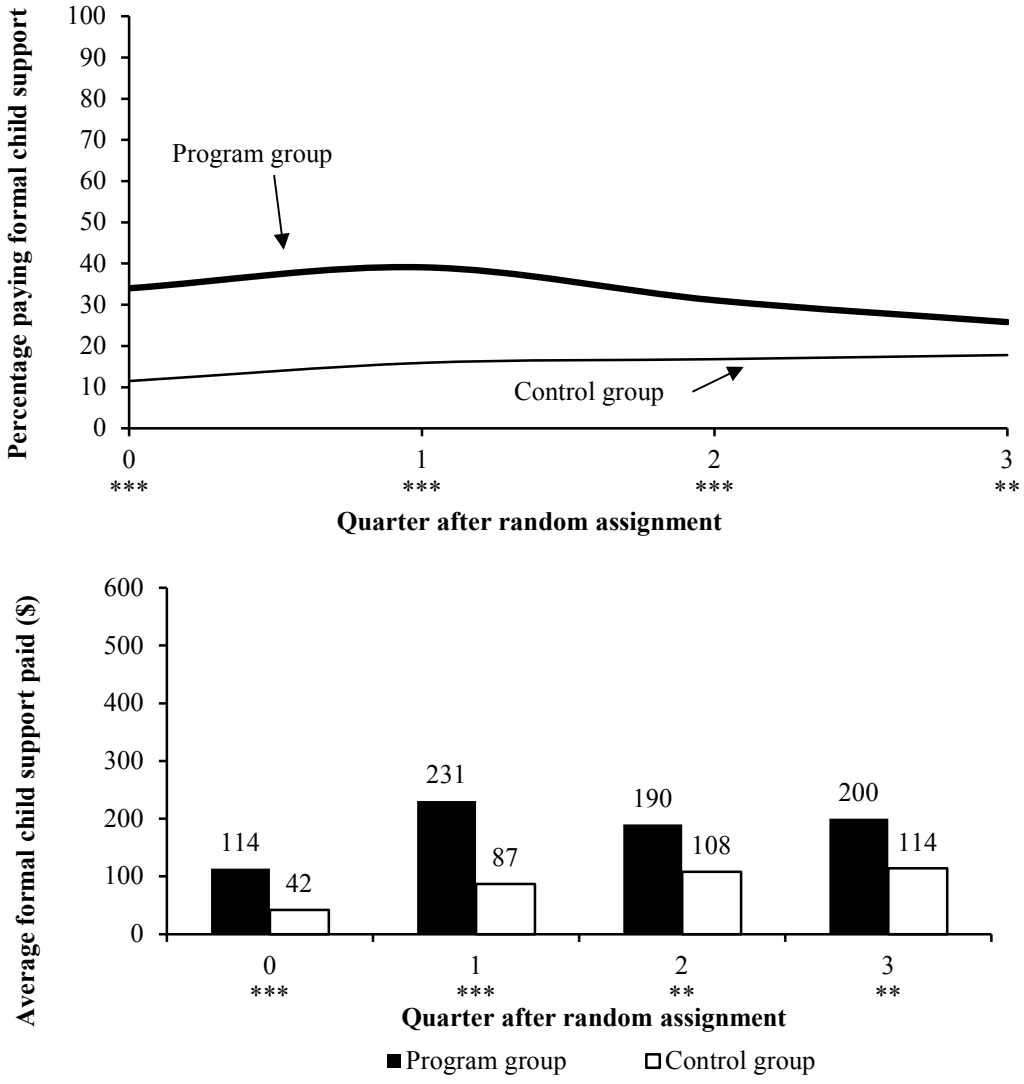
A test of differences in child support impacts by cohort (first-year cohort versus second-year cohort) yielded no statistically significant findings (see Appendix Table F.2).

[40]In a call on January 15, 2016, RecycleForce program staff members suggested that program group members might have declined to report children in an attempt to mislead surveyors and avoid child support.

[41]While some children would be expected to have reached adulthood over the course of the study, it is hard to explain why that would occur at different rates between the program and control groups.

Figure 7.4

Formal Child Support Payments Over Time: *Indianapolis*



(continued)

Figure 7.4 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on child support agency data.

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

Economic and Personal Well-Being Outcomes

A couple of recent studies have shown, perhaps unsurprisingly, that former prisoners are at high risk of experiencing economic hardship and of suffering from health problems, including both mental and physical conditions.[42] RecycleForce could have affected outcomes in these areas indirectly, by increasing employment, and directly through support services such as advice, mentorship, mental health assistance, and other forms of support provided by case managers.

- **The program resulted in few measurable improvements in economic and personal well-being.**

Table 7.10 shows that despite a large impact on receipt of services such as mentorship and the large short-term impact on employment, there were few differences between the program and control groups in self-reported personal well-being. RecycleForce helped program group members sign up for health insurance on the Affordable Care Act exchange, and through this mechanism the program significantly increased the proportion of participants who had health insurance coverage: 38 percent of program group members and 29 percent of control group members reported having any type of health insurance, and 15 percent of program group members and 9 percent of control group members reported having employer-provided health insurance.[43]

The RecycleForce program had no significant impact on the four measures of financial insufficiency reported in Table 7.10. Likewise, it had no significant effect on food insufficiency, being homeless or living in temporary or emergency housing, health, or psychological distress.

[42]Wester and Pettit (2010); Mallik-Kane and Visher (2008).

[43]Due to the large number of tests reported in Table 7.8 and the absence of a clear pattern of impacts, this finding should be interpreted with caution.

Table 7.10

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

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Ninety Percent Confidence Interval
Experienced a financial shortfall in the past 12 months	53.4	55.7	-2.2	[-8.0, 3.6]
Could not pay rent or mortgage	38.2	40.2	-2.0	[-7.8, 3.7]
Evicted from home or apartment	9.2	11.2	-2.0	[-5.6, 1.6]
Utility or phone service disconnected	30.4	34.9	-4.5	[-10.0, 0.9]
Could not afford prescription medicine	26.1	23.7	2.3	[-2.7, 7.3]
Had insufficient food in the past month[a]	16.2	20.5	-4.3	[-8.8, 0.3]
Housing in the past month				
Rented or owned own apartment or room	27.4	21.3	6.1**	[1.1, 11.0]
Lived with family or friends[b]	46.3	48.8	-2.5	[-8.4, 3.4]
Homeless or lived in emergency or temporary housing	3.6	4.2	-0.6	[-2.9, 1.7]
Incarcerated, on work release, or living in a halfway house	21.8	25.1	-3.3	[-8.2, 1.6]
Other	0.9	0.6	0.3	[-0.7, 1.3]
Is currently in good, very good, or excellent health	78.5	77.8	0.7	[-4.1, 5.5]
Had health insurance coverage in the past month	38.0	29.4	8.6***	[3.2, 14.1]
Health coverage was employer-based	14.9	8.6	6.3***	[2.5, 10.1]
Experienced serious psychological distress in the past month[c]	13.3	15.2	-1.9	[-6.0, 2.2]
Sample size	401	400		

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]Respondents who were incarcerated in the month before the survey are coded as not having experienced food insufficiency. This situation applies to 19 percent of program group respondents and 22 percent of control group respondents.
[b]Includes those who lived with friends or family and paid rent and those who lived with friends or family without paying rent.
[c]A score of 13 or higher on the Kessler-6 (K-6) scale is used here to define serious psychological distress. The K-6 assesses how often during the past month a respondent felt so sad that nothing could cheer him or her up; nervous; restless or fidgety; hopeless; that everything was an effort; or worthless. As a result of minor differences between the scale used to administer the K-6 in the ETJD 12-month survey and the standard K-6 scale, the percentages presented in this table may slightly underestimate the incidence of serious psychological distress among the ETJD sample.

Conclusion

RecycleForce aimed to help formerly incarcerated individuals learn skills and appropriate workplace behaviors that would lead to permanent employment, and aimed to help them reintegrate into the community. It was successful at engaging participants in program services. All participants held transitional jobs, and nearly all participated in education and job training. A large majority participated in workforce-preparation activities and received help related to past criminal convictions. Participant questionnaires, focus groups, and in-depth discussions revealed largely uniform and positive assessments of the program. However, after four months in the program, most participants had not found unsubsidized jobs or were deemed unready for unsubsidized employment. The average participant spent more than five months in the program. Staff members noted that individuals with multiple barriers to employment could benefit from more structured case management than the program's informal, participant-initiated approach provided.

Half of the study participants in Indianapolis were noncustodial parents, and over 70 percent of those noncustodial parents in the program group received child support assistance thanks to a relationship that RecycleForce established with the child support enforcement agency. Many noncustodial parents entered the program with large monthly debt payments in addition to their current support payments; both current and debt payments reduced the earnings they had available for other purposes (for example, probation fees or housing). Many also had had their driver's licenses suspended for nonpayment, which compromised their ability to commute to work. The child support consultant worked with participants to reach compromises on their debts and reinstate their licenses.

RecycleForce also built relationships with a variety of criminal justice partners, from which it ultimately had a steady stream of referrals. It established new partnerships with Marion County probation officers, Indianapolis Parole District 3, Duvall Residential Center, and Marion County Reentry Court. This strong referral network enabled RecycleForce to meet its grant enrollment target two months early.

In addition to providing services directly to participants, RecycleForce hoped to help other social enterprises in Indianapolis provide employment services to the formerly incarcerated. These partner relationships were not entirely successful. The social enterprise partners did implement a number of program activities: transitional jobs, development time (and associated work support), and case management. However, a central component of the program — peer mentoring — proved difficult to export to the subgrantees. Additionally, the subgrantees' preexisting cultures did not align with RecycleForce's philosophy of "continuous approximations," where mistakes are teachable moments.

As suggested by the implementation analysis, the program was successful in increasing receipt of services related to employment, and substantially increasing receipt of services related to child support, criminal justice issues, mentorship, advice or support from staff members, and mental health assistance. In the year following random assignment, program group members also had higher rates of employment and earnings in unemployment insurance-covered jobs than control group members. Much of this impact is likely to be from subsidized employment, as program group earnings from transitional employment are equivalent to the entire difference in earnings between program and control group members. It is not possible at this point to determine whether RecycleForce will produce long-term employment impacts. There is little evidence that RecycleForce affected criminal justice outcomes such as arrests or incarcerations at the one-year follow-up point, although program group members were somewhat less likely to be incarcerated for a felony than control group members. Finally, the program had substantial impacts on child support outcomes. Program group members were more likely to have paid child support, paid more on average, and paid for more quarters than control group members.

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