

Jobs-Plus Site-by-Site
Key Features of
Mature Employment Programs
in Seven Public Housing Communities

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Overview

Since 1997, the Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families has been under way at seven public housing developments in six cities across the nation. This ambitious employment initiative seeks to significantly raise employment levels and earnings of residents living in low-work, high-welfare public housing developments. Operating from an on-site job center at each development, Jobs-Plus targets employment assistance, financial incentives, and community supports for work to *all* working-age, nondisabled residents of a development. None of the programs began as fully formed interventions, evolving instead over several years. But with the exception of the one at the Chattanooga site, which became a financial-incentives-only program, all of the programs now offer all three of the Jobs-Plus components. The chapters of this report provide “snapshot” descriptions of Jobs-Plus as it has been operating at each of the six demonstration sites as of the summer of 2002.

Key program features

- **Employment-related services and activities** are widely available in the form of job readiness and job search assistance and education and vocational training opportunities, as well as support services such as transportation and child care assistance. Although Jobs-Plus offers some group services and classes at the developments, most employment-related services are offered either through individualized case management or referrals to off-site providers. In addition to helping residents with job placement, the sites also consider clients’ job retention and career advancement needs. Across the sites, the specific content of these services varies in accordance with local circumstances and needs. For example, special efforts are made to accommodate monolingual Spanish-speakers in Los Angeles, who require language and immigration assistance to secure employment, or for substance abusers in Baltimore and Dayton, who need treatment and recovery support programs.
- **Financial incentives** have been implemented to encourage residents to find and keep jobs by limiting the increases in rent they would normally face if they increase their income by working. Generally, the approaches taken across the sites have either replaced rents traditionally based on the level of a household’s income with flat rents that are based on the size of the apartment unit, instead, or they calculate tenants’ rent based on a smaller percentage of the household’s income than would commonly be used in rent calculations authority-wide. The plans vary from site to site in how incentive features are structured, as well as in other details, such as the use of escrow accounts and rent credits to promote savings or encourage job retention.
- **Community support for work** was the slowest component to develop. It has since coalesced as institutionalized outreach by residents who are trained and hired to go door-to-door to distribute information about specific job openings, education and training opportunities, and Jobs-Plus’s services and activities, and to relay residents’ concerns back to the program staff.

This report complements other implementation research at MDRC that is drawing cross-site lessons from Jobs-Plus about how residents are engaged in the program, how the financial incentives are administered, and how the community support for work component is developed. By describing how the Jobs-Plus model was implemented site-by-site, this report will also serve as a foundation for understanding what precisely was tested as the analysis proceeds of Jobs-Plus’s effects, or “impacts,” on residents’ employment and wage levels and quality of life across the sites. The descriptions of the distinctive characteristics of each site’s Jobs-Plus approach presented in this report may offer clues to why any ultimate impacts vary across the sites.

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The Authors

Chapter 1

Introduction

Linda Yuriko Kato

Since 1997, the Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families (“Jobs-Plus” for short) has been under way in several cities (Jobs-Plus “sites”) around the nation. This ambitious employment initiative seeks to significantly raise employment and income levels of residents living in “low-work, high-welfare” public housing developments. As the research demonstration enters its final years of data collection, this report provides a snapshot of the Jobs-Plus programs at each of the six demonstration sites by assembling chapters written by the field researchers who are collecting data at those sites. The report underscores the considerable progress that the Jobs-Plus programs have made since the research for a previous report describing each site’s program was conducted in 1999.¹ Jobs-Plus did not begin as a fully formed program with all its components in place at any of the sites. Rather, it evolved into being over a period of several years. The programs encountered numerous challenges along the way, and several sites experienced major setbacks or saw their programs stall for extended periods of time. Today, however, most sites are offering a mature program with the full complement of Jobs-Plus components. And — in an effort to engage participants and address the wide-ranging employment-related needs that a housing development can encompass — the programs have developed creative outreach strategies and services in partnership with the residents, local agencies, and employers. By the end of June 2002, the Jobs-Plus programs reported having registered or engaged over 3,000 residents and having placed 2,000 residents in jobs since operations began.²

This report is part of a multiyear evaluation of the Jobs-Plus demonstration that is assessing the feasibility, implementation, and effectiveness of the initiative through 2004.³ Each chapter describes a site’s program operations and the services, benefits, and activities that it of-

¹Susan Philipson Bloom (ed.), *Jobs-Plus Site-by-Site: An Early Look at Implementation* (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 2000).

²Second Quarter 2002 Summary of Jobs-Plus Site Reports, April 1 to June 30, 2002, submitted by MDRC to HUD. These numbers were reported by the Jobs-Plus programs. “Registration” is defined as completing an intake and assessment form or process.

³The Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families is funded primarily by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and The Rockefeller Foundation, with additional support from the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Labor; the Joyce, James Irvine, Surdna, Northwest Area, Annie E. Casey, Stuart, and Washington Mutual Foundations; and BP. The demonstration is being managed by Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), which is also carefully evaluating the feasibility, implementation, and effectiveness of the program. The demonstration will continue through 2004.

fers. Practitioners and researchers who are involved with welfare-to-work and employment training programs or other community and assisted housing initiatives can also draw insights from the experiences that the Jobs-Plus sites have had in implementing the program model within various social and demographic contexts, in the effort to address concentrated poverty and joblessness.

Overview of Jobs-Plus

The Jobs-Plus Model

As Figure 1.1 outlines, Jobs-Plus seeks to transform low-work, high-welfare public housing developments into high-work, low-welfare communities through an innovative program model that includes three key components:

- **Employment-related services and activities** to help residents secure and retain employment, including job search instruction, education programs, vocational training, and support services such as child care and transportation assistance.
- **Financial incentives to work**, consisting of changes in public housing rent rules to help “make work pay” by reducing the extent to which higher earnings are offset by increases in rent. The incentives assure residents that participating in the program and earning higher income from employment will not automatically raise their rent.
- **Community support for work**, which seeks to strengthen social ties and activities among residents to support their job preparation and work efforts — for instance, by fostering neighbor-to-neighbor exchanges of information about job opportunities or help with child care.

Furthermore, Jobs-Plus is a “saturation-level” initiative; that is, it targets these services and benefits to all working-age residents of the housing developments in the demonstration.⁴ The program assures all those who come forward that they will be accommodated, rather than having to compete for a limited number of slots. (Although this does not guarantee that every qualified resident will obtain, for instance, a training slot to become a Certified Nursing Assistant with a specific provider, it does mean that Jobs-Plus will identify training opportunities

⁴The Jobs-Plus research demonstration defines its target population as working-age nondisabled residents between ages 16 and 62.

with similar providers to accommodate every applicant.) Finally, Jobs-Plus is a place-based initiative that operates conveniently on-site at the housing developments.⁵

Figure 1.1

The Jobs-Plus Approach

Saturation — Reaching all working-age residents through:

Employment-related services +	Financial work incentives +	Community support for work →	Big improvements in employment, earnings, and quality of life
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In response to such local circumstances as funding availability, staffing capacity, and political support, the Jobs-Plus sites implemented the program’s three components at different points during the demonstration — particularly in the case of the financial incentives (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1

Time Line for Jobs-Plus Components

	1998	1999	2000	2001
Employment services	Baltimore Chattanooga Dayton Los Angeles St. Paul Seattle			
Financial incentives	St. Paul	Seattle	Baltimore Chattanooga Dayton Los Angeles	
Community support for work ^a		Dayton Seattle	Los Angeles St. Paul	Baltimore

NOTES: These years refer to when the Jobs-Plus programs first hired resident outreach workers (that is, building captains in Dayton, court captains in Baltimore).

^aChattanooga never fully implemented the community support for work component before it became a financial-incentives-only program.

⁵For a full description of the origins and early accomplishments of the Jobs-Plus demonstration, see James A. Riccio, *Mobilizing Public Housing Communities for Work: Origins and Early Accomplishments of the Jobs-Plus Demonstration* (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1999).

The Jobs-Plus Sites

In March 1997, eight public housing developments in seven cities were selected to implement the Jobs-Plus model as part of the research demonstration:

- Gilmore Homes in Baltimore, Maryland
- Harriet Tubman Homes in Chattanooga, Tennessee
- Woodhill Homes Estates in Cleveland, Ohio
- DeSoto Bass Courts in Dayton, Ohio
- Imperial Courts and William Mead Homes, both in Los Angeles, California
- Mt. Airy Homes in St. Paul, Minnesota
- Rainier Vista Garden Community in Seattle, Washington

Two of the sites — Cleveland and Seattle — are no longer part of the Jobs-Plus research demonstration. A range of factors in Cleveland contributed to shifts in the interests of the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority, so that supporting an employment demonstration that is limited to a single housing development was no longer feasible for the agency. In November 1999 — by mutual agreement of the housing authority, MDRC, and the lead funders of the national Jobs-Plus demonstration — Cleveland formally left the demonstration. In 1999 as well, the Seattle Housing Authority received a federal HOPE VI grant, which is being used to tear down and rebuild the Rainier Vista development. Because demolition and reconstruction will dislocate the residents temporarily, Seattle's program is also no longer in the demonstration. However, because a Jobs-Plus program continues to operate at Rainier Vista under the name "HOPE-Plus," as part of the HOPE VI community and supportive services plan, the report includes a chapter on this program.

Although Chattanooga is still in the Jobs-Plus demonstration, in April 2002, the Chattanooga Housing Authority, MDRC, and the lead demonstration funders mutually agreed to transition Chattanooga into a financial-incentives-only site that will no longer offer the other Jobs-Plus components. This agreement was prompted by a number of factors, including the Chattanooga Housing Authority's decision to bring its housing developments under the management of a private contractor. The demands of implementing this privatization initiative would have limited the attention that the housing authority could give to Jobs-Plus. The transition of Chattanooga's program into one offering financial incentives only was completed by the late summer of 2002.

In terms of demographic composition, the housing developments in the demonstration vary considerably. Gilmore Homes in Baltimore, DeSoto Bass Courts in Dayton, and Harriet Tubman Homes in Chattanooga consist almost completely of African-American households, typically headed by single mothers (although Gilmore Homes also has a sizable number of disabled men and elderly residents). In contrast, the vast majority of households at Mt. Airy Homes

in St. Paul and Rainier Vista Garden Community in Seattle consist of immigrants from Southeast Asia, East Africa, and Latin America. Finally, the majority of residents at William Mead Homes in Los Angeles are immigrants from Mexico and Central America, whose numbers are also growing at Imperial Courts; most of these residents in the Los Angeles developments live in two-parent households.

The following chapters also underscore the wide variation in residents' employment readiness, which challenges each site's efforts to help residents achieve employment and self-sufficiency. The residents who are targeted by Jobs-Plus range from people with considerable work experience to others who have major barriers to employment, such as mental illness and substance addictions. The report examines various efforts by the Jobs-Plus programs to recruit and assist this highly diverse target population — for instance, by enlisting residents as staff and outreach workers and by adopting flexible, individualized ways to assist residents outside the program's offices and regular business hours.

Data Sources

This report draws on data collected by MDRC's implementation research staff and on-site field researchers, who used a standardized research template from fall 2001 through summer 2002. The data sources include interviews with Jobs-Plus staff, participants, site representatives, and service providers; observations of program activities; and program documents. The chapters chronicle the programs as they appeared through summer 2002, and they underscore the considerable progress that the sites have made over the course of the demonstration. Mature programs that offer the three Jobs-Plus components are now in place at all the demonstration sites except Chattanooga, which has become a financial-incentives-only program.

Overview of the Report

The chapters of this report describe the nature and extent of the implementation of the Jobs-Plus model at each demonstration site. After presenting information about the specific housing development and the population served, each chapter includes four key sections that are described below: (1) program infrastructure, (2) program flow, (3) financial incentives, and (4) community support for work.

Program Infrastructure

Staffing and Management. Staffing structures vary across the Jobs-Plus sites, but typically a project director heads the program, supervising the line staff and raising funds. The line staff include a job developer, who locates employment opportunities and helps residents look for jobs; and case managers, who help residents get the education, training, and support

services they need to secure and retain employment. Some line staff members are employees of the local housing authority. Others work for various service agencies and are either outstationed at the Jobs-Plus office or under contract to Jobs-Plus.

The programs also employ housing development residents, usually in administrative support and outreach positions. Since residents rely heavily on one another in making decisions about participating in the program, the presence in Jobs-Plus of resident staff and outreach workers has greatly enhanced the program's visibility and credibility.

To accommodate the wide range of residents' employment-related circumstances and needs, all the programs generally offer individualized services rather than operating in a group context. Therefore, Jobs-Plus tends to be very labor-intensive, and maintaining a full and stable complement of staff has been critical to the sites' ability to engage and assist residents. However, staff turnover has been a problem at several sites, and case managers across the sites have often observed that large caseloads did not allow them to give as much personalized attention as they felt the residents needed.⁶

The demonstration also required the sites to form collaboratives to design and supervise the Jobs-Plus programs. These collaboratives were to include four mandatory members — the local housing authority, the welfare agency, the workforce development agency, and resident leadership — as well as local service providers selected by the sites. Over the course of the demonstration, the participation of the collaboratives has declined at all sites, though some programs continue to consult their collaborative for advice in addressing various service needs. The exception is St. Paul, where the collaborative still exercises a managerial role over the program. (A separate report presents a detailed analysis of the sites' experiences in governing and operating collaborative partnerships among agencies and residents.)⁷

Facilities. Jobs-Plus is a place-based initiative that has a visible presence at the housing developments, usually occupying units that have been converted into office space. (The exception again is in St. Paul, where Jobs-Plus is located in the Mt. Airy Homes Community Center.) The programs conduct outreach, enrollment, assessment, case management, and job search at the offices, but they refer residents to off-site service providers for most education, training, and

⁶In an effort to address wide variations among the sites in terms of staff's professional preparation and their access to administrative resources and technology, MDRC has provided case management training as well as technical assistance in using automated management information systems to track residents' employment and use of services. Achieving adequate staffing, however, has been a more intractable problem, and constraints on local funding make it unlikely that programs will get additional personnel and resources.

⁷Linda Y. Kato and James A. Riccio, *Building New Partnerships for Employment: Collaboration Among Agencies and Public Housing Residents in the Jobs-Plus Demonstration* (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 2001).

support services. To varying degrees, the housing management offices at the developments are also involved with enrollment and with administration of the financial incentives.

Program Flow

Typically, welfare-to-work and employment programs are expected to provide formal services — usually in a group context and in a developmental sequence — to clients who have completed an official enrollment process. This sequence generally starts with orientation, enrollment, and assessment; then it moves on to training, education, and assisted job search; and these are followed in some cases by postemployment services to promote job retention, wage progression, and, ultimately, self-sufficiency. Clients are expected to progress through this sequence over an extended period of time. For instance, in such a program, a participant might proceed as follows:

enrollment/assessment → Certified Nursing Assistant training → job placement
at a convalescent hospital → job retention follow-up assistance

Jobs-Plus did not operate in such a neatly structured way in any of the sites. In part, this is because some residents who sought assistance were already working (albeit in low-wage jobs). The sites thus generally took a more individualized approach to service delivery. They also felt compelled to do this because of the wide range of skills and circumstances that they encountered among residents — a diversity growing out of Jobs-Plus’s mission as a saturation initiative that targets *all* working-age residents in the developments. Unlike the categorical clientele of a welfare-to-work program, for example, the residents who were targeted by Jobs-Plus could be connected to or eligible for a range of different service systems. Some were welfare recipients who were subject to work mandates, but others were not. Some households were eligible for Food Stamps, but others were not. Variation in service eligibility complicated Jobs-Plus’s efforts to address variation in the residents’ employment readiness.

The program at all the sites also had to contend with the fact that some residents were relatively educated and had extensive work experience — or were eager to take up Jobs-Plus’s employment services to become so — while others had major barriers to employment, such as mental illness and substance addiction, and were reluctant to come forward for help. In addition, the foreign-born residents of the developments in Los Angeles, St. Paul, and Seattle faced daunting language and sociocultural barriers to employment, which required Jobs-Plus to provide services in ways that were sensitive to residents’ cultures and circumstances.⁸ For all these

⁸For a discussion of Jobs-Plus’s efforts in Seattle and St. Paul to provide services in culturally sensitive ways, see Linda Y. Kato, *The Special Challenges of Offering Employment Programs in Culturally Diverse Communities: The Jobs-Plus Experience in Public Housing Developments* (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 2002).

reasons, it was difficult for Jobs-Plus to deliver services in a group context and standardized manner, especially across ethnic and language groups.

The chapters of this report describe each site's official processes for enrolling and assessing residents and the formal services that each program offers, organized under the headings shown below. It must be emphasized that all the Jobs-Plus sites currently offer such assistance primarily on an individualized basis, and it refers residents to off-site organizations for most education, training, and support services, including specialized services geared to specific ethnic groups or to employment barriers like substance abuse. Moreover, most residents tend to be opportunistic, idiosyncratic, and sporadic — rather than sequential and continuous — in their use of services, typically turning to the program for quick relief in a crisis. Like the resident who insisted, “I’m the kind of person who doesn’t use the resources until I really, really have to,” these residents come running to Jobs-Plus when they actually need emergency food assistance or job leads after being fired or child care when a babysitter fails to show up.

Indeed, the lives of many public housing residents are beset by chronic financial instability, which makes long-term planning difficult and emergencies hard to avoid. Even working residents have a hard time making ends meet through entry-level jobs in service and manufacturing — sectors in which employers depend heavily on paying low wages and being able to cut or extend the work hours even of “permanent” employees on a daily or weekly basis, in response to shifts in production demand.⁹ Yet the social service systems that are supposed to help such residents often only add to their uncertainty and distress because of rigid eligibility requirements, complex application procedures, and proneness to bureaucratic errors. In these circumstances, the Jobs-Plus programs at several sites play an invaluable role as advocates and mediators helping residents to access services and benefits from other agencies, such as the welfare agency. Jobs-Plus staff work with their counterparts at other agencies to cut through the red tape and ensure that residents do not “fall through the cracks.” They also assist residents in

⁹For a discussion of the employment backgrounds and work experiences of the residents at the Jobs-Plus demonstration sites, see John M. Martinez, *The Employment Experiences of Public Housing Residents: Findings from the Jobs-Plus Baseline Survey* (New York, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 2002).

For employment conditions and experiences of low-wage workers, see also David H. Bradley, “Low Child Care Wages and High Turnover Shortchange Pennsylvania Children: Findings from Surveys of Child Care Providers in Allegheny County, Southeast Pennsylvania, and York County” (Harrisburg, PA: Keystone Research Center, October 2001); Francoise Carre et al. (eds.), *Nonstandard Work: The Nature and Challenges of Changing Employment Arrangements* (Champaign, IL: Industrial Relations Research Association, 2000); Lisa Dodson, Tiffany Manuel, and Ellen Bravo, “Keeping Jobs and Raising Families in Low-Income America: It Just Doesn’t Work” (Cambridge, MA: Radcliffe Public Policy Center, 2002); Susan J. Lambert, Elaine Waxman, and Anna Haley-Locke, “Against the Odds: A Study of Instability in Lower-Skilled Jobs” (Paper presented at the 23rd Annual Research Conference of the Association for Public Policy and Management, Washington, DC, November 1-3, 2001).

many informal ways outside the program's offices and regular business hours — for example, by accompanying residents to medical clinics or family court or even job interviews.¹⁰

Figure 1.2 presents a simplified flowchart of formal Jobs-Plus services as they might be offered in an idealized sequence. The flow, however, is altered by the sites' actual emphasis on individualized assistance and by the residents' preference to use services opportunistically and sporadically.

Recruitment, Orientation, Enrollment, and Assessment. The variety of methods used to bring Jobs-Plus to residents' attention and to encourage them to enroll include printed materials sent as mailings and distributed as flyers and sponsorship or participation in popular community celebrations. But because residents rely heavily on the opinion of other residents in deciding whether to participate, the programs across sites have institutionalized community support for work. This component of Jobs-Plus takes the form of employing residents as outreach workers to relay information to their neighbors in the housing development and to encourage them to take up the program's services and benefits.

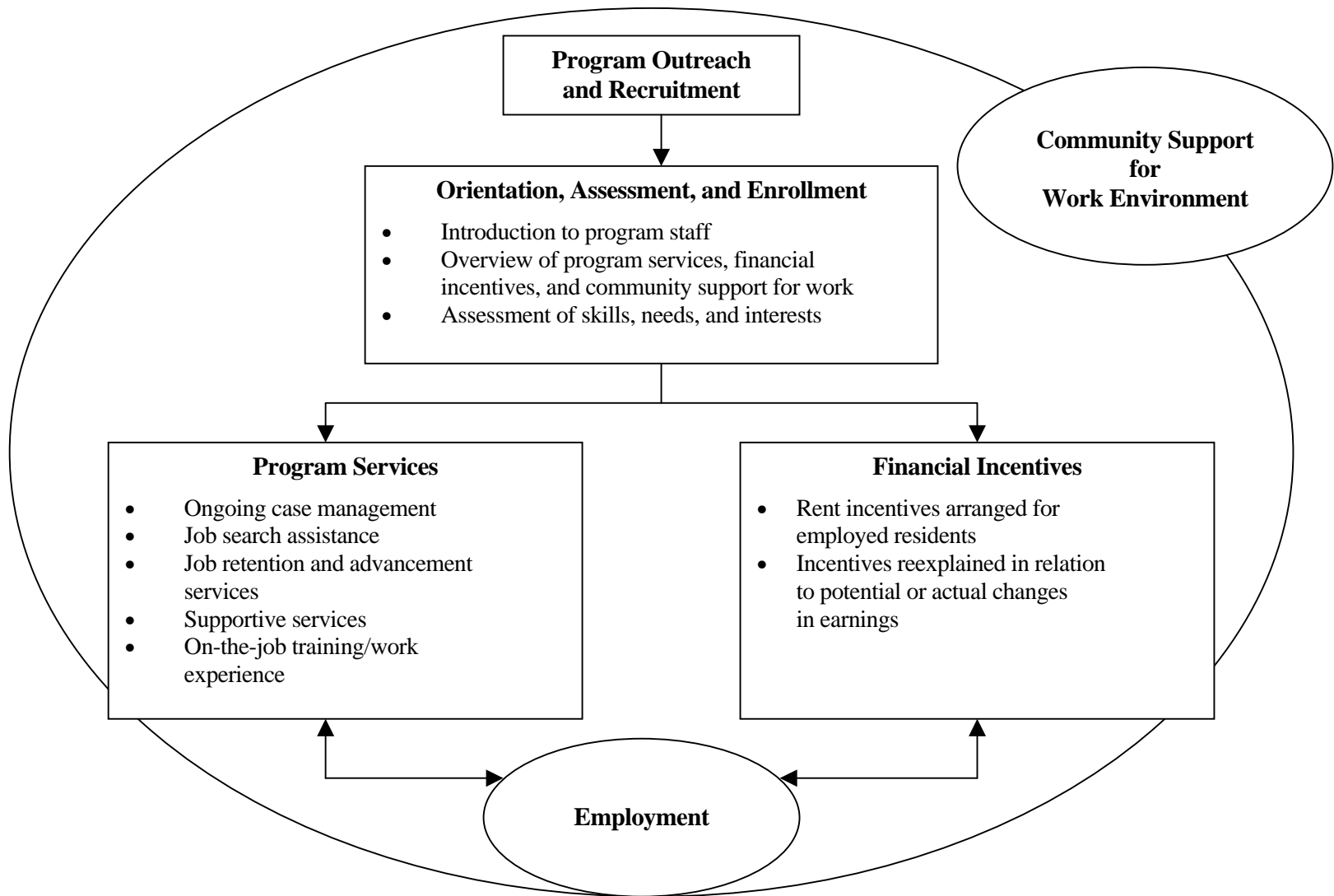
The requirements and procedures for accessing Jobs-Plus services and benefits also vary by site. A formal process is required to apply for the program's financial incentives, since this component involves the resident's lease and rent calculations. But some residents express little patience with procedures to access employment services, such as undergoing an assessment of needs and skills or even signing in at the front desk. A resident observed: "[T]he people around here are looking for quick results — somewhere where they [can] go straight on [to] an interview or fill out an application for an interview . . . and not have to go through the process of Jobs Plus. [Y]ou have to fill out the application and all that type of stuff just to get into Jobs Plus." Responding to such concerns, the sites have tried to streamline their intake and assessment processes to minimize the time and paperwork involved, and they apply these procedures on an individualized basis.

Job Readiness and Job Search. None of the programs in the demonstration offers a group activity on-site to prepare residents for the workplace and to help them find a job — such as a job club that includes a combination of classroom instruction and supervised job search. Instead, Jobs-Plus staff members assist individual residents, who can turn to them for help in looking up job listings, writing résumés and applications, and preparing for interviews. Or residents can use the computers and other resources at the Jobs-Plus office to do these things independently. The programs also refer residents off-site to partner agencies for job readiness and job search assistance in a group context, particularly for special needs. For instance, various

¹⁰A forthcoming MDRC report on residents' participation in Jobs-Plus will discuss both the formal and the informal ways in which the program has engaged and assisted residents as a place-based, saturation-level initiative.

Figure 1.2

Jobs-Plus Program Flowchart



partner agencies have helped Jobs-Plus assist residents who have criminal records through their connections with employers who are willing to hire ex-felons.

Education and Training. Jobs-Plus has generally encouraged residents to get into the workforce quickly, even in a low-wage job, to get work experience — an approach that residents have typically favored. Still, because even entry-level jobs require some English proficiency and a high school diploma or its equivalent, Jobs-Plus has usually offered or referred residents to courses in English as a Second Language (ESL) or courses to prepare for the General Educational Development (GED) exam. The programs have also encouraged some residents to get short-term vocational training, and they have periodically offered courses on-site when there was sufficient demand — for instance, to become a Certified Nursing Assistant or to prepare for the driver’s permit exam. More recently, however, wage progression and career advancement have become pressing concerns for the programs, now that welfare recipients are facing lifetime limits on benefits and must become self-sufficient. At the same time, it has generally been difficult to encourage busy working residents to pursue additional education and training in order to qualify for better jobs.

Job Development. Residents who seek employment assistance from Jobs-Plus are primarily looking for information about job openings that are unknown to their own networks. Although most of the programs have a job developer on staff, it has not been worthwhile to establish preferential hiring relationships with medium and large employers, because the programs are limited to the residents of a single housing development and cannot guarantee a sizable, continuous pool of qualified applicants. Instead, the programs canvass local One-Stop job centers and Internet Web sites to identify and circulate information about suitable opportunities; they also follow up employers who hire Jobs-Plus residents, to encourage them to employ other residents.

Job Creation. In the earlier years of the demonstration, several Jobs-Plus sites offered residents assistance in starting their own business, such as a home-based child care center, for example. Few residents took up such opportunities. Moreover, the sites do not encourage self-employment; they emphasize how challenging it is to start a business and how few of the residents’ attempts have met with success.

Support Services. Residents drop by Jobs-Plus most frequently to get support services for a range of pressing needs that can undercut employment. In addition to child care and transportation assistance, residents may need help with immigration or medical problems, domestic violence, substance abuse, or creditors. Jobs-Plus staff play a valuable role by helping residents navigate the complex bureaucracy to access services and benefits, often calling and accompanying residents to agencies, courts, and clinics. Besides targeting working-age residents, some programs also offer services to other residents, including children and adolescents, seniors, disabled residents, and unregistered males who are living illegally with female residents. The pro-

grams assist such groups as members of the community whose well-being and support for the program are often critical to the targeted residents' decisions about participating in Jobs-Plus.

Job Retention and Career Advancement. Initially, all the sites emphasized rapid entry into employment, but many working residents had serious problems retaining jobs for more than a few months (or even weeks), and others earned too little in low-wage jobs to achieve self-sufficiency. Later, residents began to reach the time limits on their welfare benefits, and they needed additional skills to get better jobs. The Jobs-Plus programs have therefore shifted their focus from job placement to job retention and career advancement. But the following chapters underscore the difficulties that the programs are having in contacting working residents to help them stabilize their employment and to encourage them to pursue opportunities for further education and training. Some sites, however, are developing formal and informal ways to engage working residents. For instance, St. Paul's financial incentives program requires working residents to meet with staff employment counselors in order to reenroll every year in the incentives program and to apply for safety net services when they lose a job.

Financial Incentives

The financial incentives component of Jobs-Plus offers working residents a rent structure that seeks to "make work pay" — in contrast to the traditional method of calculating public housing rents as a percentage (usually 30 percent) of the household's income, which can discourage work in low-wage jobs. The following chapters describe the various financial incentives plans that the Jobs-Plus sites have developed. Most of these plans involve flat rents based on the size of the apartment rather than on the level of household income. However, the plans of the Baltimore and Chattanooga sites calculate a household's rent using a smaller percentage of income than the traditional, authority-wide percentage.¹¹

Staff at Jobs-Plus, the downtown housing authority, and the on-site management office have all had to dedicate considerable time and effort to implementing and administering the financial incentives component. At some sites, because the housing management office is less involved in the program, the burden of incentives outreach and administration has devolved largely on the Jobs-Plus staff, who have needed training and supervision to help residents understand and make informed decisions about financial incentives.¹²

¹¹For details about the public policy background and the development of the financial incentives plans across the Jobs-Plus sites, see Cynthia Miller and James A. Riccio, *Making Work Pay for Public Housing Residents: Financial-Incentive Designs at Six Jobs-Plus Demonstration Sites* (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 2002).

¹²A forthcoming MDRC report will examine the administration of, and residents' participation in, the financial incentives programs across the Jobs-Plus sites.

Community Support for Work

Community support for work is the component of Jobs-Plus that took longest to develop, but the effort has solidified in the form of institutionalized outreach by residents who are trained and hired for this purpose. They are known by different titles at each site: court captains (Baltimore), building captains (Chattanooga and Dayton), community coaches (Los Angeles), community outreach workers (St. Paul), and resident outreach and orientation specialists (Seattle). These resident staff primarily go door-to-door to distribute flyers about specific job openings, education and training opportunities, and services and activities; they also answer residents' questions about Jobs-Plus and relay their concerns to program staff. At times, outreach workers have also been asked to conduct surveys to assist in special campaigns, such as the efforts at some sites to prompt working residents to file for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) or for an extension of time-limited benefits under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). (Chattanooga's site had not yet fully implemented this component of Jobs-Plus when its program shifted to financial incentives only.)

Early efforts to implement the component of community support for work were hampered by the breadth and imprecision of the concept and by the expectation that residents would initiate and administer it, after some training. Instead, experience has demonstrated the need for staff leadership, focus, and structure in operationalizing this concept and institutionalizing residents' roles in achieving it. Rather than focusing on other community objectives that are unrelated to employment, resident outreach workers primarily advance Jobs-Plus's strategic goals under the ongoing supervision of program staff.¹³

Open Research on the Jobs-Plus Demonstration Project

This report and its descriptions of the Jobs-Plus components and operations at each demonstration site complement the implementation research that is drawing cross-site lessons from Jobs-Plus — for instance, lessons about engaging residents in services and financial incentives and the resulting patterns of participation, lessons about administering the financial incentives, and lessons about implementing the community support for work component. By showing how the Jobs-Plus model was implemented in each site, this report will also serve as a foundation for understanding what was tested in each site in the analysis of Jobs-Plus's effects, or "impacts," across sites on residents' employment and wage levels and quality of life. Also, if those impacts vary across sites, clues about why this is the case might be found in the report's descriptions of the program at each site.

¹³A forthcoming MDRC report will examine how the Jobs-Plus sites implemented the community support for work component.

Chapter 2

Jobs-Plus in Baltimore

Linda Kaljee with Elinor Robinson

Program Background and Highlights

Jobs-Plus in Baltimore has been operating at Gilmor Homes in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood of West Baltimore since April 1998. It serves a community that consists primarily of African-American single mothers as well as a sizable minority of disabled residents and seniors.

The employment backgrounds and service needs of the residents at Gilmor Homes vary widely, creating a significant challenge to Jobs-Plus's effort to offer services that can help them achieve employment and self-sufficiency. Besides needing skills, some residents face such serious impediments to employment as substance abuse and mental illness. Jobs-Plus therefore currently offers employment and support services primarily on an individualized and referral basis. The program refers residents to an array of public and nonprofit agencies in the neighborhood that provide training, education, transportation and child care services, and specialized job search assistance for youth and "hard-to-serve" clients with multiple barriers to employment. Jobs-Plus has built strong collaborative relationships with these partner agencies that help the program to assemble a comprehensive package of services suited to the needs of individual residents and to monitor their progress across these agencies. When there is sufficient demand, however, Jobs-Plus also offers workshops on-site at Gilmor Homes — including a very successful driver's education course that was linked to an auto-purchasing program sponsored by a collaborative partner.

Jobs-Plus's designers identified health problems — especially substance abuse — as a major obstacle to employment at Gilmor Homes. The collaborative therefore arranged for the Vision for Health Consortium (VHC) of public and private health organizations to establish a referral office on-site at Gilmor Homes, across the street from Jobs-Plus. The VHC office's on-site staff worked closely over the years with Jobs-Plus to identify residents with mental and physical impediments to employment and to get them the medical treatment they needed, including substance abuse treatment. It was therefore a loss to the community when the office was closed in September 2002 because of funding shortfalls.

Jobs-Plus in Baltimore: Gilmor Homes

Jobs-Plus in Baltimore occupies one remodeled unit in Gilmor Homes. The Jobs-Plus office is staffed by the project director, a case manager, a job developer, a community outreach specialist, an administrative assistant, and a resident aide. Jobs-Plus retains another unit, adjacent to its current offices, which formerly housed the Resident Empowerment Center; the center's activities now operate out of the main offices. As the number of Jobs-Plus staff declined over time, the offices were consolidated from two units into one, emphasizing the team approach taken in Baltimore.

All residents of Gilmor Homes who express interest in Jobs-Plus receive an individual orientation and go through an initial intake meeting with the resident aide. They then meet with the case manager, who does a general assessment to identify their strengths, determine their work readiness, and specify their service needs. This assessment may take two or more visits to complete, in order to address all the work-related issues of a participant. After assessment, enrollees are referred either to the job developer for help in finding employment or to one or more service providers for assistance with work readiness issues. The case manager makes from three to five referrals per participant. Transportation stipends or bus tokens are available to Jobs-Plus participants to go to a job interview or a new job or an appointment with a service agency. TANF recipients formerly received many services through Jobs-Plus or relied on Jobs-Plus for referrals to the WorkMatters program of the housing authority and the Office of Employment Development. Now, however, the case managers for that program conduct virtually all their contacts with TANF recipients separately from Jobs-Plus.

Improving the health of the Gilmor Homes community and removing health-related barriers to employment are major priorities for Jobs-Plus in Baltimore. The Vision for Health Consortium (VHC) of public and private health organizations has on-site facilities where Jobs-Plus participants can obtain an individual or family health assessment and referrals to health services, including substance abuse treatment funded by the housing authority's Family Support Services. Although VHC closed its office at Gilmor Homes in September 2002, residents will likely still have access to health referrals because the primary VHC staff person will join the Jobs-Plus team.

In November 2000, Jobs-Plus in Baltimore implemented a financial incentives plan that reduces the percentage of countable income used to calculate working families' rent, from the traditional 30 percent to 20 percent. In addition, half the rent paid is put into an escrow account, so that a participant who maintains regular employment over a 12-month period will receive the escrow savings and can use the money as desired. As of the end of 2002, this program had enrolled 123 residents.

Jobs-Plus began enrolling residents in Baltimore's financial incentives program in November 2000. Baltimore's plan reduces the percentage of countable income used to calculate the rent of working households from the traditional 30 percent to 20 percent. The plan allows more than one adult in a household to take advantage of the financial incentives, as long as each additional household member is a Jobs-Plus participant. And the housing authority establishes escrow accounts that set aside 50 percent of the reduced rent as savings for the participants if they maintain their employment during each lease-year of the program. As of September 30, 2002, the financial incentives program had enrolled 123 residents.

The community support for work component in Baltimore primarily takes the institutional form of "court captains." In 2001, Jobs-Plus began recruiting and training residents to be court captains, whose primary responsibility is circulating to other residents printed and verbal information about Jobs-Plus's services and benefits and about job leads and local training and education opportunities. The court captains report regularly to the community outreach coordinator at the Resident Empowerment Office, who supervises their activities.

Jobs-Plus in Baltimore has had many successes in helping the residents of Gilmor Homes secure and retain employment and make significant investments in autos and homes. The program has benefited greatly from the stability of its staff, several of whom have been with the program since its inception or early stages. They offer caring, personalized support to help residents address the many issues and circumstances that can undercut their work efforts. Moreover, the program is distinguished by its efforts to engage residents in program outreach and service delivery. The resident staff and outreach workers have been instrumental in building the credibility of the program in the community.

The Housing Development and Its Population

Gilmor Homes is located in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood in the Baltimore City Empowerment Zone. Over the past 15 years, various programs have helped residents of the neighborhood get increased access to health care, social services, and opportunities for homeownership. Despite these efforts, many homes remain boarded up, and the neighborhood's infrastructure of grocery stores, banks, and other resources is limited.

Built in 1942, Gilmor Homes is a low-rise brick development that encompasses 564 one-, two-, and three-bedroom units. Over the past several years, the development has undergone some renovation work, including new roof structures on all the buildings and new windows for each unit. The majority of households at Gilmor Homes are headed by African-

American single mothers, although a number of households are headed by seniors and disabled residents.¹

Program Infrastructure

Staffing and Management

The members of the Jobs-Plus staff at Gilmore Homes are all employees of the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC), except for the job developer, who has been assigned to the program by the Office of Employment Development (OED). Many of the Jobs-Plus staff have been with the project for several years, including the project director, who has been in her position since the planning stages of the project. Limited turnover among core staff has helped to build residents' trust in the program.

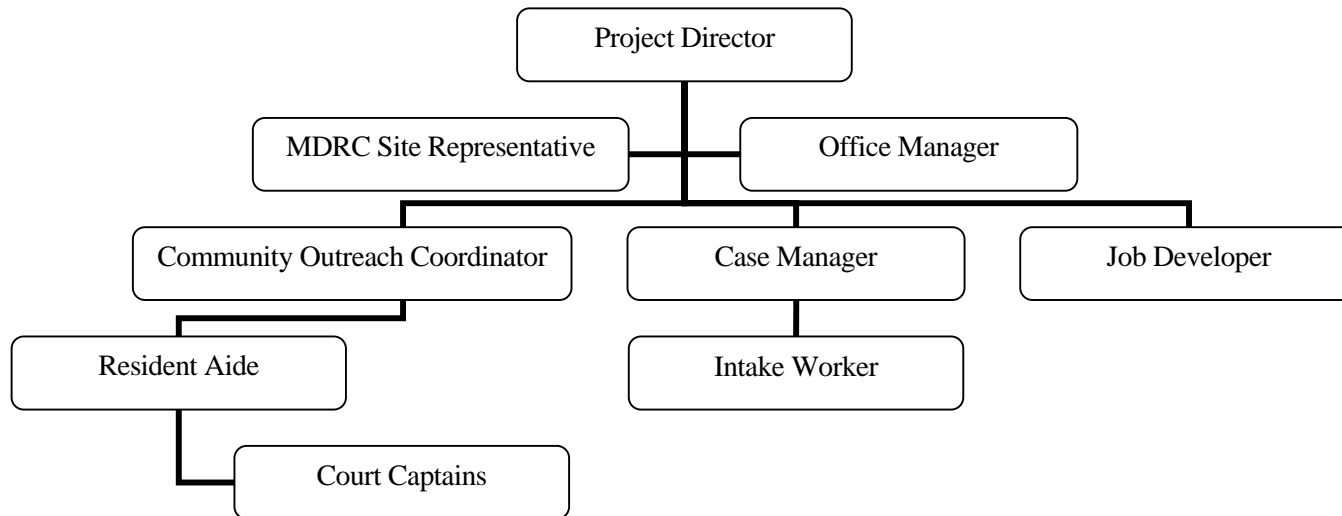
Recently, however, the Job Plus office has experienced some staff turnover. As evidence of the program's success, some of the former residents of Gilmore Homes who were hired as resident aides have been promoted within the HABC or have moved to private sector employment. The untimely death of the office manager in December 2001 also left a deep hole in the Jobs-Plus staff structure. Because of a hiring freeze within the housing authority, several of these positions have remained vacant, and other staff members have had to work in multiple capacities. Figure 2.1 presents the organizational chart of the Baltimore Jobs-Plus office.

- The **project director** joined the Jobs-Plus project when planning began in September 1997. Her role includes leading the staff, communicating with collaborative partners, working with program providers, and coordinating logistics for implementing programs.
- The **case manager**, hired in 1999, is responsible for assessing participants as they enter and progress through the program. She also works with participants to identify and address their needs for social services.
- The **job developer** helps participants with job search efforts — such as answering newspaper ads and making cold calls — and refers them to job fairs and group interviews. He also conducts outreach to potential employers. The job developer works closely with the case manager to provide comprehensive services to residents.

¹October 1997 tenant rosters indicate that 83 percent of households had only one adult member and that 99 percent of the heads of household were African-American; 79 percent were female; 16 percent were elderly; and 30 percent were disabled.

Figure 2.1

Organizational Chart for Jobs-Plus in Baltimore



- The **community outreach coordinator**, a member of the staff since November 1997, helps recruit and organize the residents of Gilmor Homes by distributing information about Jobs-Plus and available services. She coordinates the work of the court captains, a group of residents who contribute to outreach efforts. In addition, she coordinates efforts to market the financial incentives to the residents and is responsible for enrolling and tracking incentives participants.
- The **intake worker**, a former resident who has been with program since 1998, registers program participants on-site and schedules appointments for them to meet with the case manager.
- The **resident aide**, another former resident, assists and supports the community outreach specialist and has assumed some of the duties of the office manager, whose position is currently unfilled.

Collaboration

Jobs-Plus relies on the support and resources of its collaborative partners to offer the residents services for their wide-ranging employment needs. The Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) is the lead agency of Jobs-Plus and provides its operational funding and office facilities; all but one of the staff members are housing authority employees. For employment and support services, Jobs-Plus also draws heavily on referral relationships with various collaborative members, including the Baltimore City Department of Public Works, Office of Employment Development, and Department of Social Services as well as the Enterprise Foundation, Vision for Health Consortium, Goodwill Industries, Civic Works, Eden Jobs, Community Building and Partnership, Self Motivated People's Community Village Center, Empower Baltimore Management Corporation, STRIVE-Baltimore, and Baltimore City Community College.

The resident council of Gilmor Homes has been on the collaborative since its inception. Council members worked with the housing authority staff on the application to participate in the Jobs-Plus demonstration. Their support has been critical in building residents' trust in the program and in developing services that respond to residents' needs.

Facilities

The Jobs-Plus office occupies two contiguous apartment units in Gilmor Homes. The on-site office of the Vision for Health Consortium used to be located immediately across the street from the Jobs-Plus office, and the housing management office of Gilmor Homes is less than a block away. The Resident Empowerment Center — formerly the offices of the community outreach coordinator and the resident aides — now serves as a location for meetings and workshops.

Program Flow

Gilmor Homes residents who come to Jobs-Plus for assistance are directed through the intake and service process in different ways, depending on their prior interactions with the office and their current needs. A resident who has not registered with the Jobs-Plus office is usually directed to the intake worker, who creates a file for the individual. After registration is complete, the resident can either make an appointment with the case manager or request immediate assistance, depending on the availability of the case manager. The case manager assesses the resident's employment history and skills, refers the resident to job search or education or training, and assists in removing barriers to employment, such as child care needs or health issues. These activities may run concurrently. The case manager and job developer then work with the resident and outreach workers to monitor the resident's progress in securing and retaining a job. The following sections describe these elements of the program.

Recruitment

Jobs-Plus at Gilmor Homes has developed a variety of techniques for recruiting residents to participate in the program's services and activities. Recruitment strategies are often geared toward particular groups, such as working residents who are interested in a driver's education course or in the program's financial incentives or residents who have problems with substance abuse or domestic violence and are reluctant to come forward for assistance. Jobs-Plus does not limit recruitment efforts only to working-age and work-eligible residents. Disabled residents are also encouraged to participate and get part-time work to enhance the quality of their lives. A few have become involved in outreach for the program as court captains. Senior residents are also encouraged to participate in program activities and to help in recruitment efforts.

When Jobs-Plus began its operations as an unknown entity in the community, many Gilmor Homes residents were familiar with local service providers who were collaborative partners. So Jobs-Plus arranged for these agencies to refer residents to the program. For instance, the Baltimore City Department of Social Services agreed to recognize Jobs-Plus as a work activity for recipients of Maryland's welfare program, Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), who live at Gilmor Homes and to require welfare-to-work case managers to assign clients from Gilmor Homes to Jobs-Plus. At this point, residents who have been welfare recipients for fewer than 30 months may still fulfill their work activity through Jobs-Plus, but the program now enrolls few welfare recipients, because their numbers at Gilmor Homes have dropped significantly over the course of the demonstration. Any residents who have been welfare recipients for more than 30 months are assigned directly to the WorkMatters program, which operates from offices downtown. WorkMatters, which is jointly sponsored by the housing authority and the Office of Employment Development (OED), is responsible for providing intensive case

management to help “long-term” welfare recipients secure and retain employment as they near their lifetime limits for receiving welfare benefits.

Resident involvement is also a distinctive and key feature of Jobs-Plus’s outreach efforts in Baltimore. Staff and residents have both emphasized that residents at Gilmore Homes rely primarily on the word-of-mouth recommendations and one-to-one interactions with other residents for information and advice in making decisions to use program services. The presence of residents on the Jobs-Plus staff has helped the program gain visibility and credibility. The residents experience a level of comfort in knowing that other residents are there to assist them at the Jobs-Plus office, and they speak about the inspiration that they draw from the successes of the resident staff in securing employment and the benefits that come with a steady job: “[T]hey’re an example that you can do this also,” said a resident. “Oh, it makes a difference you see,” said another resident, “because . . . they see them and say, ‘Oh my goodness if they can do it, I can too. . . . I’m going down to Jobs-Plus too.’ And those girls actually have [moved into] a home, and they look different. . . . They’re more confident in themselves.” Since 2001, residents have also assisted in outreach as court captains, going door-to-door to distribute printed information about program services and activities and to encourage their neighbors to participate.

In June 2000, Jobs-Plus inaugurated the Resident Empowerment Center, which is responsible for coordinating outreach and community support for work. The center is under the direction of the community development specialist. Residents who have just moved into Gilmore Homes receive calls and visits from the center’s staff, who bring welcoming baskets of gifts and information about the Jobs-Plus program. The center undertakes targeted campaigns to publicize and recruit participants for various services or benefits, such as the successful driver’s education program.

Since being launched at Gilmore Homes in April 1998, Jobs-Plus has sponsored a number of social gatherings that create an enjoyable, family-oriented atmosphere in which to inform residents about available services and to introduce new components of the program, such as the opening of the Vision for Health Consortium office in February 1999.

Jobs-Plus staff members also meet regularly with residents in conjunction with the monthly resident council meetings, to keep them informed about program services and activities. And Jobs-Plus produces a quarterly newsletter that includes information about ongoing and new activities and that publicizes the residents’ personal and professional accomplishments.

Intake and Enrollment

Gilmore Homes residents who want to enroll in Jobs-Plus meet with the intake worker to complete a registration form, which elicits such basic information as the resident’s date of birth, household size, and education and employment history. (Individuals who have received welfare

for more than 30 months, however, are promptly referred off-site for employment assistance from the WorkMatters welfare-to-work program.) Residents also fill out a “capacity sheet” to provide information about their employment-related skills. The intake worker then schedules an individual assessment meeting for the enrollee and the case manager. Between January and June 2002, Jobs-Plus served 136 residents of Gilmor Homes.

Assessment

Although assessment meetings with the case manager are generally scheduled in the afternoon, the case manager does conduct brief assessment sessions for “walk-in” clients in the morning. The case manager typically meets with an enrollee at least twice in order to complete the assessment. These meetings help to identify the individual’s marketable skills and potential barriers to getting and keeping a job. Areas of assessment include finances (debt and money management); employment (career goals, vocational training, education); literacy (the need for remedial education or General Educational Development [GED] classes); social interactions (interpersonal relations, planning skills, education and school performance, involvement in the criminal justice system); child care and transportation needs; abuse and crisis issues (child abuse, adult or spousal abuse, substance abuse); the immediate lack of food, clothing, medical care, or housing; and physical or mental health issues. The information that is obtained from residents is entered into the JobPoint case management computer program, which was developed for the housing authority in Baltimore.

Enrollees are then referred to one or more of the following: (1) the job developer or Eden Jobs, for job search assistance; (2) various collaborative members, like Goodwill or Baltimore City Community College, for training and education programs; (3) the Vision for Health Consortium, for referrals to mental and physical health services; and the staff of the Resident Empowerment Center, for enrollment in such activities as driver’s education or participation in life skills workshops, such as financial management.

Job Readiness and Job Search

Jobs-Plus offers the residents of Gilmor Homes a number of job readiness services and job search options, both in a group context and on an individualized basis.

Residents can call on Jobs-Plus staff for individual help in résumé writing, interviewing, and completing job applications and in learning how to dress and comport themselves in the workplace. But residents can also get formal job readiness assistance in a group context. Jobs-Plus has sponsored several job readiness workshops over the years, including a one-day workshop at St. Gregory’s Catholic Church, which is adjacent to Gilmor Homes, and another workshop called SAGE that is geared toward “hard-to-serve” residents who have multiple bar-

riers to securing and retaining employment; SAGE helps such residents develop skills in setting and achieving goals and organizing their lives.

Jobs-Plus generally refers residents to other programs for group-based job readiness services. In November 1998, Goodwill Industries opened an on-site job readiness program at Gilmore Homes in collaboration with Women In Community (WIC), which is based in Alexandria, Virginia. Goodwill Industries emphasizes that the first step in seeking employment is to identify, acknowledge, and overcome one's barriers to employment. The program also tried to develop supportive relationships among the participants, to encourage one another's job search and employment efforts. Each cycle of this program operated for eight weeks, for six hours per day and five days per week. Although 100 women were targeted for participation, only 30 joined, and the program continued to suffer from poor attendance and retention. Jobs-Plus staff attributed these problems to the program's length, its small meeting space, and the absence of a stipend for participating. Currently, residents who need job readiness assistance are referred to the downtown office of Goodwill Industries, where a former Gilmore Homes resident is employed in a program that is designed to help the clients transition from job readiness to life skills management. The resident's presence at Goodwill Industries helps maintain the connection between that program and Jobs-Plus.

STRIVE provides an intensive three-week job readiness course to residents of the 21217 ZIP code area, which includes Gilmore Homes. Participants are assessed in terms of skills and career interests, and they receive training in résumé preparation and interviewing skills as well as job search assistance; the STRIVE program also provides two years of job retention follow-up. For job readiness and job search services, Jobs-Plus refers residents to Eden Jobs, a collaborative partner that serves the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood. In addition, the Center for Mind and Esteem Development (CMED) offers a course to build the self-esteem of public housing residents who are seeking employment. The two-week program has a New Age orientation that focuses on helping participants to recognize and remove their attitudinal and behavioral barriers to employment and to create a positive plan of action. CMED has a contract with the housing authority to assist public housing residents before they begin a training program that is sponsored by the housing authority.

Job search assistance is conducted primarily on an individualized basis. When the resident and the case manager or job developer determine that the resident is ready for employment, the resident is referred either to Jobs-Plus's job developer or to Eden Jobs. The job developer and the Eden Jobs staff conduct additional assessments of the resident's skills and employment history, and they help the resident identify job openings, complete a résumé and job applications, and schedule and undertake interviews. Eden Jobs also is connected to employers in Howard County, and it recruits and trains applicants for those firms and then transports the employees to work. Some 60 residents from the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood are enrolled

in Eden Jobs at any time, and men represent 60 percent of the program's participants and job placements. Goodwill Industries also provides job placement and retention follow-up services.

Jobs-Plus did offer group job search activities early in its operations. In November 1998, the program implemented a version of the Pathways case management system. The system requires participants to maintain a monthly employment diary and to attend a monthly group meeting, and it provides the program with procedures and protocols and software for tracking clients. The director and founder of Pathways gave technical assistance to Jobs-Plus staff in implementing the system. Generally, participants liked keeping the personal diaries, but they were less enthusiastic about the group meetings. As participation in Pathways declined, the system was dropped at the end of 1999.

People from the neighborhood who do not live at Gilmore Homes or who do so illegally come to Jobs-Plus at times for job search assistance. The program cannot enroll these people, but it helps them unofficially by referring them to other local service providers. Individuals who have felony convictions can get help at Goodwill Industries, which operates a job search program for ex-offenders.

The Jobs-Plus job developer cultivates relationships with local employers to encourage them to share job opportunities with the program and with the residents of Gilmore Homes. Job openings are posted regularly at the Jobs-Plus office so that residents can pursue them on their own. Jobs-Plus has also arranged for groups of residents to interview with various employers, including the United States Postal Service.

Education and Training

Jobs-Plus in Baltimore offers a variety of educational and training opportunities to participants, primarily through referrals to off-site providers. These include referrals to General Educational Development (GED) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes, computer courses, training in the hospitality industry, and a number of training courses offered by the housing authority. For instance, for GED and ABE classes, Jobs-Plus refers residents to Eden Jobs, Baltimore Works, and the Office of Employment Development (OED). In the summer of 2002, the program developed a referral relationship with the Sylvan Learning Center, which is under contract with the Department of Social Services to provide GED and job readiness classes to welfare recipients, and with the Caroline Center, which offers women employer-customized training in clerical skills, nursing, and furniture upholstery.

Initially, efforts were made to find convenient locations for education and training services on-site or within the immediate vicinity of Gilmore Homes. For instance, Jobs-Plus arranged for Baltimore City Community College to offer GED and ABE classes exclusively to Jobs-Plus participants at Gilmore Elementary School and a local community center, and Good-

will Industries offered on-site training in computer skills. In Jobs-Plus's second year, a resident also taught a computer class that met four evenings a week for 12 weeks at Gilmor Elementary School. However, none of these classes was well attended, and residents were subsequently referred to courses off-site. The staff found that bringing residents together in classes that were offered exclusively to them could sometimes intensify cynical attitudes about services and employment and any ill feelings that the residents felt toward one another. Said a staff member: "I found that when just the residents are in the training program, for some reason they just keep at each other with the negatives about what's not happening and what they don't like. And they compound it because they have this group to talk to about it all the time. And so it starts. It wears us out because we're constantly trying to fix [it]."

The housing authority also offers a number of employment services and training through its Resident Services Program. Public housing residents have access to training in personal development, pesticides, lawn care, and groundskeeping as well as to employment and business startup services through the Business Development Program, the Employment Opportunities Program, various Learning Centers, the Youth Entrepreneur Institute, and People Accessing Continued Employment (PACE).

Job Development

Jobs-Plus cultivates local employers, including nonprofit and government agencies, to establish the program as a source of job applicants. For instance, during the program's first year, the Baltimore City Department of Public Works provided 11 full-time training job slots for Jobs-Plus participants. The department collects and recycles trash, provides services related to water safety and meeting public health standards, and maintains roadways and city-owned buildings. One Jobs-Plus participant obtained a permanent full-time position with the agency and was promoted twice in three years. Jobs-Plus has developed hiring relationships with more than 20 local employers, including Broadway Services, Owings Mill Town Center, Mondawmin Mall, Rite Aid, Suntrust Bank, Radisson Inner Harbor Hotel, Yellow Transportation, MCI, and Rockland Industries.

Gilmor Homes residents have also been hired for staff positions as resident aides and intake workers on-site at the Jobs-Plus and the Vision for Health Consortium offices or as interns at member organizations of the collaborative. Many of the interns have obtained employment at the collaborative agencies or in the private sector, and some have also succeeded in purchasing cars and homes. In 1999-2000, the housing authority secured Economic Development and Supportive Services (ED/SS) funding from HUD to support the salaries of 15 residents for

up to three years in new work experience job slots at various collaborative organizations.² Among those who were hired, four individuals were fired, one died, and the remaining ten remain employed. Two of these residents continue to work at Jobs-Plus, and the other eight advanced within the housing authority or got city or state government jobs.

Civic Works — sponsored by the federally funded AmeriCorps program — is an on-the-job training and educational program for young adults between the ages of 17 and 24. For two years, Civic Works ran two sessions at Gilmore Homes, and 16 young people participated.

Job Retention and Career Advancement

Helping public housing residents get employment was just the beginning of Jobs-Plus's efforts, since so many residents experienced repeated job loss and remained in low-wage jobs without benefits. Jobs-Plus staff referred to such residents as "cyclers," who managed to stay in a job for only a few months or even weeks. Some had little work experience and major problems with tardiness and absenteeism, especially if they were juggling child care and commutes on public transportation for the first time or were struggling with substance abuse, domestic violence, or mental illness. Others were used to working, but only for the limited time needed to pay off some bills or purchase an item. "I call it the living-room furniture phenomenon," said the Jobs-Plus site representative:

[T]he goal is to buy the living-room furniture set. So they get the layaway plan for the living-room furniture set, they get a job. Right, three months they get the set. Once the set is paid off, they quit because they reach their goal. [T]hey can sit at home all day and watch the TV until the next goal comes. . . . My kid needs clothes or something like that, and get another job.

Job retention and career advancement, therefore, have increasingly become formalized parts of Baltimore's program. For instance, efforts are made to track and follow up working participants regularly and systematically, to offer assistance. Participant data are maintained in JobPoint, a computerized tracking and case management system. In addition, files of employed participants are kept separate from other participant files. The staff members pull these files and contact the residents regularly, to ask about the status of their employment. Staff members encourage residents to ask for help in keeping their jobs and getting better-paying ones.

²The Economic Development and Supportive Services (ED/SS) program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides grants on a nationally competitive basis to public and Indian housing authorities for creating and operating programs that increase employment and self-sufficiency among working-age nondisabled residents and/or that support independent living for elderly and disabled residents. Up to 25 percent of the ED/SS program beneficiaries can also be Section 8 residents. For further details, see <http://www.hud.gov:80/progdesc/ed-ss.cfm>.

But the staff have generally had a hard time contacting working residents during the day and getting them to return phone calls. Jobs-Plus in Baltimore has therefore been creative in using community-wide events to bring in residents to talk about their jobs. For instance, the program got a large turnout of working residents when it offered turkeys and grocery-store gift certificates during the weeks preceding Thanksgiving Day and Christmas to those who could present two recent successive pay stubs. The staff used these visits to inquire about residents' jobs and lives, to offer assistance, and to update case files.

The job developer also builds relationships with local employers that hire Jobs-Plus participants — such as Aramark, Towson University, and Baltimore Washington International Airport — to encourage them to contact him for help if there is a problem or conflict with an employee from Gilmore Homes. The Jobs-Plus staff state that residents who are placed at these firms are more likely to retain their jobs and avoid rapid dismissal.

The relationships with residents that the case manager has built over the years (she has been with Jobs-Plus since July 1999) continue to be critical to the program's efforts to get working residents to take up job retention and advancement services. The case manager maintains regular contact with working residents and has familiarized herself with so many aspects of their lives that they feel she knows and cares for them personally. "She calls me off and on," said a resident: "How you doing? How's the baby?" Sent my baby get-well cards. They really keep in touch." These residents therefore feel more inclined to keep the case manager informed about their circumstances and to seek her assistance when they lose a job, and they respond to her encouragements to get further training and education to improve their employment prospects. One resident who had gotten a job as an assistant at a child care program spoke about the importance of the case manager in helping her to get further training and certification to become the site manager of the program. She is currently also taking classes while working, in the hopes of becoming a teacher one day. Said this resident of the case manager: "She is like a mentor to me. She has pushed me so much. 'You can be a teacher. You go back to school while you're being a teacher. You can be become a site manager. You can have your own daycare'. . . . [W]ith them pushing me, . . . I can't look back."

Support Services

Jobs-Plus assists the residents of Gilmore Homes in accessing a range of support services to help them secure and retain employment in the face of the many personal and structural obstacles that can undercut their work efforts.

Child Care Assistance

Jobs-Plus refers clients for child care to the Baltimore City Department of Social Services (DSS), which provides residents with vouchers so that they can obtain center- or home-

based child care. There is also a child care center at Gilmor Homes that is open weekdays from 7:30 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. This program can accommodate approximately 80 children in preschool and after-school programs. It does not serve Gilmor Homes residents exclusively, but it does reserve 30 emergency slots for Jobs-Plus participants, who can use them for up to two weeks while they find permanent daycare for their children.

Nonetheless, child care remains a problem for residents, and Jobs-Plus has had to be creative in addressing a range of individual circumstances. Residents with infants have limited options, since programs usually require children to be at least 3 years old and out of diapers. Although welfare policies in Baltimore will pay for a relative to provide infant care, the requirements for background checks of potential providers can cut off this avenue, since the relatives of the residents often have a criminal record. Welfare policies can also undermine access to approved providers for residents with children of any age. For instance, a woman may be reluctant to comply with the DSS requirement that she register the name of the child's father when applying for child care support. Residents whose jobs begin very early in the morning or late at night have had problems getting child care during those hours. Finally, a sizable number of children at Gilmor Homes suffer from asthma, which often requires parents to take time off from work to look after them and get medical care.

Jobs-Plus has assisted several residents in getting training at Baltimore City Community College to become child care providers, thus increasing the availability of on-site child care. And the program helps residents broker informal child care arrangements with neighbors during hours that are not covered by formal care. A court captain observed: "Because a lot of times the job starts at 7:00 and the daycare centers need to be open at least starting at 5:30 not 6:00, because by the time [it's] 7:00, you're running late for work and you're not going to have that job that long. . . . And since I'm laid off, I take the burden off of some of them and watch them and take their children to the daycare center. . . . [O]n my block, they know when I'm there, I'll look out for everybody. If they're running late and I've fixed dinner, I'll go ahead and take care of them too."

Transportation Assistance

Lack of adequate transportation is a real impediment to employment for Gilmor Homes residents. Since jobs are not widely available in the neighborhood, residents often need to travel substantial distances to find employment, usually relying on buses to do so. For those who commute early in the morning or late at night, safety is another concern. In fact, transportation issues are a major reason why residents join Jobs-Plus in the first place, because the program is creative in helping to solve the problems. The Jobs-Plus office provides bus tokens (as well as referrals to clothing closets) for residents who are going on job interviews. Transportation assistance has been targeted to participants who are employed, who have a high likelihood of being

employed quickly, or who are in training. Up until January 2002, the program had offered driver's education courses on-site. Since then, the driver's education benefit has been extended to all housing authority residents in Baltimore, and the new program is based on the model developed by Jobs-Plus. A number of classes at various times of the day and week are offered at five locations throughout the city. To participate in this program, residents of Gilmor Homes must show their commitment to improving their transportation circumstances by being enrolled in Jobs-Plus, showing proper identification, and paying for their own learner's permit. The Community Development Specialist manages the enrollment and administration of the driver's education program for the Jobs-Plus participants. Jobs-Plus has also referred residents to Vehicles for Change, a program that is sponsored by Eden Jobs to help participants purchase a used car. These two programs have been popular; 25 residents received their driver's license, 5 purchased a car through Vehicles for Change, and 6 others bought an automobile on their own.

Health Care

During the planning stages for Jobs-Plus in Baltimore, collaborative members identified problems with mental and physical health as being primary obstacles to employment and job retention for the Gilmor Homes residents. Drug abuse, in particular, seriously undercuts employment in the Sandtown-Winchester section of Baltimore, where the development is located. Even residents who do not abuse drugs themselves are affected negatively by the abuse of household members or neighbors. In February 1999, therefore, the collaborative arranged for a referral office of the Vision for Health Consortium (VHC) to be established in a converted housing unit at Gilmor Homes. VHC consisted of a group of public and private health care providers operating in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood that banded together to better serve the community's members, whether insured or not. Its mission statement indicated that the organization was "dedicated to creating a community-driven health system . . . and improving the community's overall health status." VHC promoted adult health and primary care and offered substance abuse prevention, including assessments and referrals for treatment. It also provided public health nurses and health care to the elementary schools in the area.

Residents who had problems with substance abuse were able to go to VHC's on-site office at Gilmor Homes for referrals to treatment programs. But locating appropriate programs for the residents was a challenge. Women tended to avoid inpatient services, for example, because they feared losing custody of their children while they were in treatment. And those residents who did agree to inpatient treatment often encountered bureaucratic hurdles and limited slots in treatment programs, which prevented them from getting prompt care. VHC assigned a substance abuse counselor to the Gilmor Homes office in order to focus on finding appropriate treatment options and to provide counseling workshops.

VHC's services went far beyond making health referrals. The staff spent long hours helping residents cope with the burdensome paperwork and phone calls needed to access medical information and health care for low-income people. Furthermore, the staff had a holistic approach to health care, recognizing that wellness has multiple dimensions — physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social. A staff member observed: “[A] lot of residents need more than just referrals. What they actually need is a whole support system put in place to assist them.” So if a resident needed a sympathetic ear or food or clothing for the household, the VHC office was there to help. Its staff and the Jobs-Plus staff worked closely together and with other agencies in the neighborhood to address such problems.

The VHC staff at Gilmor Homes used a variety of outreach methods to increase residents' awareness of and use of its services. The staff distributed flyers door-to-door and held regular open-house events during which residents could get an overall health assessment and free blood pressure screening and were encouraged to enroll in the program. But residents who were suffering from severe drug abuse, alcoholism, or domestic violence were reluctant to come forward, again because of fear that they might be evicted by the housing authority for drug use or illegally harboring partners in their units. “I think they might be afraid they'll lose their unit if they report that they have a substance abuse problem,” said a resident. “But deep down inside I believe they really truly want that help to get themselves straight.” The VHC office staff included two longtime, well-respected residents of Gilmor Homes, and these residents encouraged their neighbors to stop by and look into the program.

Unfortunately, the on-site VHC office was discontinued in the summer of 2002 because of funding shortfalls. With the closure of the office in September 2002, Gilmor Homes and the surrounding neighborhood lost a valuable, readily accessible source of public health information and assistance.

Homeownership

Residents in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood also have access to homeownership programs. Habitat for Humanity has been very active in assisting local residents with renovating and purchasing homes.

Financial Incentives

The Housing Authority of Baltimore City normally calculates rents at its developments as 30 percent of any household income earned from either wages or business revenue. A household's rent, therefore, increases as wage income increases, which creates a disincentive for residents to work. Rent levels are capped at what the housing authority considers Fair Market Rent for housing in the area. But these ceiling rents are set so high that residents find it difficult to

earn enough to benefit from the caps. A three-bedroom housing unit might cost a working resident as much as \$684. Going to work also has hidden costs in terms of increased spending on clothing, child care, and transportation. These additional expenses can outweigh the benefits from increased income from employment, especially in a low-wage job. The goal of the financial incentives component of Jobs-Plus is to offset such losses by allowing residents to keep more of their income and accumulate savings.

The financial incentives program in Baltimore reduces the percentage of a household's earned income that is used to calculate rent — from 30 percent to 20 percent — and it cuts the rent ceilings in half. Since the Jobs-Plus rent structure is based on residents' income, the plan includes a built-in safety net that reduces rent if reported income declines. The plan was submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in May 1999, and it was approved by HUD and the Housing Authority of Baltimore City in February 2000. Jobs-Plus in Baltimore began enrolling residents in the financial incentives program in April 2000. However, a change occurred in the position of the executive director of the housing authority. In response to concerns that the deputy executive director raised about the existing incentives design, an escrow savings plan was added to Baltimore's financial incentives program. Working residents would have half their reduced rent deposited into a non-interest-bearing account for each month they worked over a consecutive 12-month period. At the end of each cycle (which falls in October), savings from these accounts would be rebated to residents, who could use these as they wished. (Residents who reported that they were not employed for 30 days or more during any 12-month cycle would forfeit any savings accumulated during this period.) The housing authority approved this modification, and the financial incentives program in Baltimore officially began in November 2000.³

Applicants for the incentives must complete a Jobs-Plus orientation and assessment and must submit three pay stubs to the Jobs-Plus office. This information is sent to the housing management office, where the rent is recalculated. The program requires the recipients to pay their rent on time, remain employed, and pass their annual housekeeping inspection.

Recipients who lose their jobs have the option of continuing to pay the rent that they were assessed with the 20 percent calculation and to look for another job. If they get another job within 30 days, they can remain in the incentives program and keep their escrow savings. However, if residents are unable to find employment or continue paying the rent at the financial incentives level, they will lose their escrow savings, and their rents will be recalculated according to the standard formula.

³For an extended examination of the financial incentives plans of the Jobs-Plus sites and the policy principles behind the program, see Miller and Riccio (2002).

At the outset of the program, Jobs-Plus's case manager was responsible for enrolling working residents in the incentives program. Due to the heavy demands already placed on the case manager, the community outreach coordinator assumed these responsibilities. She recruits and enrolls residents in the program, submits their paper work to the housing management office, and helps residents who have any problems.

In the first year of the incentives program, 48 residents enrolled; 27 residents fulfilled the program's requirements by retaining their employment, and they received escrow checks in November 2001. Checks ranged from \$177 to \$1,452. Since the checks were disbursed at the time of the winter holidays, some residents used their checks for gifts and holiday celebrations. Others invested them in various long-term savings instruments, targeting the money for automobiles and homes.⁴

Of the 21 residents who had to leave the incentives program and forfeit their escrow accounts, one had moved voluntarily out of Gilmore Homes, and three were evicted for nonpayment of rent. Of the 17 residents who defaulted from the program but stayed at Gilmore Homes, many reported having difficulty paying their rent on time. The housing authority requires that rent be paid in full by the sixth of the month. Residents who are paid biweekly sometimes have problems paying rent if their first check of the month comes after the date when the rent is due. Furthermore, residents must pay their rent in person during business hours; those who had recently started a job sometimes had trouble negotiating their work schedules to do so, and many residents did not feel that they could trust other residents to pay their rent for them.

However, several residents who defaulted in the rent incentives program said that even though they had lost the opportunity to receive the money in their escrow accounts, they had learned an important lesson from the program. These residents took responsibility for not meeting the requirements of the incentives program, and they vowed to make the changes needed to complete the program successfully in the future.

A sizable number of working residents at Gilmore Homes still have not enrolled in the financial incentives program. A housing management staff member said that a review of leasing information early in 2002 indicated that approximately 144 households were eligible for the incentives but had not enrolled. Jobs-Plus staff believe that these residents fear that applying for the incentives will subject them to further housing authority scrutiny and will reveal, for example, the presence of unregistered partners or relatives in their housing units or past unreported income. Also, some residents still have rent arrears to pay before they can enroll in the incentives program. These arrears usually consists of late fees incurred as part of arrangements to pay past due rent, and they appear on monthly rent statements.

⁴Based on participants' records maintained by Jobs-Plus in Baltimore.

Another problem in administering the financial incentives program has been the lack of management office staff at Gilmor Homes to assist Jobs-Plus staff in enrolling and tracking participants. Because the financial incentives program is a “special program” of the housing authority in Baltimore, regular staff have not been assigned to market and administer it. In the past, Jobs-Plus has had to rely heavily on the dedicated support of one housing authority staff person, the former assistant manager of Gilmor Homes. She created the systems for implementing and tracking the financial incentives in the management office, and she coordinated those efforts with the Jobs-Plus office. She also made herself available on weekends and during evening hours for the convenience of working residents. After being promoted to another housing authority position and leaving the management office, she continued to administer the program on a volunteer basis. She worked with the Jobs-Plus staff to review the leasing information submitted annually by the residents to identify households with employed members who were potentially eligible for the incentives. However, this staff person has left the housing authority to assume a position with HUD, and now the housing authority is working to provide Jobs-Plus with assistance in administering the rent incentives.

For the second year of the incentives program, Jobs-Plus hopes to double the enrollment of residents through outreach campaigns that include targeted letters, canvassing by the court captains, and new approaches to distributing fliers. For instance, letters were sent to eligible residents who have not yet enrolled, to notifying them of their eligibility and the program’s potential benefits.

Jobs-Plus also encourages working residents to apply for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and the program provides tax preparation assistance to ensure that they will do so. Residents can also attend financial management courses at the Resident Empowerment Office; these focus on such matters as how to open a bank account, manage one’s money, and clean up a credit history.

Community Support for Work

As at the other Jobs-Plus housing developments, at Gilmor Homes the last component of the program to be implemented was community support for work, which entails strengthening residents’ social networks and changing institutions to facilitate work. Over the past two years, the Resident Empowerment Office has taken the lead in implementing a number of community support for work activities. In June 2001, Jobs-Plus began recruiting and training residents to be court captains. Their primary responsibility is circulating printed and verbal information to the residents. Trained in providing basic information about Jobs-Plus, they receive a stipend and report regularly to the community development specialist at the Resident Empowerment Office, who supervises their activities. The residents also turn to the court captains on an informal basis to exchange information about the program and about their lives and jobs: “And

they come up with something and let us know what's going on, like they've found a job or they have a job or they got their GED or they got their license. We do have some residents that just see us and start giving us updates.”

However, the program has not always been able to benefit from such information about the community. There are inherent problems in asking residents to do outreach and act as informants in a housing development where a lot of illicit activity is occurring — including unregistered people residing in units illegally, drug activity, and even drive-by shootings. Residents try to avoid asking about one another's lives and opinions about the neighborhood, and the cost of “getting into another's business” can be deadly. Unfortunately, this discourages the court captains from reaching out to the hard-to-serve, who tend to be involved with illicit activities but are also the very people whom the program needs to reach. And the court captains have an informal rule that they will share only the information that residents relay during official work hours, even though residents mostly share information with the captains after work hours, in informal interactions. For instance, a resident aide talked about his informal mentoring on evenings and weekends: “[A]fter work, I mentor people. I be there for people. . . . So I hear all types of sorts of stuff that I wouldn't hear normally during work hours.” This included information about problems on the job and issues of domestic abuse, but he *did not* relay this information to the program: “No. If I do bring it back, it has to do with a situation or something that's going on within the work hours that will bring it up.” The program staff needed to assist the court captains further to help them deal with confidentiality issues and the culture of secrecy in order to capitalize on their knowledge of the community. A field researcher emphasized: “They need to be empowered to bring up issues without naming names.”

Conclusions

Moving into its fifth year of operation, Jobs-Plus in Baltimore can look back on rapid growth in its capacity to offer services and benefits to the residents of Gilmore Homes. A resident's remarks about her experience with Jobs-Plus might also be applicable to the program itself: “I have come a long way in a short time.” The fact that Jobs-Plus is place-based and employs residents as staff members and outreach workers has been a strong point in engaging residents and sustaining their work efforts throughout the program's short history. And the staff can now see evidence of the long-term effects of their efforts, in the many personal and professional accomplishments of the participants.

However, the program faces ongoing challenges in helping the residents of Gilmore Homes achieve self-sufficiency through employment. Job retention remains a problem among some working residents. And a core of “hard-to-serve” residents continues to elude efforts to engage them and steer them toward employment in the formal economy. Health issues — particularly substance abuse — constitute a serious obstacle to employment and job retention for

many of these residents, who are also often reluctant to get treatment. And although the Vision for Health Consortium has been an important source of treatment referrals and on-site support for substance abusers, its office at Gilmor Homes was closed in September 2002 because of funding shortfalls.

Jobs-Plus in Baltimore also continues to have problems engaging working residents in the financial incentives program. Enrollment remains low mostly because of residents' distrust of the housing authority but also because of the lack of "buy-in" among the management office staff, who are reluctant to assist in marketing and administering the incentives. The Jobs-Plus staff must constantly work to maintain the program's relationship with the management office to ensure that the incentives program runs smoothly.

Finally, administrative and financial issues at the Housing Authority of Baltimore City have thwarted Jobs-Plus's efforts to maintain critical aspects of the program and to pursue needed areas of program development. Several times over the past two years, changes at the senior levels of the housing authority have required Jobs-Plus to introduce the program to new executives in order to cultivate ongoing support. Funding for the program in Baltimore has decreased significantly over the years, however, and there are no provisions currently in place to ensure that it will continue after the Jobs-Plus demonstration ends in 2003.

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Chapter 3

Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga

Stan L. Bowie

Program Background and Highlights

The Jobs-Plus program in Chattanooga was selected as a site for the national demonstration in 1997, and Chattanooga is the only site in the southern region of the United States. The program is based at Harriet Tubman Homes, a predominantly African-American public housing development operated by the Chattanooga Housing Authority (CHA).

Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga has experienced two major organizational transitions that have fundamentally altered the dynamics and scope of its implementation of the Jobs-Plus model. The first transition occurred during the second and third quarters of 2000, when the program experienced a major organizational breakdown in service provision and participant recruitment. Several factors contributed to this crisis, including problems in staffing and managing the program. In particular, difficulties in establishing suitable roles for the residents of Harriet Tubman Homes impeded the scope and quality of services that Jobs-Plus provided as well as its appeal to the residents.

In the meantime, the CHA was increasingly preoccupied with other projects that limited the attention that the housing authority — as the lead agency of the Jobs-Plus collaborative — could give to overseeing Jobs-Plus and addressing its problems. The implementation of the financial incentives component of Jobs-Plus, which was eagerly awaited by the residents, also did not occur until 2000, because of delays experienced by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in securing the funding for this component. And as the site's troubles worsened, the other Jobs-Plus collaborative partners became less and less involved with the program's affairs.

This combination of problems had severe consequences for Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga. For the period January–June 2000, the program operated at a minimal level of productivity, in terms of case management, job preparation, and job placement programming with the Jobs-Plus participants. Residents' confidence in it declined precipitously, and key funding entities and collaborative partners threatened to withdraw their support. There were even serious discussions

Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga: Harriet Tubman Homes

Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga operates out of Harriet Tubman Homes, a predominantly African-American public housing development owned by the Chattanooga Housing Authority. Since the program's inception in 1997, it has been through several major reconfigurations. The first was prompted by a breakdown in program services and participant recruitment late in 1999. Factors that contributed to this organizational crisis included problems in staffing and managing the program; the housing authority's preoccupation with other projects, which limited the attention it could give to Jobs-Plus; and delays in implementing the financial incentives component because of HUD's problems in securing the needed funding. MDRC and key national demonstration funders and local collaborative members agreed that the program should be completely restructured. Through early 2001, under MDRC's direction, Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga underwent a major program redesign and a reconfiguration of staff, including the hiring of experienced and qualified professionals to replace residents in key staff positions.

Residents of Harriet Tubman Homes who came to Jobs-Plus for employment services were first assessed by the career development specialist. Those who were judged to be job-ready were referred to the job coach, who divided her time between the on-site office and the Southeast Tennessee Career Center, where she helped the residents use the center's job search services. Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga generally referred residents off-site for educational and vocational training programs. However, the Hamilton County Board of Education offered GED preparation classes and computer literacy training at Harriet Tubman Homes, and the Academy of Allied Health ran a series of Certified Nursing Assistant trainings for the residents. A number of public or private nonprofit agencies also provided on-site social services; among these providers was the Family Neighborhood Center, which offered training programs, after-school services, a food pantry, and a free lunch program. But Jobs-Plus referred residents to off-site service providers for child care and transportation assistance and for help with such serious barriers to employment as domestic violence and mental or physical health problems.

The Chattanooga program's financial incentives component consists of two rent steps and was implemented in November 2000. During Step 1, which lasted 16 months, working residents paid 10 percent of their adjusted income in rent, instead of the traditional authority-wide formula based on 30 percent of income. During Step 2 and throughout the remainder of the demonstration, rents are fixed at 20 percent of adjusted income. Adjustments include a \$100 reduction in countable income to offset the costs of commuting to employment, and they apply to all adult workers in the household. The earnings of dependents up to age 24 are disregarded, and the program absorbs "excess" utility costs. The community support for work component of Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga primarily took the form of hiring residents ("building captains") to disseminate information about job openings and program activities, to inform Jobs-Plus staff about new tenants and about residents' concerns, and to keep the housing development clean. This component, however, was not yet fully developed in the spring of 2002, when the housing authority decided to turn over its property management and social service operations to a private contractor. Because this transition would severely limit the attention that the housing authority could give to Jobs-Plus, the agency and the national demonstration's partners mutually agreed to continue a scaled-down, financial-incentives-only version of Jobs-Plus at Harriet Tubman Homes for the remainder of the demonstration. The employment services and the community support for work components would be discontinued. As of June 30, 2002, Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga officially became a financial-incentives-only program.

among the national demonstration's sponsors about whether it was feasible to continue operating Jobs-Plus at the Chattanooga site.¹

After a series of meetings and discussions among MDRC officials and key members of the Jobs-Plus financial and organizational support network, it was determined that it would be feasible to “reconstitute” Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga. The key ingredients in that effort would involve an extensive assessment of personnel, a redesign of the program, replacement and/or elimination of Jobs-Plus staff positions, and deliberate steps to professionalize the program. (These efforts are described below, under “Program Infrastructure.”)

In September 2002, Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga began another major transition when it was determined that the program would offer only the financial incentives component for the remainder of the demonstration; it would discontinue the other two Jobs-Plus components — employment services and community support for work. In July 2001, the CHA had hired its third executive director since Jobs-Plus's inception in 1997. The incoming director informed the funders of the national demonstration that he intended to privatize the CHA's management and maintenance operations. During the spring of 2002, the CHA and the national demonstration partners negotiated and mutually agreed to continue a scaled-down version of Jobs-Plus at Harriet Tubman Homes: a financial-incentives-only program.

Most of this chapter describes the features and operations of Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga through the summer of 2002, when the program was still offering employment services, financial incentives, and (to a lesser degree) community support for work activities. As the chapter concludes, it elaborates on the projected transformation of Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga into a financial-incentives-only program — and on the significance of this for the national demonstration research.

The Housing Development and Its Population

Harriet Tubman Homes is located in the East Chattanooga area, a few miles west of the Tennessee River and approximately 10 to 15 minutes by car from downtown Chattanooga. Within 3 or 4 miles of the development are various retail establishments as well as large industrial and commercial sites, a train yard, and the Chattanooga Area Rapid Transit Authority

¹The Jobs-Plus collaborative in Chattanooga strongly emphasized resident empowerment through formal control of the program, and it gave the Resident Management Corporation (RMC) of Harriet Tubman Homes primary access to positions on Jobs-Plus's Governance Board and on the program's staff. These decisions contributed to the program's subsequent administrative and operational difficulties. For instance, residents were hired for key staff positions for which they had inadequate professional training and experience, and lines of supervisory authority and accountability over Jobs-Plus were blurred between the project director and the RMC, creating tensions between them.

(CARTA), which serves the area with a bus line. Several churches are adjacent to Harriet Tubman Homes, most notably, Seven-City Ministries.

Harriet Tubman Homes contains 420 households, 4.7 percent of which were unoccupied as of January 2001. It is the largest of the 21 public housing developments operated by the CHA, with 964 residents, or 15 percent of the total public housing population in the City of Chattanooga.² The development's generally well-maintained 37 acres contain one- and two-story brick townhouse-type units that are arranged in clusters around courtyards. Each unit has a small yard, in some cases bordered by low chain fencing. The residents make good use of their community facilities, which include a gymnasium operated by the Boys and Girls Club, a community multipurpose center, after-school programs for children and adolescents, a beauty salon owned and operated by a resident, a recently opened youth dance studio, and a playground area for children.

According to the CHA, in January 2001, over half the residents (54 percent) were age 17 or younger. The next-largest group (25 percent) were ages 18 to 34, followed by ages 35 to 54 (15 percent) and ages 55 or older (6 percent). The socioeconomic status of the residents is typical of public housing communities. In January 2001, only 26 percent of the 400 heads of household were employed full time, and another 6 percent were employed part time or seasonally. The majority of the heads of household (42 percent) had an annual income of less than \$5,000. Approximately 30 percent had annual incomes between \$5,000 and \$10,000, and almost 29 percent had incomes that exceeded \$10,000. Of the residents at Harriet Tubman Homes who had an income source, 84 percent were females. The primary sources of income were Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (29 percent); employment (24 percent); Supplementary Security Income (SSI) (16 percent); Social Security (15 percent); and child support (10 percent).

Program Infrastructure

Staffing and Management

As of July 2002, the staff of Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga consisted of a project director, a TANF eligibility specialist, a case manager/intake specialist, a community development specialist, a case manager specialist/record keeper, a career development specialist, and a job coach. In addition, there were approximately 26 community support for work personnel, including "building captains." The staff's responsibilities are described below:

²Data in this and the following paragraph are based on *Tenant Demographics* (Chattanooga Housing Authority, 2001).

- The **project director** was responsible for overseeing all supervisory and administrative functions of Jobs-Plus. This included designing services; recruiting, hiring, and training staff; interfacing with the Jobs-Plus collaborative and other partners in the nonprofit and business community; monitoring the budget; maintaining program records; and issuing reports.
- The **TANF eligibility counselor** was responsible for assessing residents' eligibility for income maintenance (TANF) benefits and Food Stamps. This individual also interviewed citizens and disabled residents to assess their eligibility for services offered by the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS). This staff member indicated that she was only indirectly or tangentially involved with the Jobs-Plus program; her interactions with Jobs-Plus consisted of attending some staff meetings and occasionally providing information about Jobs-Plus clients who were receiving TANF benefits.
- The **case manager specialist/recordkeeper** assisted the eligibility counselor by referring clients to DHS training programs and following up their progress. She provided these services to Jobs-Plus participants only if they were also TANF recipients.
- The **case manager assistant specialist** was the initial point of contact for new Jobs-Plus participants. In addition to intake appointments, this individual provided residents with an orientation to Jobs-Plus, opened a case file, assisted clients in completing administrative and background information forms, and scheduled an appointment with the career development specialist.
- The **career development specialist** was responsible for initial psychosocial assessments of Jobs-Plus participants, referrals for social support services and job openings, developing a Basic Employability Plan, and providing an orientation about Jobs-Plus's financial incentives.
- The **job coach** was responsible for skills assessment, developing a Basic Employability Plan with the resident, and providing "soft skills" and job readiness training. The job coach also supervised participants' job search efforts, matching the participants with job openings, scheduling job interviews, facilitating job retention and advancement, and tracking their progress on the job.
- The **community support specialist** was responsible for program outreach, informing residents about the program, developing support networks for participants, and making and following up referrals to Jobs-Plus.

- The **building captains** were residents of Harriet Tubman Homes who were paid a stipend to support the outreach efforts of the community support specialist; to engage in community beautification activities; to keep residents informed about Jobs-Plus activities by distributing flyers and talking with their neighbors; and to serve as liaisons among Jobs-Plus, the housing authority, and the residents.

The Jobs-Plus staff positions were funded by four different sources. The project director was the former property manager of Harriet Tubman Homes and an employee of the housing authority who was essentially “on loan” to Jobs-Plus. The job coach and the career development specialist were employees of the Southeast Career Center who were reassigned to work with the program. These “in-kind” positions were funded by the Southeast Tennessee Developmental District, which is the administrative entity for the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). The TANF eligibility counselor, the case manager specialist/record keeper, and the case manager assistant were all funded by DHS. Finally, the positions of the community support specialist and the building captains were funded by a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

So far, the description of the organizational and supervisory structure of Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga reflects substantial changes that were made in 2001 in staffing and management practices to address a precipitous decline in the program’s performance. As an earlier MDRC report stated, this site’s efforts to engage residents heavily emphasized from its inception “resident empowerment through formal control of the program” to the point that “employment was often in danger of being lost as the primary objective of Jobs-Plus and the measure of its success.” For example, to signal that the program was a resident-driven initiative, the collaborative guaranteed the residents of Harriet Tubman Homes at least half of Jobs-Plus’s staff positions, including positions that required the residents to provide employment assistance and case management — services for which the residents who were subsequently hired lacked educational preparation and professional experience. Consequently, the first project director had to dedicate much of his time to training and supervising the resident staff or to performing their responsibilities himself. Furthermore, the lines of accountability between the project director and colocated staff from other agencies were also unclear, and there was little coordination between other agencies’ staffs and the Jobs-Plus staff to ensure that residents were getting the services they needed to secure and retain employment. Finally, the entire Jobs-Plus staff needed a better understanding of the program model. Over time, these factors — in addition to other problems mentioned earlier — contributed to the program’s poor performance and organizational instability, bringing resident recruitment and job placements to a standstill.³

³For a discussion of Jobs-Plus’s efforts in Chattanooga to engage residents in program development, governance, and service delivery, see Kato and Riccio (2001, pp. 95-96).

Consequently, in October 2001, MDRC took the lead in working with the CHA and the collaborative partners to reconstitute, or overhaul, Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga. MDRC provided extensive consultation and technical assistance for the process. It took approximately four months to reestablish organizational equilibrium. The challenges included a comprehensive assessment of Jobs-Plus's personnel and continuous efforts to develop and reach consensus on a logical redesign that incorporated personnel constraints, a depleted funding base, and an arduous and politically charged process of hiring a new project director. All case files were audited, and the program's technology needs were assessed. Efforts were also made to modify various program elements, such as the weeklong orientation that was required for enrollment — a lengthy process that discouraged some residents from applying for the program. During this period, the expiration of the federal Employment Development and Supportive Services (ED/SS) grant that Jobs-Plus had been using to fund various staff positions provided a timely opportunity to let go of several staff — and instead to hire experienced and qualified professionals for key program positions. The entire staff then received training in case management.

Various agencies had also colocated a few staff members at Harriet Tubman Homes to work with Jobs-Plus. The fact that these staff members were employees of, and accountable to, other agencies created difficulties for the Jobs-Plus project director in supervising their work. For example, although the TANF eligibility counselor was physically located at the Jobs-Plus site, at least two other individuals in the Department of Human Services supervised her, and she understandably believed that their concerns and directions took precedence over those of the Jobs-Plus project director. Such problems were subsequently addressed by efforts to clarify the lines of accountability and staff members' responsibilities through MDRC-sponsored case management training and through negotiations with senior officials of the agencies involved.

Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga continued to face various programmatic challenges after the restructuring took place. Although the new project director had been the property manager at Harriet Tubman Homes for many years, she had no experience in managing an employment program — much less an unstable one — and she faced a steep “learning curve” in dealing with ongoing staff issues and interfacing with the collaborative and other local agencies. She also had to assume responsibilities for supervising the building captains, because of instability in the position of the community support specialist, and she had to conduct some intake and case management activities because of trust issues that occasionally arose between prospective participants and the career development specialist. Finally, most of the Jobs-Plus staff were also new to their positions and, like the project director, had to “hit the ground running” to get the program operating again.

Collaboration

Initially, a collaborative was organized to help design and govern Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga. It consisted of residents and senior-level administrative staff from organizations and foundations that were Jobs-Plus partners. The organizations included the Chattanooga Housing Authority (CHA), the Workforce Investment Board, the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS), the Harriet Tubman Resident Management Corporation (RMC), the Chattanooga Department of Family and Children's Services, the Chattanooga Urban League, the Private Industry Council, the Southeast Tennessee Developmental District, the Office of the Mayor of Chattanooga, the Chattanooga Area Rapid Transit Authority (CARTA), the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga, the Lyndhurst Foundation, the Greater Chattanooga Community Foundation, Project Head Start, Inner-City Ministries, the Signal Center, the Chattanooga Department of Human Services (DHS), and several local corporate representatives. The collaborative originally consisted of approximately 50 private and public sector organizations, many of which wrote letters of support when CHA applied to participate in the Jobs-Plus demonstration.

The idea of a collaborative was based on the premise that the Jobs-Plus programs could be most effective, best tailored to local conditions, and most sustainable if the primary responsibility for designing, funding, and operating them were a collective effort by many committed individuals and organizations in the community. The mission statement of the Chattanooga collaborative indicates that it was founded "to provide the services and supports to assist the residents to achieve their vision . . . by providing jobs, training, supportive services, incentives, education, technical assistance, and financial assistance to the Jobs-Plus Program."⁴

The collaborative designated the CHA as the lead agency. Its responsibility was to provide Jobs-Plus with fiscal management and administrative oversight; to handle staff procurement, resource development, and interagency agreements; and to implement decisions of Jobs-Plus's Governance Board. Other collaborative agencies were expected to participate in making policy decisions and to provide training, education, support services, employment opportunities, client-tracking information to evaluate services, and feedback regarding program implementation. The collaborative included several standing committees charged with the responsibility of planning for specific aspects of the program, such as job training, financial incentives, program sustainability and marketing, and community support for work.

As was the case with the original staffing structure for Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga, the original governing structure conferred on the resident leadership at Harriet Tubman Homes significant authority in the effort to make the program a resident-driven initiative. In June 1997, a two-day collaborative retreat was held in Sweetwater, Tennessee, a small town located ap-

⁴Chattanooga Jobs-Plus, 1998, p. 9.

proximately an hour from Chattanooga.⁵ Representatives of the collaborative established a Governance Board that would have the responsibility for developing Jobs-Plus policies, communicating those policies to the full collaborative, and relaying those policies to the lead agency for implementation. The participants agreed to give the residents of Harriet Tubman Homes the majority of the board positions (6 out of 11), tipping decisionmaking in their favor. Furthermore, only the residents on the board would be permitted to second the nominations of the other five board members, which were to be held by representatives of the CHA, of the Private Industry Council, and of the Tennessee Department of Human Services, as well as by an elected government official and an employer.⁶

Members of the Resident Management Corporation (RMC) subsequently assumed the six board positions reserved for residents. These residents played a leading role in selecting the services that Jobs-Plus offered, in retaining the service contracts in the office of the RMC, and in filling staff positions, several of which were assumed by the RMC officers themselves. This created a quandary for the project director, who was expected to supervise employees who also had the authority as Governance Board members to countermand his directions, which only added to the organizational difficulties of the program. The Governance Board was suspended in fall 1999; the collaborative committees had ceased to operate during the first six months of 2000; and the collaborative had collapsed by fall 2000.

As part of the efforts to reconstitute Jobs-Plus, key members of the collaborative convened in October 2000 and made the decision to create a new Governance Board to provide direction and oversight. Resident representation on this new board would be limited to only the RMC president and one other resident, thereby ending residents' control over Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga. Furthermore, in February 2001, the new project director reconvened the collaborative, advised the members of new directions being undertaken as a result of the reconstitution process, and established a schedule for quarterly meetings of the collaborative. The project director had requested that each collaborative member complete an "Agency Update" form that included current contact information as well as an inventory and description of the agency's services.

⁵This meeting was attended by almost 40 individuals, including high-level administrators from such key organizations as the executive directors of the CHA, the Lyndhurst Foundation, the Private Industry Council, and the Greater Chattanooga Community Foundation. Other organizations represented at the meeting included the Resident Management Corporation of Harriet Tubman Homes, the Tennessee Department of Human Services, Inner-City Ministries, the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga, the Chattanooga Police Department, the CADAS substance abuse program, Kandy Kastle Daycare, Chattanooga Head Start, and the Harriet Tubman Express, a program to prevent teenage pregnancy.

⁶The resident board members also insisted that their agency partners send to the board only senior-level representatives who could make final decisions for their agencies.

Facilities

Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga has been operating out of two separate and very visible facilities located within Harriet Tubman Homes. The two buildings are adjacent and on the same street, which is known locally as “Services Row” because several other social service organizations are located within a two-block area, including youth and educational programs. The street also includes a beauty salon, and recently a dance studio for children has opened, and a music studio is under development. All the facilities have attractive signs that are visible to residents and visitors and that emphasize the services available in this community.

The program’s main facility is the Jobs-Plus Resource Center, which was formerly a unit large enough for two and a half families. The top floor of this spacious, extensively renovated facility housed the project director, administrative personnel, and job developers and job coaches. The first floor consists of several multipurpose rooms, including a reception area and two large rooms — one with desk space and an area that was used for job search and job readiness activities, such as videotaping mock job interviews. The area had a telephone that participants could use to explore work opportunities and a computer and printer that they used in preparing résumés. This area was connected by sliding doors to a multipurpose room that was used for orientation classes, social gatherings, and Jobs-Plus committee and staff meetings. The connecting doors could be opened to accommodate larger groups of people.

The program’s second facility was a family townhouse unit that was renovated to accommodate staff and activities. This building formerly housed several Jobs-Plus staff members as well as colocated staff from other agencies. All offices had computers and private telephone lines with voice mail, and staff also had access to printers and a copy machine.

In addition, Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga regularly used the Southeast Career Center, a One-Stop established by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The Career Center is a large, modern facility located in a high-traffic urban mall approximately 20-minutes by car from Harriet Tubman Homes. It is also located on a main bus route. The center is clean, professionally run, and staffed with caring and personable people. It offers a variety of employment services, including eligibility determination, career assessment, self-directed job search and job placement assistance, and referrals for training and education programs, interview preparation services, and parenting classes. Jobs-Plus routinely sent participants to the Career Center for services. If residents did not have transportation, Jobs-Plus would provide bus tokens. The Jobs-Plus job coach split her time between the office at Harriet Tubman Homes — where she worked two days per week — and the Southeast Career Center. This was a useful arrangement for Jobs-Plus participants, who were thus assured of a familiar face at the Career Center. The center’s staff also faxed employment openings to Jobs-Plus, to relay to participants.

Program Flow

The following sections describe the service delivery sequence that was laid out for applicants and participants who came to Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga for assistance, beginning with efforts to recruit residents. Applicants underwent an enrollment and assessment and were then assigned to a career development specialist, who directed them to various employment services depending on their level of job readiness, work experience, career goals, and so forth. This process was implemented with varying degrees of effectiveness and was modified over the course of the demonstration according to residents' needs, staffing capacity, and the local availability of services.

Recruitment

Jobs-Plus's outreach and recruitment efforts at Harriet Tubman Homes were critical to its ability to encourage residents to participate. Initially, Jobs-Plus was a new program without a local track record, and residents regarded it with suspicion — having seen many well-intentioned programs come and go over the years without making an appreciable change in their individual or community standard of living. Early outreach and recruitment activities included special events, circulation of electronic and printed media (such as a Jobs-Plus newsletter and informational flyers), door-to-door visits, motivational speakers, and even Jobs-Plus-sponsored religious “revivals.” The management office at Harriet Tubman Homes as well as local service providers were also asked to distribute information about Jobs-Plus. For instance, posters and flyers were displayed at the management office, and the management staff routinely informed prospective tenants about the program. These early outreach and recruitment activities were quite successful. Jobs-Plus captured the imagination of residents and created a level of enthusiasm rarely seen in public housing settings. Despite the organizational difficulties that arose as the program evolved, it appeared that virtually all the residents were aware of Jobs-Plus, even if they did not know exactly what the program entailed.

Several factors probably contributed to such a successful initial outreach and recruitment campaign. First, residents were centrally involved in designing and staffing the program and recruiting participants. Second, the program's design seemed to the residents to be logical, easy to understand, and adequate to meet their job procurement or career-enhancing needs in virtually any stage of personal development. Residents were particularly drawn to the promise of the financial incentives and the idea that these could “make work pay” for public housing residents. Finally, the full-time community organizer was skillful in providing the staff — particularly the community revitalization counselors — with an explanatory angle that conveyed the program's basic message effectively and persuaded the residents that Jobs-Plus could improve their well-being.

Since its reconstitution, Jobs-Plus has also been successful in resurrecting residents' interest. The new project director did much to overcome their cynicism about the program. As the property manager at Harriet Tubman Homes, the project director had earned a reputation for treating residents with respect and fairness and for being sincerely interested in their well-being. When she became the project director of Jobs-Plus, she worked alongside the resident outreach workers and personally knocked on doors, made home visits, and talked with residents about their goals in life in the effort to convince them that Jobs-Plus could help them achieve self-sufficiency and cherished life goals. She also helped to reestablish Jobs-Plus's credibility as an employment program by hiring qualified and committed professional staff. And when residents finally began to receive the program's financial incentives, they saw tangible benefits in terms of rent savings for joining Jobs-Plus and for working.

Orientation, Enrollment, and Assessment

The orientation, enrollment, and assessment processes have evolved over the life of Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga and have become less complicated during the last two years. A key facet of the original orientation "curriculum" was an extended session that all applicants had to attend in order to become a member. The 10-hour orientation took place in 2-hour sessions over five days, beginning on Mondays and ending on Fridays. Several Jobs-Plus staff participated in that process, which included "classes" on goal-setting, time management, job interviewing skills, and instruction about proper workplace attire and behavior. This process included a videotaped mock interview by the participants, followed by a critique and discussion with the Jobs-Plus job coach. These orientation activities concluded with a graduation ceremony at which participants were awarded a certificate of completion and received a Jobs-Plus T-shirt. The overarching goal of the five-day session was to foster enthusiasm by motivating the participants and getting them into a mind-set that promoted hard work, perseverance, and patience in the pursuit of self-sufficiency.

During orientation, applicants were also enrolled in the program by completing a series of forms designed to collect their personal and background data. For instance, a preliminary intake form requested their name, information about their status as a resident of Harriet Tubman Homes, a copy of their driver's license or other photo identification, and their Social Security number. Another registration form assigned them a client number and requested their home address, demographic data, emergency contact information, income and income source information, and public assistance status.

A battery of administrative forms assessed the registrants' readiness for employment by inquiring about their training background, personal issues, and life aspirations. A key aspect of this assessment was a Family and Community Enrichment Plan (FACEP), a written plan developed mutually by the Jobs-Plus employment counselor and the resident to indicate the skills that

needed to be developed and the barriers that needed to be addressed in order for the resident to achieve self-sufficiency. The FACEP listed eight potential problem areas: housing and related skills, employment skills, literacy skills, family and/or community functioning skills, child care and transportation, abuse and crisis intervention, and mental health problems. The assessment also collected data on the participant's educational attainment, employment history, and training and/or certifications (for example, Certified Nursing Assistant). A final part of this process ascertained whether the participant had a criminal history or had used counseling services. When this assessment process was completed, the participant was assigned to the Jobs-Plus career development specialist.

Beginning in the fourth quarter of 2000, the decision was made to eliminate the five-day orientation process because its length discouraged some residents from enrolling. Even if the sessions were desirable, reductions in staff made them impractical, if not impossible. Furthermore, enrollees would be assessed along either a track for TANF clients or a track for non-TANF clients. This change was instituted because the Jobs-Plus eligibility counselor — who was a colocated DHS employee — was only permitted to provide services to Jobs-Plus participants who were enrolled in TANF and who were usually also eligible for additional services (under the auspices of the State of Tennessee) that were limited to TANF clients.

Job Readiness and Job Search

The next steps for the residents of Harriet Tubman Homes who were in Jobs-Plus varied according to their employment histories, their readiness for work, and the severity and scope of their barriers to employment. Based on the outcome of the assessment process, the residents could be referred to job readiness and job search assistance, job interviews, education or training, or support services to address serious impediments to employment. This section addresses the first two options. The career development specialist worked with the job coach to develop an employability plan for the resident, either to enhance employability or to refer those who were judged to be “job-ready” to employment.⁷ Job readiness activities to enhance employability included soft-skills training in workplace conduct and in how to create a résumé, complete application forms, and interview for a job.

Earlier in the program, residents who were TANF recipients were referred to the Tubman Group, a resident-operated business that offered job readiness services (discussed in the next section). In cases where a resident was determined to be job-ready, a job coach worked with the resident to identify appropriate job openings to pursue. This involved screening the

⁷The Jobs-Plus staff also received training from MDRC's technical assistance providers on using Income Calculator, a Web-based software program designed by MDRC to explain to the residents the benefits of employment and the financial incentives.

requirements of various openings to determine whether the jobs were suitable for the resident. The job coach then helped the resident schedule and prepare for interviews. It is important to note that after Jobs-Plus was restructured, the job coach was assigned off-site three days a week at the Southeast Career Center. There the job coach had access to the center's facilities and resources to help the residents locate job openings and secure employment. Jobs-Plus participants, for the most part, were more comfortable engaging in job search and related activities at the Jobs-Plus Resource Center on-site at Harriet Tubman Homes. They were familiar with the setting; they knew the employees; and the proximity to their homes made it very convenient for them. Nonetheless, after the program was restructured, the project director was a proponent of sending participants to the Southeast Career Center. In her view, some residents were more conscientious about their personal appearance and demeanor when they went to the Career Center than when they visited the on-site facility, which was in their "comfort zone." She felt that it was important training for work to require residents to get up in the morning, groom themselves, put on appropriate attire, and catch a bus if necessary to get to an appointment at the Career Center. The project director believed that requiring the participants to travel to the Career Center was "one of the best things we could have done."

Job Development and Job Creation

Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga did have agreements with some local employers, including collaborative partners, that gave priority to program participants for being interviewed. These employers included Marriott Corporation, Inroads Manufacturing Corporation, and Harrison Direct, a television order and shipping company. Collaborative members also assisted in the early stages of Jobs-Plus's implementation by contacting prospective employers, providing information about the program and its mission, and encouraging them to consider Jobs-Plus participants when they had job openings. The career development specialist worked to establish or enhance rapport with various businesses in order to develop employment opportunities for Jobs-Plus participants.

In the early years of program, Jobs-Plus also promoted the idea of residents' learning to operate private businesses as an avenue toward self-sufficiency. This concept crystallized particularly around "the Tubman Group," consisting of women from Harriet Tubman Homes who were legally incorporated to offer job readiness instruction to fellow residents. They taught the soft skills needed to secure and retain employment, such as goal-setting, time management, money management, workplace behavior and decorum, and health. The members of the Tubman Group received training to operate a business from the University of North Carolina's Keenan Institute, Success by Design (a local business development organization), and the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC); the group got funds for training and startup from the Benwood Foundation, the Chattanooga Community Foundation, and the Lyndhurst Foundation. The Tubman Group received a contract from the Tennessee Department of Human Ser-

vices to provide soft-skills training on the UTC campus to 82 Jobs-Plus participants who were TANF recipients, but the group was able to serve only 21 participants during this contract period. The low turnout partly reflected difficulties in getting a steady flow of referrals of TANF recipients from busy welfare caseworkers who had heavy caseloads to process and also partly reflected the unwillingness of some residents to go to the unfamiliar UTC campus to get the training. However, the members of the Tubman Group also had difficulties keeping up with the demands of offering training and operating a business, and the group eventually dissolved as members left to focus on other employment interests or to attend to health problems.

One member of the Tubman Group was successful in establishing a small business at Harriet Tubman Homes. The business was a beauty shop, and it was initially funded by a loan from the federal Employment Development and Supportive Services (ED/SS) entrepreneurial development program. This program was an important element of the original Jobs-Plus program in Chattanooga. Two other residents received ED/SS loans, but they defaulted when their business ventures were unsuccessful. The beauty shop has operated for two years and is regularly utilized by the residents. The owner has experienced the “growing pains” that are associated with operating a new business. For instance, although she needs an employee to relieve her at times, she does not have the resources to hire someone. In addition, the shop’s patrons began to do things that annoyed her as a business owner. For example, some customers would leave their children for services and would return to pick them up much later. Since the children were unattended, the owner had to baby-sit until the parents returned. This compelled her to post a new regulation requiring parents to remain with their children while the children received services.

Job Retention and Career Advancement

The policy for promoting job retention at Harriet Tubman Homes involved contacting residents over a period of five weeks after they were hired to see how they were doing on the job. At least three contacts were supposed to be made by the Jobs-Plus staff during the resident’s first week on the job, to assess the fit between the resident and the work environment. Once the staff were assured that the resident was making satisfactory progress, the number of contacts was reduced. All contacts were documented in the client’s case files and in a separate “Participant Employment Report” that included detailed information about the resident’s interviews, employment, and discharges while participating in Jobs-Plus.⁸

⁸Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga maintained the following records for program management purposes:

- “Participant Employment Report” was a log of each participant’s job interviews, placements, and discharges. For instance, the job placement data included hiring dates, job titles, job categories (unskilled, skilled, and so on), employers, and wage levels.
- “Telephone Contact Activity” documented all contacts with program participants, including the dates, times, and content of discussions.

(continued)

These follow-up efforts, however, became sporadic during the troubled months of the program. It was only after Jobs-Plus was restructured that the project director made it a point to emphasize following up job placements in order to solve problems and promote job retention. In addition, the project director and career development specialist began working with employed residents to help them secure promotions, better jobs, and additional training and education.

Education and Training

Jobs-Plus participants had access to education and vocational training opportunities on-site at Harriet Tubman Homes and off-site through various local institutions. In order to take part in education or training programs during the evening hours, residents often worked part time or full time during the day. Several education and vocational training providers offered on-site classes. The Hamilton County Board of Education offered GED preparation classes and computer literacy training. Over the years, the Academy of Allied Health offered several training series to become a Certified Nursing Assistant. And Kandy Kastle (a local child care franchise) and Chattanooga State Community College provided both on-site and off-site training in managing a child care center. Jobs-Plus often referred residents off-site to the Urban League of Greater Chattanooga for training in office technology.

Support Services

Support services were an integral part of the assistance that Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga provided to the residents of Harriet Tubman Homes. The intake and assessment process identified any barriers that might prevent residents from participating in training or from seeking and retaining employment. This was part of the Basic Employability Plan that was mutually developed by the resident and the career development specialist. The Jobs-Plus staff were responsible for helping residents access the appropriate services to address any employment barriers that were identified.

Some support services were available on-site. For instance, Jobs-Plus provided transportation assistance for short-term work-related needs and for emergencies. The program had access to a van provided by the housing authority's Resident Initiatives Program to take residents to job interviews on short notice or to and from work during the period before they re-

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- "Case Notes" documented all contacts with participants or with an organization that was contacted on their behalf.
 - Administrative documentation that was routinely collected included data on the total number of enrolled participants, new enrollees, job placements, training placements, participants enrolled in General Educational Development (GED) classes, initial assessments completed, participants receiving financial incentives, and residents who moved out of Harriet Tubman Homes.

ceived their first paycheck. The van was owned by the Resident Management Corporation (RMC) but was operated by one of the Jobs-Plus community revitalization counselors who had a chauffeur's license. The Jobs-Plus program paid for the RMC's liability insurance in return for using the van; but prohibitively high increases in insurance rates, vandalism to the van, and the program's restructuring caused Jobs-Plus to discontinue the insurance arrangement. The RMC was then responsible for maintaining the vehicle and for providing drivers and insurance. When Jobs-Plus needed the van for program purposes, the staff would simply contract with the RMC to use it.

There were other support services available on-site for Jobs-Plus participants and their families. Most services were provided by public or private nonprofit agencies that operated satellite facilities at Harriet Tubman Homes. The nonprofit agencies included the Boys and Girls Club as well as Girls, Inc. Harriet Tubman Express was a program that was aimed at preventing teenage pregnancy and was funded by the Hamilton County Health Department. The Family Neighborhood Center offered classroom space for training programs, after-school services, a food pantry, and a free lunch program; the center was funded by the City of Chattanooga Department of Human Services. Finally, the "One-Room Drop-In School," which was funded by Hamilton County Schools, offered tutorial programs and GED classes. In the very early stages of Chattanooga's Jobs-Plus program, RMC members reportedly used these facilities to provide short-term child care for Jobs-Plus enrollees who were going through assessment or orientation.

Jobs-Plus referred residents off-site to public, private, or nonprofit service providers for longer-term child care needs and for services to address other barriers to employment, such as domestic violence or mental or physical health problems. Many of the agencies that provided support services were members of the Jobs-Plus collaborative, including the City of Chattanooga Family and Children's Services, the Tennessee Managed Care Network, the Tennessee Department of Human Services, Community Matters, the Cedar Hill Center, the CADAS Project First Step (substance abuse treatment), the City of Chattanooga Department of General Services, Special Transportation Services, Head Start, Signal Center, and Kelly's Adult Daycare Service. The services provided by these agencies were not exclusively for the residents of Harriet Tubman Homes, with the exception of services that were located on-site.

Financial Incentives

The financial incentives plan for Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga went into effect in November 2000 and is currently the only component of the Jobs-Plus model that the Chattanooga site offers. The plan was intended to be particularly generous during the initial period of the demonstration, in order to help the participants defray work-related expenses and to encourage work-eligible residents to secure employment. The principal features of the Chattanooga's financial incentives program are as follows:

- Participants' rents are reduced from 30 percent to 10 percent of adjusted income during the first 16 months of the Jobs-Plus program.
- During the second phase, rents are fixed at 20 percent of adjusted income until the end of the demonstration (an additional 18 months).
- To reduce the expense of commuting to and from work, the income on which rent is calculated is reduced by \$100 per month for families with a full-time worker. If two adults in a household are working full time, they both receive this transportation disregard.
- The earnings of dependents age 24 or younger are not counted as income when calculating a household's rent. This adds six years to the cutoff age of 18 under traditional rules.
- Working residents are not required to pay "excess" utility costs. Jobs-Plus absorbs price spikes affecting utility costs.

Residents learn about the Jobs-Plus financial incentives in several ways. When prospective residents apply for a public housing unit, the housing authority staff of the Leasing and Occupancy Department at the main administrative offices tell them about Jobs-Plus and its financial incentives as benefits of living at Harriet Tubman Homes. They emphasize that the financial incentives can "make work pay" for participants. The property management staff at Harriet Tubman Homes reinforce this message during the move-in interviews with new residents, and they repeat it during the process of enrolling in the incentives plan if residents chose to participate in Jobs-Plus. Informative flyers about the incentives are posted in the lobby of the housing authority's administrative offices and in the on-site office of the development's property manager. As of September 2002, a total of 196 residents had enrolled in the Jobs-Plus financial-incentives-only program.⁹ All records regarding financial incentives are maintained at the office of the property manager, who was formerly the Jobs-Plus project director and now operates from the Jobs-Plus Resource Center.

To be eligible for financial incentives, the Jobs-Plus participants have to be employed full time or part time. Even if they are elderly or disabled, they are eligible for financial incentives as long as they are employed. To receive financial incentives, residents simply go through the enrollment process and provide verification of full-time or part-time employment, in the form of paycheck stubs. (The housing authority cross-references this information with resident employment data contained in its own tenant records and — in the case of TANF recipients — with the records of the Tennessee Department of Human Services.)

⁹Based on Harriet Tubman Homes financial incentives records, November 2002.

The implementation of the incentives program in Chattanooga was delayed for approximately two years. One factor contributing to the delay was a change in the housing authority's executive director. Unlike the executive director who had brought Jobs-Plus to Chattanooga and who strongly supported the program, the incoming executive director had philosophical objections to the idea that the residents of Harriet Tubman Homes would be getting preferential access to special programming that was not available to other public housing residents in Chattanooga. Unfortunately, the delay undermined the program's credibility among the residents and contributed to the overall decline in Jobs-Plus participation levels in 2001. Despite this delay, participants who have enrolled since November 2000 will receive the Jobs-Plus financial incentives through the end of the demonstration.

Initially, some working residents who enrolled in the incentives program were not "picked up" by the housing authority's recordkeeping system and did not receive the financial incentives. There were concerns that the credibility of the program would be further undermined as "the word got around" about these initial administrative problems. Efforts have therefore been made to improve coordination between Jobs-Plus and the housing authority in administering the incentives. Recordkeeping for the financial-incentives-only program is coordinated by the property manager of Harriet Tubman Homes and by the chief financial officer of the housing authority.

Until Jobs-Plus became a financial-incentives-only program, the development's property manager worked with the Jobs-Plus project director to track all current and new participants in the financial incentives program and to keep Jobs-Plus informed about new residents at Harriet Tubman Homes, to target them with information about the incentives. The project director reported participant data to the housing authority's administrative offices. After Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga became an incentives-only program, the property manager (previously the Jobs-Plus project director) reported participant data directly to the housing authority's Finance Office.

Jobs-Plus also tried to be fair to incentives participants who lost their jobs. If a job loss was the result of a layoff or of substantiated unfair treatment by employers, the Jobs-Plus staff tried to maintain the resident in the incentives program until he or she got another job. The staff stayed in touch with the resident and helped with job search. However, if an incentives participant quit a job for an unacceptable reason, the resident was dropped from the financial incentives program immediately.

Community Support for Work

The community support for work component of Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga did not begin to take shape until the first and second quarters of 2001. A series of events occurred over the life of Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga that impeded full implementation of this component. When the

program was implemented in 1998, there was a full-time community organizer on board as part of the original staff. In addition to outreach and recruitment activities, the community organizer was the individual who would have developed and supervised community support for work activities and personnel. The position of the community organizer, however, was phased out of the staffing structure when the original individual resigned after the first year of the program, thereby stalling the implementation of this component for almost a year.

There was another attempt to resurrect the community support for work component during the spring of 2001. Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga received a \$50,000 grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation that it earmarked for community support for work activities. A community development specialist was hired, but the position became vacant again after only a few community-wide public relations endeavors had gotten under way, such as a “school uniform drive and exchange” among the residents of Harriet Tubman Homes. The project director assumed responsibility for the community support for work activities in the fall and winter of 2001. The Annie E. Casey Foundation funds were used to hire 20 residents to be “building captains.” They received \$100 stipends on a monthly basis and were assigned to one of 20 “clusters,” or designated sections of the housing development. The building captains were responsible for disseminating flyers about job openings and program activities, for informing Jobs-Plus staff about new move-ins and residents’ concerns, and for keeping their clusters clean. The building captains were supposed to be the “eyes and ears” of the program in the community and were to serve as role models in promoting employment and civic responsibility, as expressed in the program’s literature: “I’ll show you or I’ll help you.” The building captains included women who were enrolled in GED classes or training or certification programs, women who were long-term unemployed or were taking care of grandchildren, and others who were disabled and unable to work in conventional jobs.

While Chattanooga’s community support for work component was not nearly as comprehensive as conceptualized in the Jobs-Plus model, the program’s activities and selection of building captains adhered to the fundamental principles as outlined in one of the early implementation reports. Jobs-Plus’s “helper activities” in Chattanooga were described as supportive activities that “give people a way to participate” and that target “people who may or may not be on a career track, but who want to support the Jobs-Plus program.” The activities that were listed included “community beautification” and the use of community outreach workers.¹⁰ In the spring of 2002, the project director hired a longtime community activist and member of the Harriet Tubman Resident Management Corporation to supervise the community support for work component. The operating philosophy for this component would remain in place through December 2002, when the Annie E. Casey Foundation grant would end.

¹⁰Bailey, 1998, p. 19.

Transition to a Financial-Incentives-Only Program

During spring 2002, senior administrators of the Chattanooga Housing Authority (CHA) and representatives from MDRC and other key Jobs-Plus partner organizations in Chattanooga convened and held discussions that would radically change the nature of the program. A decision was made at that time to immediately begin a transition process whereby Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga would become a financial-incentives-only program. As such, it would no longer offer the employment services and the community support for work components at Harriet Tubman Homes. However, residents who obtained full-time or part-time employment would continue to be eligible for Jobs-Plus's financial incentives. In accordance with a memorandum of understanding between MDRC and the CHA, MDRC would terminate its financial support and technical assistance by May 1, 2002, and Jobs-Plus would complete the transition to a financial-incentives-only program by June 30, 2002. Until the demonstration ends in December 2003, MDRC's research on Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga will assess only the impact of the financial incentives on residents' employment acquisition and retention.

Several factors contributed to the decision to transform Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga into a financial-incentives-only site. The first factor was the view within the housing authority that Jobs-Plus was a low-priority program. This was the view of two of the last three executive directors of the CHA, who inherited Jobs-Plus from the director who was in place when Jobs-Plus was launched, and who was an avid supporter of the initiative. While the second executive director allowed the program to continue, he did not feel a significant stake in its success. The CHA's current executive director — the third to occupy this position since Jobs-Plus was launched in 1997 — came on board in the third quarter of 2002. He has expressed serious reservations about Jobs-Plus concerning (1) the inability of Jobs-Plus staff to effectively document and market the successes of the program; (2) the lack of significant numbers of supporters on the Chattanooga Housing Board; and (3) the erosion of support from key partners in the Jobs-Plus collaborative, especially those who had committed funds or in-kind resources to the program over the past few years.

A second factor that contributed to the site's transformation to a financial-incentives-only program was the CHA's decision in spring 2002 to turn over the property management responsibilities and social service operations at its housing developments to a private contractor.¹¹ The demands of implementing this plan would seriously limit the attention that the CHA could give to Jobs-Plus. The decision to privatize had an impact on Jobs-Plus's project director, a CHA employee who was "on loan" to Jobs-Plus. The private management firm would now be responsible for social services at Harriet Tubman Homes, including employment-type services that were currently offered by the Jobs-Plus staff.

¹¹In summer 2002, H. J. Russell's bid was accepted for the contract to assume managerial responsibilities for CHA's housing developments.

Finally, the reconstituted program had not been able to overcome the disenchantment of the private foundations and public agencies, which had initially supported Jobs-Plus. In addition, these organizations probably concluded that it was not in their best interests to be associated with what was widely perceived to be a failed program. They had a clear motivation to shift their focus and redirect their resources to public housing endeavors that were “fresh” and that had a greater potential for success — in order to enhance their prospects for leveraging public funds in the future. Two such promising endeavors were the HOPE VI renovation at McCallie Homes and the ongoing public services initiatives and economic development programs at College Hill Courts, which were being spearheaded by the Westside Community Development Corporation.

It is important to note, however, that although the CHA showed declining support for the full Jobs-Plus program, it has remained supportive of the financial incentives component. This component is a significant policy reform in its own right, and the CHA has pledged to continue implementing it for the duration of the demonstration. The financial-incentives-only version of Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga offers the demonstration’s researchers the opportunity to examine the implementation and impact of Jobs-Plus’s financial incentives on household employment and income and on the quality of life in the development in the absence of the other program components. And this site provides a comparative example of Jobs-Plus’s financial incentives program at a housing development that is under private — rather than public — property management. Given the trend toward privatized management of public housing, this example will provide important information.

The initial point of progression for the financial-incentives-only program is the property management office at Harriet Tubman Homes. Current participants in the incentives program are informally advised of the transition during their periodic contacts with the property manager. The extent of their understanding of what the transition implies has not been ascertained.

The financial-incentives-only plan is “marketed” to others by the CHA Leasing and Occupancy Department, which is responsible for informing prospective residents about the existence and benefits associated with the program when they are considering housing options. The message about financial incentives is then fortified by the property manager when new residents actually move into Harriet Tubman Homes. With that information in hand, it becomes the responsibility of the residents to inform the property manager when they have obtained employment. The property manager then officially enrolls the residents in the financial incentives program, opens a file for them, and tracks them on a monthly basis. In order for the CHA to receive reimbursements from HUD for the financial incentives, the property manager provides a monthly report of adjusted rent levels to the CHA Finance Office. Staff there then use the information to prepare “draw-down sheets” that indicate the number of residents receiving financial incentives and the amount of reimbursement funds that have been requested.

Conclusions

As Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga enters the final phase of the research demonstration, the site can look back to a difficult implementation experience. Unlike Jobs-Plus at the other demonstration sites, the program in Chattanooga never developed into a stable and fully mature program with all three components in place. And the implementation of the program was beset with fundamental management problems from the outset; with waning support from the Chattanooga Housing Authority; and, most recently, with the authority-wide privatization effort. Indeed, critical managerial mistakes that were made early in Jobs-Plus's processes for hiring, supervising, and training staff and for maintaining service records — including the effort to transfer significant authority and responsibilities to the residents even without having an effective management structure in place — offer important insights for future efforts to implement resident-driven employment initiatives in public housing settings.¹²

Despite these problems, Jobs-Plus in Chattanooga can also look back to several significant achievements. The program was successful in mobilizing the residents of Harriet Tubman Homes and at igniting their imaginations and creating a shared vision of a community making strides toward self-sufficiency and well-being through employment. The program mobilized a collaborative of multiethnic partners — from the development's resident leadership, public and nonprofit agencies, and local businesses and churches — that offered residents a forum for shaping the future of their community. For several years, Jobs-Plus provided Harriet Tubman Homes with a significant array of employment-related services, coordinated by a team of collocated staff. Finally, since November 2000, Jobs-Plus has been offering a generous rent-based financial incentives program that will remain in effect until December 2003.

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¹²For a discussion of lessons learned from the Jobs-Plus sites about the possibilities and challenges of engaging public housing residents as collaborative partners in designing, implementing, and administering an employment initiative, see Chapter 6 of Kato and Riccio (2001).

Chapter 4

Jobs-Plus in Dayton

Alissa Gardenhire

Program Background and Highlights

Jobs-Plus in Dayton has been operating at the Hughbert Poore Community Center at DeSoto Bass Courts since 1998. The program has made concerted and creative efforts over the years to assist a resident population who present wide variations in job readiness and job retention issues and who have significant barriers to employment.

Currently, the staff provide job readiness instruction to residents on an individualized basis as needed instead of referring them to off-site programs, as was the practice earlier in the demonstration. Jobs-Plus offers some educational and training opportunities on-site, such as a cashier training course that is sponsored by the Walgreen's drugstore chain. Residents can undertake job search also at Jobs-Plus — for instance, by going on-line at the Job Resource Computer Learning Center in the basement of the Jobs-Plus office complex to look up job listings from Dayton's One-Stop Job Center. And the job developer regularly relays information about job opportunities from the center and other sources to the residents.

Jobs-Plus in Dayton continues to cultivate a range of support services for working residents. For instance, in addition to the child care slots at the neighboring Melissa Bass Day Care Center, a facility now operates nearby that offers much-needed infant care. Family members can also become certified to provide in-home child care for relatives by completing a one-day training program offered through the One-Stop Job Center. For school-age children, Jobs-Plus operates an after-school tutoring program in its complex. And the coordinator of the housing authority's youth services has been colocated on-site at DeSoto Bass Courts; the development's youth are given priority for activities offered by that office.

Jobs-Plus in Dayton has been particularly creative in its efforts to engage and assist hard-to-serve residents who struggle with such issues as domestic violence and substance abuse and who are reluctant to come forward for help. Unlike other programs in the demonstration, Jobs-Plus in Dayton has funding from the housing authority to offer employment and support services to the fathers of the children who live at DeSoto Bass Courts; many of these men reside illegally in their partner's unit, and some have felony convictions and substance abuse issues. Jobs-Plus has helped to recruit these men for a basketball league and has co-sponsored tournaments with picnics that have brought out entire families. These popular events offer informal

Jobs-Plus in Dayton: DeSoto Bass Courts

Jobs-Plus in Dayton is distinguished by its alliance with Montgomery County's One-Stop Job Center — a huge, multiservice center housing numerous social service and employment agencies. Although Jobs-Plus does refer residents to the center for services, the residents are now able to access many critical services directly through Jobs-Plus. The program works closely with the Job Center to ensure that its on-site services closely mirror those of the center.

At DeSoto Bass Courts, the Jobs-Plus Center was established to house the program's services and activities. Two case managers are available to the residents to assess their employment service needs, refer them to the appropriate local providers, and monitor their employment progress. The job developer helps locate appropriate job openings. The Jobs-Plus staff provide almost all job readiness services in-house, covering everything from résumé preparation to household management skills.

The Job Resource Computer Learning Center is located downstairs from Jobs-Plus's main offices and offers a direct computer link to the Job Center's on-line Job Bank, an electronic posting of all employment opportunities listed by employers in the Dayton area. Residents can also find software to prepare their résumés and can get word-processing and Internet instruction.

The center is also home to the Jobs-Plus Youth Program. Jobs-Plus in Dayton emphasizes the importance of providing services to children and youth in the effort to break the cycle of poverty in the development. The Jobs-Plus Youth Program offers after-school recreational activities — such as photography, golf, and soccer — and a tutorial program aimed at enhancing reading and math skills. There is also a Youth Leadership Training program that fosters leadership and conflict resolution skills. These are important institutional supports for working parents. Older youth can get after-school and summer jobs as program assistants. Jobs-Plus Dayton also sponsors a basketball league that has experienced tremendous growth since its inception. Because both players and their families come out to the games, the league has provided a forum for Jobs-Plus to reach the "hard-to-serve" segment of the target population.

The financial incentives plan in Dayton eliminates the income-based rent calculation and replaces it with a two-step, flat-rent approach. The flat rents are set at a rate lower than what most full-time workers would pay if their rent remained income-based. Under this plan, rent does not increase with increases in earnings, so families can keep more of their earned income.

In the effort to build community support for work, Jobs-Plus has been working with the resident council to recruit and train building captains to inform residents about Jobs-Plus and support their employment efforts. The captains disseminate program information to the residents of DeSoto Bass Courts, both through conversations with their neighbors and by distributing informative flyers door-to-door. The captains are paid a stipend in the form of a rent credit.

venues for the Jobs-Plus staff to interact with men and women who rarely come to the office and to inquire about their employment and lives and offer the program's help. Again unlike the other Jobs-Plus sites, the program in Dayton works with residents who have felony convictions and who reside legally in the development as participants of Mercy Manor, a reentry program for female ex-felons.

Jobs-Plus in Dayton implemented the financial incentives component of the program in May 2000. The plan offers working residents of DeSoto Bass Courts flat rents that are less than they would pay under the traditional formula for calculating rent as a percentage of household income and that are set at lower levels than the optional flat rents that are available throughout the housing authority under the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act (QHWRA). The working residents responded enthusiastically to the financial incentives program, and 102 households were participating in August 2002. Nor has participation declined significantly as residents moved into the second phase of the program and began paying higher flat rents.

The community support for work component of Jobs-Plus in Dayton primarily takes the institutionalized form of the building captains. The captains are residents whose primary responsibility involves going door-to-door to distribute information about program services and employment opportunities and to relay residents' concerns to the Jobs-Plus staff.

The Housing Development and Its Population

At the start of the Jobs-Plus demonstration in 1997, DeSoto Bass Courts consisted of 467 households. As of August 2002, there are 374 occupied units. This reduction reflects several factors, including vacancies resulting from the improved financial circumstances of residents who found employment, an increase in evictions because of nonpayment of rent, and a density reduction effort being undertaken using a HOPE VI grant that will demolish 180 units (18 buildings) by October 2002. The density reduction will increase the green and open spaces and the parking areas for remaining residents.

DeSoto Bass Courts primarily consists of African-American households, the majority of which are headed by single females, although some are headed by single males and married couples. In 1996, only 19 percent of all households had some income from wages.¹ As of August 2002, the housing management staff and the Jobs-Plus staff indicated that the figure had increased to 34 percent of all households and to 46 percent of working-age households — the target group for Jobs-Plus. Since the start of the program, 360 residents have enrolled in Jobs-

¹Riccio, 1999, p. 23.

Plus, and 142 (39 percent) of them were employed as of August 2002. The recent economic downturn has negatively impacted the employment rate in the development.

A large proportion (56 percent) of the targeted working-age households at the start of the demonstration relied on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) for at least part of their income.² However, that figure has dropped precipitously, to only about 15 percent, as of June 2002. The lead case manager attributes this drop — at least in part — to both enforcement of lifetime limits on welfare receipt and the efforts of the Jobs-Plus staff, including a Work Experience Program (WEP) specialist who is outstationed at the Jobs-Plus office. Recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) who have children over the age of 6 months are mandated by Ohio Works First — the Ohio welfare-to-work program — to participate in up to 40 hours per week of work- or training-related activities. As explained below, TANF recipients living at DeSoto Bass Courts are assigned to the WEP specialist and may fulfill their work or training requirements through activities developed by her. The housing development also has a number of “zero income” households, which include both formerly homeless persons and TANF recipients who have reached their time limits but have not yet secured employment.

As was noted earlier, DeSoto Bass Courts is also distinguished from other housing developments in Dayton by the presence on the grounds of Mercy Manor, which was founded in 1992 by the Church Women of Greater Dayton (CWGD) to help female ex-offenders reenter the community and secure employment. A significant motivation for many of the participants is the chance to reunite with their children after being separated during the mothers’ incarceration. During their reentry period, the housing authority provides the participants and their families with a stable residence in a section of units that is set aside for their use at DeSoto Bass Courts. The majority of the Mercy Manor participants have been incarcerated for drug-related offenses, primarily involving use, not sales. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Dayton Metropolitan Housing Authority (DMHA) prohibit people who have felony convictions and are on probation from taking out a public housing lease or even being on public housing premises. However, when CWGD approached the housing authority to discuss the Mercy Manor program, DMHA decided to make an exception in the policy. Besides attending regular counseling sessions and not using drugs, the participants must be willing to work and must attempt to obtain employment as soon as they enter the program. The director of Mercy Manor uses many established connections with employers to assist these “hard-to-employ” participants find work. Although this program is separate from Jobs-Plus, the Jobs-Plus staff regard its participants as part of their target population of work-eligible residents for whom they provide outreach, employment services, and case management follow-up.

²Riccio, 1999, p. 23.

Thus, Jobs-Plus in Dayton is distinguished from the other programs in the demonstration by having an official target population that includes residents who have felony convictions. Moreover, unlike the other programs, Jobs-Plus in Dayton is also authorized by the local housing authority to offer employment services to the fathers of children who reside at DeSoto Bass Courts — even to men who cannot be on the lease because they have felony convictions. (Services to ex-felons and to unregistered male residents are discussed further under “Program Flow.”)

Program Infrastructure

Staffing and Management

The staff of Jobs-Plus in Dayton currently include a project director, a lead case manager, a second case manager, a job developer, an intake specialist, and two community outreach specialists. All these staff are employees of Sankofa Corporation, which also outstations at the Jobs-Plus office the coordinator of its youth services for the housing authority and his assistant. In addition, the welfare agency has colocated a Work Experience Program (WEP) specialist at Jobs-Plus to ensure that WEP clients who live at DeSoto Bass Courts comply with their work requirements.

- The **project director** is responsible for guiding the overall direction of Jobs-Plus in Dayton — its “vision,” as she says — and for the scope of its services. However, she works off-site at the offices of Sankofa and is not involved in the daily operations of the program.
- The **lead case manager** is responsible for the day-to-day operations of Jobs-Plus in Dayton. She supervises the staff and takes the lead in developing the program’s employment services and activities.
- The **second case manager** handles case management responsibilities along with the lead case manager, assuming half the caseload. Case management includes assessing the residents’ job readiness and helping them access the employment and support services that they need to secure and retain employment and to manage their households. The two case managers are responsible for 360 participants, although the active caseload for each averages about 70 participants.
- The **job developer** gathers and circulates information about job openings, helps residents secure and retain employment, and cultivates employment opportunities at local firms. The housing authority has charged him in

particular with helping the “zero income” residents to secure steady employment.

- The **intake specialist** is in charge of enrolling new participants and assisting with “sign-in” procedures when participants come to the office for help. He is also the receptionist and handles phone calls, data entry, and other administrative tasks.
- The **Work Experience Program (WEP) specialist** is responsible for ensuring that TANF recipients who reside at DeSoto Bass Courts comply with the work requirements of Ohio Works First, the state’s welfare-to-work program. The WEP specialist organizes daily work activities for residents who are not yet employed and who need to fulfill their requirement of up to 40 hours of work-related activities per week.
- The **youth coordinator** and his assistant provide educational and recreational activities for youth who reside in the city’s public housing developments.
- Two residents of DeSoto Bass Courts are employed as **community outreach specialists** to promote residents’ involvement in Jobs-Plus. One of them serves as a liaison between the program and the Resident Advisory Council and also oversees the daily operations of the building captains (for instance, distributing their packet of flyers to them and tracking the hours they have worked). The other community outreach specialist works with a youth leadership group.

Unlike some Jobs-Plus sites, it has not been the practice in Dayton to hire residents for staff positions that have access to confidential information about other residents. The program has relied instead on professional staff for these positions. “[E]arly on I decided that residents weren’t good to work [as primary staff] per se,” said the lead case manager, “because other residents don’t feel comfortable with residents knowing their ‘business.’ So I’ve never used that for Jobs-Plus.”

Recent efforts were made, however, to increase the diversity of the mostly female staff by hiring more men. This has encouraged male residents to come to Jobs-Plus, and it has also drawn hard-to-serve female residents, who seem to appreciate a male case manager’s perspective on the issues they face. The lead case manager observed: “I don’t know if it’s because [the case manager is] a guy, but his participants are just coming in and [saying], ‘I need to talk to my case manager.’ I’m looking at them and they’re just beaming, and I’m thinking, ‘This was a good decision.’”

In 2002, Dayton’s housing authority began downsizing its staff for the first time in memory. Some DMHA staff members were let go, while others were reassigned within the agency. The staff attributed this downsizing to a number of factors, including decreasing revenues from the high vacancy rates in DMHA developments, changes in revenue support from HUD, and an effort to reorganize the relatively “top-heavy” agency. Jobs-Plus is unlikely to be directly affected by the downsizing, though the program may ultimately pick up new staff from the reorganization of personnel.

Sankofa — the nonprofit offshoot of DMHA that provides resident services — is responsible for the majority of Jobs-Plus’s programmatic functions, with the exception of the financial incentives component, which is administered by the housing authority. Sankofa provides human and social services to public housing residents in Dayton, while DMHA is responsible for property management, including rent collection and property maintenance.

The Jobs-Plus collaborative also has oversight duties for the program’s development. In the early stages of the demonstration, approximately 60 agencies were involved in the collaborative, helping to design the program and provide referrals to child care, transportation, and other services that address barriers to employment. Unlike most of the other Jobs-Plus collaboratives, Dayton’s had the good fortune to have as active members senior-level administrators from such key agencies as DMHA (the lead agency) and the Montgomery County Department of Human Services (MCDHS). These senior administrators also used their authority to make policy changes in their agencies on behalf of Jobs-Plus. For instance, the director of MCDHS mandated that TANF recipients who resided at DeSoto Bass Courts fulfill their work requirements through participation in Jobs-Plus.

However, the active participation of these agencies has declined over the course of the demonstration as the needs of the program have changed. Currently, Jobs-Plus is trying to help working residents get better-paying jobs and, therefore, is working closely with other job developers at the One-Stop Job Center and at local employment “intermediary” agencies. Jobs-Plus continues to provide collaborative members with biannual updates of its accomplishments and activities, and it holds an annual collaborative meeting.

Facilities

Jobs-Plus in Dayton is housed in the Hughbert Poore Community Center at DeSoto Bass Courts. The center is convenient to all areas of the development, so that residents need to walk or drive only a few minutes to get to the building. This location also overlooks the central “green” and the basketball courts — places where many activities in the development take place — and residents feel that this fosters a perception that Jobs-Plus is a central part of community life.

The first floor of the Jobs-Plus complex includes individual office spaces for the staff, a reception area, a restroom, and the Walgreen's training classroom; the Job Resource Computer Learning Center and the youth coordinator's office are in the basement; and a large multipurpose room and kitchen are on the second floor. Job-seekers and children and youth in the after-school tutoring program use the basement space. The multipurpose room truly serves multiple functions as an instruction space for the WEP participants, a classroom for the housekeeping class, a meeting space for some of the support groups sponsored by Jobs-Plus, and a lunch room for the children in the after-school tutoring program. The housekeeping course was formerly offered in a separate converted apartment near the Jobs-Plus offices, but this facility was vandalized, and so the class was moved into the Jobs-Plus complex in 2001.

Jobs-Plus in Dayton is open from 8 A.M. to 7 P.M. Monday through Friday during the school year and from 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. during the summer months. The staff conduct evening and weekend hours as needed, primarily in response to special events. For instance, on a Saturday in May 2002, Jobs-Plus sponsored a "Celebration of Life and Women's Health Awareness Day." The monthly Resident Advisory Council meeting, many activities for the youth of DeSoto Bass Courts, and a variety of community celebrations take place on weekends, and the staff often attend such events.

The One-Stop Job Center in downtown Dayton was also central to the original plan for Dayton's Jobs-Plus. The program was supposed to recruit and refer residents of DeSoto Bass Courts to the Job Center for employment services, while providing on-site follow-up support for residents involved with education, training, and employment. Many organizations that are located at the Job Center are also members of Jobs-Plus's collaborative. The One-Stop Job Center is a nationally recognized employment and social service center. It was established in 1997 with funds from the City of Dayton, Montgomery County, and the State of Ohio, and with support from various local nonprofit agencies. The goal of these groups was to create a center that would foster collaboration among key human service and employment providers that were previously scattered throughout the community and atomized in their operations.

Within the walls of this enormous 8.5-acre facility are nearly 50 organizations that provide supportive services for Montgomery County residents. For instance, the Montgomery County Department of Job and Family Services oversees the work activities of TANF recipients; Dayton Public Schools assists county residents with education and training; and Clothes That Work provides people who are entering the workforce with appropriate clothing. Job-seekers may also receive a wide variety of job search assistance at the Job Center, including help preparing a résumé, the use of business machines like copiers and faxes, and access to the huge job database that is accessible through the World Wide Web. This searchable database provides Montgomery County residents with information about jobs at all levels of skill and experience and in locations within and outside the local area.

Although Jobs-Plus was originally designed to be a satellite of the Job Center, instead it has turned out that the program utilizes the center's services and resources. For instance, the WEP specialist takes participants to the Job Center weekly, using the resources there to help them prepare résumés, gain computer experience, and search the job database. But the lead case manager indicated that she and the job developer no longer regularly refer residents to the Job Center for employment-related support, because they are able to handle such matters "in-house." Indeed, some residents reported that they were overwhelmed by the size and scale of the Job Center and preferred to get support, information, and resources through Jobs-Plus, whose staff they viewed as being much more personable — despite the training in customer service that the Job Center staff have received.

According to the lead case manager, however, the Jobs-Plus staff and the Job Center staff have developed a working relationship over the course of the demonstration as they came to realize that they "work with the same people." The job developer has contacts among the Job Center staff and has established a weekly protocol to gather information from them about new or emerging job opportunities that are appropriate for Jobs-Plus participants. He brings this information back to the Jobs-Plus office instead of requiring residents to go to the Job Center for it. Since Jobs-Plus in Dayton is now on-line, participants can access the information electronically at the Job Resource Computer Learning Center. The lead case manager said: "There's not a need to really refer, because we can now bring [information] to them."

Program Flow

Jobs-Plus in Dayton offers the residents of DeSoto Bass Courts a range of employment and support services both on-site and through referrals to off-site agencies; the emphasis is on getting residents into jobs as quickly as possible. Experience has also taught the Jobs-Plus staff that participants will face significant challenges at the workplace and at home once they secure employment. So services are also available to help working residents retain employment and pursue career advancement.

Although Jobs-Plus does offer some group services and although applicants go through a standardized enrollment and assessment process, interactions between participants and staff and the use of services vary widely according to participants' needs and circumstances. The program tries to provide each resident with a comprehensive set of services tailored to personal circumstances. Case management is individualized and serves to integrate efforts across staff members to help residents secure employment and make progress toward self-sufficiency. Staff members insist that it is critical to build trusting relationships with the residents so that they will feel comfortable about discussing their concerns and barriers to employment.

The program in Dayton has also made concerted efforts to keep track of its activities with each participant. Indeed, staff members are responsible for completing an “activity ticket” for any and every encounter that they have with a resident, even informal interactions around the development. The program is in the process of shifting to a completely automated tracking system.

Recruitment

When Jobs-Plus began operating at DeSoto Bass Courts as an unknown entity, it used a variety of methods to inform residents about the program and recruit participants, including door-to-door canvassing by Project Impact, a local nonprofit agency, and by TANF recipients as part of their WEP assignments. However, after several years of operation, Jobs-Plus has become a familiar presence in the community. And new residents are informed about the program and are enrolled during their leasing interview. So the focus of Jobs-Plus’s outreach efforts has turned increasingly to getting residents who are enrolled in the program to take up its services and benefits, as well as trying to engage long-time residents who still have not enrolled. The staff members often speak informally to the residents during the day around the development, encouraging them to come to Jobs-Plus. Many residents acknowledge that they “need to” come into the office, but they remain uninvolved.

Jobs-Plus is making concerted efforts to engage TANF recipients and “zero income” residents at DeSoto Bass Courts. TANF recipients are required to fulfill their work requirements by participating in Jobs-Plus, but they do not always comply. The job developer handles outreach to the “zero income” residents, while the WEP specialist contacts and monitors the TANF recipients. The lead case manager said that a case management training session in St. Paul had convinced the staff that they needed to take a more aggressive approach to engage members of these two groups. However, reactions to the outreach efforts have not been negative. The residents are now accustomed to seeing and interacting with the staff, and, according to the lead case manager, few “have a problem with us knocking on their doors.” The program’s building captains provide additional outreach support, going door-to-door to distribute monthly newsletters and flyers with information about program services and events.

New enrollees who do come to the program for help do so for a variety of reasons. Many look to the job developer for job search assistance. Others need rental or utility assistance that Jobs-Plus or its collaborative partners can provide. And others are fulfilling their WEP requirements through daily activities arranged by the WEP specialist.

Orientation and Enrollment

Potential residents of public housing in Dayton first hear about Jobs-Plus during their pre-leasing orientation meeting, which is conducted at the housing authority’s main office for

people who are thinking about moving into a housing development. The orientation includes information about the various developments, and Jobs-Plus is identified as a key attraction of DeSoto Bass Courts. The applicants receive materials that include the monthly “Fact Sheet” about Jobs-Plus’s activities, the financial incentives, and success stories of participants. And they hear about Jobs-Plus’s services and benefits, including job readiness, education and training, job search, ongoing employment support, transportation and child care assistance, and the financial incentives. Although some of these services are available at other public housing developments in Dayton, the availability of Jobs-Plus’s services on-site is emphasized as an advantage of living at DeSoto Bass Courts. The WEP specialist from Jobs-Plus helps to conduct these orientations on a semi-monthly basis. Housing authority and Jobs-Plus staff believe that Jobs-Plus makes DeSoto Bass Courts one of the most desirable developments for people who are interested in pursuing self-sufficiency.

Enrollment in Jobs-Plus occurs at the management office during the leasing interview, when new residents move into the development. A Jobs-Plus staff member attends these interviews to talk about the program’s services and benefits. With such encouragement from both Jobs-Plus and management staff, new residents invariably enroll in the program. The challenge is then to ensure that they subsequently participate in activities.

Any current residents of DeSoto Bass Courts who decide to enroll in the program have to come to the Jobs-Plus office, where the intake specialist is responsible for interviewing and enrolling them. Applicants fill out a standardized enrollment form that elicits such information as the composition of the household and the employment status of household members as well as information about the applicant’s self-sufficiency goals, employment history, skills, and barriers to employment.

Assessment

Residents of DeSoto Bass Courts who come to Jobs-Plus for services are first assigned to a case manager, who assesses their needs and goals and helps them to develop an Individualized Training and Services Plan. This outlines their needs for training or education and their goals for work and family, and it provides the benchmarks by which subsequent progress will be measured. New enrollees are then referred either directly to the job developer for job search assistance or to training or education programs, depending on their readiness for work.

Job Readiness and Job Search

Early in the Jobs-Plus demonstration, the program in Dayton referred participants who needed job readiness services to outside agencies, including the Dayton Urban League and the New Directions/Job Prep program at Sinclair Community College. Now Jobs-Plus at DeSoto

Bass Courts handles job readiness on-site for virtually all participants, in an effort to better accommodate individual needs and circumstances that are identified during assessment. Job readiness training takes place both on an individual basis and in the context of a group, and it includes mock interviews and practice in completing a job application and writing a résumé. The staff also help the residents present a clean, appropriate, and “work-ready” appearance for job interviews and the workplace. The WEP participants receive these services both separately and together with the other participants.

Working and nonworking residents can participate in “It’s all about me!” This support group is open to everyone in the development but is largely used by women. It meets each Wednesday in the Jobs-Plus multipurpose room. The participants discuss such pertinent issues as self-worth, self-esteem, health, sexuality, parenting, and relationships. The WEP participants are required to attend, but other female residents participate as well. Although there is no explicit work focus in either of these groups, the relationships built within them are helpful to the ultimate success of Jobs-Plus, according to the lead case manager.

Jobs-Plus tries to provide job search assistance and cultivate job opportunities for a wide range of residents. The program has been asked over the past few years to target two relatively hard-to-serve populations in particular: long-term welfare recipients and “zero income” residents at DeSoto Bass Courts. The WEP specialist is assigned to the former, and the job developer is under contract with Sankofa and the housing authority to work with the latter.

The Job Bank database at Dayton’s One-Stop Job Center is the primary source of job leads for Jobs-Plus participants. It posts hundreds of job opportunities each week that are available within and outside Montgomery County. Residents can access this information at Jobs-Plus — for instance, by going on-line at the Job Resource Computer Learning Center. Jobs-Plus also posts this information at the office and in flyers that the building captains distribute.

Job Development and Job Creation

The Jobs-Plus job developer is responsible for gathering information about employment opportunities for the residents of DeSoto Bass Courts. He makes regular trips to the One-Stop Job Center and speaks to the staff there about emerging employment opportunities. The job developer has also built relationships with Montgomery County employers who have entry-level positions. And he works with a local employment “intermediary” agency that hires entry-level workers for semi-permanent and permanent positions. Recently this agency was negotiating with a company to hire graduates of the RETS Technical Institute’s HVACR (heating, ventilation, air-conditioning, and refrigeration) training program.

Each month, the job developer also targets a new industry, such as hospitality or manufacturing, and he contacts employers in that sector and sets up interviews for a group. The program

then recruits a group of residents for the interviews, and the job developer drives them to the site. Usually a number of the applicants are hired on the spot. This recruitment method ensures that residents will follow through on any job leads that they receive from Jobs-Plus. A case manager emphasizes: “[I]t works better when you take a group. Because you take them, you know they went. Versus one or two [of them] coming in for transportation assistance, and you don’t know where they went with those tokens.” The job developer makes sure that the applicants are appropriately dressed, and he encourages them as he accompanies them to the interviews.

Work Experience Program (WEP) clients at DeSoto Bass Courts are assigned by the Montgomery County Department of Human Services (MCDHS) to the WEP specialist on the Jobs-Plus staff, although they are encouraged to seek employment assistance from other staff members as well. The WEP specialist joined Jobs-Plus in fall 2001. Each of her clients is supposed to complete a number of hours of work-related activities, ranging from 20 hours per month to 40 hours per week. Her caseload ranges around 30 to 40 residents each month. The WEP specialist shifted the focus of WEP assignments from community service to work readiness and skills development. She schedules events for the WEP clients each day of the work week: Monday — job search skills and support services at the Job Center; Tuesday — utilizing resources of the public library; Wednesday and Thursday — outside speakers on such topics as health, finances and budgeting, and household management; and Friday — following up job leads collected during the week.

The WEP specialist arranges for clients to report to her on a regular basis to fulfill their assignments. But the participation rate of WEP clients is fairly low; only 15 of the 40 clients appeared regularly for their assignments in July 2002. However, only a few of these are actual “no-shows.” Many of these clients are working, and MCDHS has not yet updated their case files. Others have called to report problems with sick children, pregnancy, and so on. At the end of the month, the WEP specialist meets with an MCDHS staff member to report on the attendance and progress of clients. Those who do not fulfill their WEP assignments are usually sanctioned. The WEP specialist is a former resident of DeSoto Bass Courts, and she raised her family there. She feels that having Jobs-Plus on-site promotes a personalized service approach: “[It is] more helpful to residents. We [can] solve the problems, instead of them going somewhere else and solving the problem.”

Overall, the Jobs-Plus staff report that finding job opportunities for the residents has become increasingly difficult over the past two years, in contrast to the early years of the demonstration. Employers are requiring higher levels of education and will not overlook criminal records. The WEP specialist encourages clients to take entry-level positions — for instance, in the fast-food industry — and she talks about ways to use such work as a platform for career advancement. She herself holds a cashier position at Cub Foods (a local grocery chain) and tells her clients that the work exposes her to many different kinds of people and improves her “peo-

ple skills.” However, the job developer observes that some residents with education deficits, limited work experience, and criminal backgrounds who have few employment options are still unwilling to consider entry-level work, insisting that it is too demeaning.

Education and Training

Jobs-Plus in Dayton provides employment and training services through a combination of off-site referrals and on-site short-term programs to accommodate the wide range of employment backgrounds and service needs among the residents of DeSoto Bass Courts.

Jobs-Plus continues to refer residents to the Dayton Urban League and Sinclair College for education and training services. A small number of residents participate in the Urban League’s Step-Up program, which is a training program for women entering the construction trades. Another small group of residents studies a variety of subjects at Sinclair College. Computer training is available to participants through a Tenant Opportunity Program Support (TOPS) grant. The New Destiny computer instruction group also offers computer courses on-site at DeSoto Bass Courts.

Early in the demonstration, Jobs-Plus in Dayton had HUD’s Economic Development and Supportive Services (ED/SS) funding to be used for all training needs — including tuition, book, and supplies — or it encouraged participants to apply for Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) funds. The program now has only limited funds for training and education, from Sankofa. Residents must apply for Workplace Investment Act (WIA) funds at the Job Center or for TOPS grant funds from the resident council of DeSoto Bass Courts.

Jobs-Plus in previous years encouraged residents to pursue Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training, which took only six weeks. The expanding demand for home health care workers seemed to assure participants of a reliable source of employment and income. However, Jobs-Plus staff have since reexamined this focus. Employers in this field require applicants to have a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, and they screen out individuals with felony convictions, thereby disqualifying many potential applicants from DeSoto Bass Courts. Unfortunately, several residents encountered these barriers to employment only after they completed CNA training with a provider to which Jobs-Plus was initially referring residents. This agency was accepting and passing students without a high school diploma or a GED certificate and was allowing students who had felony convictions to attend the training program. Furthermore, the agency did not help the students find auto transportation, without which they could not perform their duties as a home health care worker. Now Jobs-Plus advises participants who express an interest in CNA training about these barriers to employment so that those who do not qualify will not waste their time.

On-site training takes place in Jobs-Plus's "retail classroom" on the first floor, where Walgreen's Drug Store offers a weeklong cashier and customer service training program. At the end of the week, participants get a hands-on test in using the cash register, and they take a written quiz. Over the years, between one and five students per week have completed this training. They receive a retail cashier certificate during a graduation ceremony at the end of the weekly course. They also receive a T-shirt that says, "Jobs-Plus Works Because I Do." During the graduation ceremony, a Jobs-Plus staff member or an outside community member gives the graduates words of encouragement about work and self-sufficiency, and then refreshments are served. The graduates are free to work for retail establishments other than Walgreen's.

Initially, the Jobs-Plus intake worker was the training instructor for the course. After he was shifted to another housing authority position, the training was temporarily suspended. But there are plans to train the assistant youth coordinator to conduct the course. Unfortunately, few participants were able to secure employment with the Walgreen's chain, because they were unable to pass the drug screening. Jobs-Plus now informs participants about this requirement and steers those who are unlikely to pass the screening to other employers that do not have drug tests. (See "Services for Substance Abusers," below, for a discussion of Jobs-Plus's efforts to address substance abuse.)

Sankofa arranged for RETS Technical Institute to provide training to approximately 20 public housing residents who were interested in the lucrative and expanding heating, ventilation, air-conditioning, and refrigeration (HVACR) field. The management of the program was given to Jobs-Plus's lead case manager. Funding for the training was provided through a Resident Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) grant from HUD, which is intended for use in the education and training of public housing residents. This ROSS grant provided the residents with funds to pay for school fees and books as well as a small stipend to cover other school-related or personal expenses.

The Jobs-Plus staff played an instrumental role in recruiting residents from across the housing authority to take up this opportunity. The applicants then went through two interviews organized by Jobs-Plus. Twenty-two of the applicants were selected for the training program, including two residents from DeSoto Bass Courts who are Jobs-Plus participants. Jobs-Plus has provided the students with wide-ranging support to ensure that they complete the training successfully. A staff member drove the students to their classes, and a case manager was assigned to monitor their progress and help them and their RETS instructors address any problems that arose. In interviews conducted in mid-2002, the students said that they had developed a sense of solidarity amongst themselves and were helping each other with the coursework to make sure that they would all complete the program. "Everybody is passing!" one of them happily said. In December 2002, 17 of the original 22 students made up the first graduating class from the RETS program.

Job Retention

Job retention is a serious problem for many residents at DeSoto Bass Courts. In addition to the structural turnover that characterizes low-wage employment, many residents also have issues with absenteeism and workplace relationships. Most of these residents lack workplace experience and role models who are steadily employed. “There seems to be a consistent notion that you don’t have to go to work every day,” said the job developer. “If you go three days, you’re doing great.” Participants who have these issues do not know how to interact appropriately with supervisors and coworkers; they complain that they do not “fit in,” and they perceive imaginary slights. Poor performance by a Jobs-Plus participant also has broader consequences for the program, because it can discourage employers from hiring other participants. Jobs-Plus must therefore help residents address these issues.

Jobs-Plus in Dayton uses a range of formal and informal means to monitor the progress of working residents. The program seeks to address any workplace or domestic issues before they escalate to the point that the resident loses the job. The job developer keeps in touch with newly hired residents and their employers through calls and visits, sometimes dropping in unannounced at the workplace to see how things are going. He acts as a mediator in conflicts between the residents and their supervisors or coworkers, if he is asked to do so. The case managers also contacts working residents through regular phone calls and letters to ensure that they are getting the support services they need. But the staff members also rely on home visits and casual contacts with residents as they walk around the development, to inquire about their progress at work. If residents lose their jobs, the staff try to get them reemployed quickly — even in temporary or entry-level jobs that may pay less than what they were previously earning — so that they can retain their membership in the financial incentives program.

The number of residents at DeSoto Bass Courts who are maintaining steady employment has increased. More than 80 participants who had been employed by the same employer for more than one year were invited to the last meeting of the collaborative.

Career Advancement

Jobs-Plus in Dayton is also trying to provide working residents with opportunities for further training and education and better-paying jobs so that they can achieve self-sufficiency from public assistance. Like other Jobs-Plus sites, the program at DeSoto Bass Courts struggles to prompt busy working residents to take up available opportunities. Jobs-Plus in Dayton has demonstrated considerable creativity and success in accessing paid advanced training opportunities for the residents, in recruiting participants, and in ensuring that they complete their programs.

Support Services

A survey of DeSoto Bass Courts residents that was undertaken early in the Jobs-Plus demonstration revealed that child care, transportation, and appropriate work clothing were significant barriers for those who were entering the workforce. Furthermore, the staff cited the prevalence of substance abuse and the presence of unregistered men with felony convictions as forces in the development that undercut residents' efforts to secure and retain employment. Jobs-Plus staff members have worked with the collaborative to address these problems through referrals and on-site support services, in comprehensive and often creative ways.

Child Care Assistance

Access to reliable child care has been critical to the residents' ability to secure and retain employment. Jobs-Plus collaborative partners have helped the program identify and secure a number of child care opportunities. The Melissa Bass Day Care Center, adjacent to DeSoto Bass Courts, offers daycare and after-school care for children ages 2 and older. Currently this program enrolls about 12 of the development's children, who range in age from 2 to 11 years. In 2002, a child care center that offers much-needed slots for infants also opened nearby.

In the past, Jobs-Plus tried to train and certify residents to become home-based child care providers, but take-up for these services by DeSoto Bass residents was very limited. Most residents prefer instead to place their children in the care of relatives and close friends. Dayton's Job Center offers a program that will train and certify a relative in one day to provide child care for the children of that worker. Jobs-Plus refers residents who are interested in home-based child care to this certification program. Certified relatives are paid at a rate of \$2 per hour and can thereby acquire additional income.

Parents of older children have access to care before and after school hours through several nearby options, including the Melissa Bass Day Care Center, the Boys Club, and the Jobs-Plus after-school tutoring program.

Transportation Assistance

At the beginning of the Jobs-Plus demonstration, the program in Dayton received an annual allotment of \$7,500 from the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) to provide bus tokens for participants engaged in job search and bus passes for those who were entering the workforce and were waiting for their first paycheck. The RTA funding ended in 2000. The program secured additional transportation funds from ED/SS grants, a ROSS grant, and then a grant from the Ohio Department of Development. Currently, the program uses flexible funds from the ROSS grant (for the HVACR training program at RETS Technical Institute) to provide transportation assistance to all Jobs-Plus participants.

The RTA also restructured some of its bus routes to accommodate the work destinations of participants. Jobs-Plus also has access to a van that the job developer uses to drive residents to group interviews and that the WEP specialist uses to take WEP participants to scheduled weekly events.

Services for Ex-Felons

Since the Mercy Manor participants are included in the official target population of Jobs-Plus in Dayton, a small number of participants have felony convictions. Criminal records present a serious barrier to employment. Ex-felons may be able to get a job temporarily, but typically they are fired after 90 days, when their criminal background checks are completed. As an obstacle to employment, felony convictions weigh as heavily on the women at DeSoto Bass Courts as on the men (if not more heavily). The entry-level jobs for which the female residents generally qualify and the training for which welfare-to-work funding is currently available in Ohio are for jobs in home health care (Certified Nursing Assistant), child care, and security — all of which bar job applicants who have felony convictions. Jobs-Plus has used temporary employment agencies to help ex-felons get jobs, since these agencies do not require criminal background checks and they offer flexible work and decent pay. But because of the impending background check, these residents still cannot take up opportunities for permanent employment with benefits in the firms where they are outsourced, so they cannot transition out of temporary employment.

Jobs-Plus does inform ex-felons about the legal process for expunging felony records, and the program has sponsored workshops on this subject with the local Legal Aid Society. However, these events have been poorly attended. Expunging felony records is generally not feasible for these residents. In order to begin the expunging process, an ex-felon must have only had one felony and a few misdemeanors — which is very uncommon among these residents — and must have stayed out of the criminal justice system for seven years. The lead case manager emphasized that few of the ex-felons at DeSoto Bass Courts can stay “clean” for that length of time: “They do end up with trouble because they’re not doing what they’re supposed to do with their parole or probation.” The monetary cost of expunging is also quite high. Ex-felons must first make good on any restitution owed to the victims of their crimes, and then they must pay any court costs related to the expunging process.

The Mercy Manor participants have had better success in securing stable employment. Over the years, the Mercy Manor program has built a solid reputation in the community and an extensive network of employers. Participants often already have a job waiting for them when they are released from prison. A Jobs-Plus case manager works closely with the Mercy Manor case manager in a “dual case management” arrangement to help the women progress toward self-sufficiency. Most participants are employed, meet regularly with the job developer about

their employment and support service needs, and have successfully graduated from the program. A Jobs-Plus staff member described the Mercy Manor participants as among the best participants in the Jobs-Plus program because they are so motivated to succeed: “I wish it was all Mercy Manor!” The president of the Resident Advisory Council has been one of the most successful examples, having gone on to purchase her own home.

Services for Substance Abusers

The use and abuse of illicit drugs among the residents at DeSoto Bass Courts continue to present Jobs-Plus with serious impediments to employment and retention. Many employers screen applicants with drug tests. As noted earlier, a number of participants who completed the Walgreen’s cashier and customer service training could not secure employment with that chain because they could not pass the drug test. Jobs-Plus “meets the participants where they are” and tries to help those with substance abuse issues to get a job. The program has identified employers who do not require applicants to pass drug tests. But drug use often continues to dog the work efforts of these participants, too — for instance, by causing them to miss work. “[U]ntil they see that smoking dope just [is not] okay,” said a Jobs-Plus staff member, “you know all we can do is try to continue to help them get employment and try to keep it until they decide to do something about their substance abuse.”

The program does try to encourage residents to abstain from drug use and to seek help for their addictions, insisting that failure to do so will continue to undermine their employment efforts. Residents who ask for assistance are referred to Sankofa, which can help them access services from partner agencies of the Collaborative Substance Abuse Committee, such as drug treatment at Daymont West. The Men of Standards — a group of recovering addicts who provide support to other recovering addicts — sponsors a support group that meets alternately at DeSoto Bass Courts and at Parkside Homes. (See “Services for Unregistered Male Residents,” below, for more details.)

Mercy Manor participants who are recovering addicts have access to comprehensive support services and are required to participate in counseling. Failure to abstain from drug use can lead to termination from the program and eviction from DeSoto Bass Courts. This recently happened to a longtime Mercy Manor resident and active Jobs-Plus participant. Jobs-Plus’s lead case manager reported that “slips” like this are rare among Mercy Manor participants because of the extensive support they receive.

Clothing Assistance

Early in the Jobs-Plus demonstration, the residents of DeSoto Bass Courts identified a lack of appropriate work clothing as a barrier to employment. At one point, residents who were starting a job received a \$100 voucher to get clothing or uniforms at a local retailer. Currently,

residents are referred for clothing assistance to Clothes That Work. Located in the One-Stop Job Center, Clothes That Work offers clothes, shoes, and accessories as well as uniforms. Residents are eligible for one outfit to attend an interview. If they get the job, they may choose two more outfits. Participants in need of additional clothing receive support from Jobs-Plus.

Emergency Assistance

Jobs-Plus in Dayton fills another important gap by offering the residents of DeSoto Bass Courts emergency assistance at moments of severe economic hardship. Jobs-Plus provides one-time assistance for utility bills and rent, especially if the household is facing eviction for late or unpaid rent. This emergency assistance is underwritten by a grant from the Ohio Department of Development. The program also offers a One Time Emergency Loan for car payments and repairs and health care expenses. In 2002, 45 residents used emergency assistance: 15 needed the One Time Emergency Loan, 25 received rental assistance, and 5 got help with utilities. Jobs-Plus also refers residents to other organizations, such as the Salvation Army or SCOPE, which offers emergency financial assistance to low-income Dayton residents.

Home Management

In mid-2002, Jobs-Plus in Dayton arranged for a home management specialist to provide residents entering the workforce with advice and instruction on running their homes. Residents who were new to the workforce were having difficulties undertaking their housekeeping chores in the effort to get their children to daycare and school and themselves to work on time. They were thereby jeopardizing their housing, since public housing residents must pass an annual housekeeping inspection to renew their lease. Initially, the home management specialist met with residents in an apartment unit adjacent to the Jobs-Plus office. But she subsequently decided that it would be more effective to work with the residents “hands-on” in their homes. She visited them on a daily basis and gave them instructions about washing, cleaning, budgeting, and other aspects of housekeeping. The program worked well but was terminated recently because of funding shortfalls. The lead case manager would like to restore this support service if funding becomes available, because she sees an ongoing need for home management skills among the residents. In the meantime, the WEP specialist offers a monthly home management course in Jobs-Plus’s multipurpose room.

Homeownership

Residents who want to leave DeSoto Bass Courts have several options to prepare for homeownership via transitional public housing at Triangleview and Riverview Terrace. Residents of these two developments are required to work, save money, and transition into homeownership within five years. Jobs-Plus case managers make sure that any residents of DeSoto Bass Courts who request a transfer to these transitional housing developments understand that

they face the traditional public housing rent structure, which is significantly higher than what they pay under Jobs-Plus's financial incentives program.³

Homeownership is not an explicit goal of Jobs-Plus's financial incentives program. But some staff members feel that participants should be taking advantage of the program to take steps toward purchasing a home, and they believe that many participants underestimate their readiness for this step. Jobs-Plus therefore offers residents opportunities to learn about homeownership. In 2001, Jobs-Plus hosted a homeownership fair that included presentations by Habitat for Humanity and First Choice Home Ownership, which had an enthusiastic response. At this point in the demonstration, only two residents have purchased homes. But two more participants are currently in the homeownership program and will likely be purchasing homes and moving out of DeSoto Bass Courts by the end of 2002.

Other Support Services

All the Jobs-Plus programs offer services to persons other than just the demonstration's "core" target population of work-eligible legal residents of the developments. The programs do so in the belief that the well-being or support of these other residents is critical to the participation and employment of the targeted group. The following sections discuss Jobs-Plus's services in Dayton for two "noncore" groups living at DeSoto Bass Courts: (1) children and youth and (2) unregistered male residents living in the units illegally.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Since its inception, Jobs-Plus in Dayton has devoted considerable energy and resources to providing activities for the youth who reside at DeSoto Bass Courts. Working parents expressed concern that their older children and youth were at risk of getting into trouble if left unsupervised in the hours after school, while their parents were still at work. The program is also offering the youth educational, employment-related, and recreational opportunities in the hopes of encouraging them to stay in school and out of trouble and to go on to college in order to break the cycle of public assistance and criminal activity that has prevailed in this community for generations.

³Few public housing residents can take advantage of this transitional option, however, since there are only 120 units in these two developments. Indeed, in the four years that Jobs-Plus's lead case manager has been at DeSoto Bass Courts, she has made only two such referrals. Jobs-Plus does not encourage participants to leave DeSoto Bass Courts for these developments, which are not free of the challenges associated with living in public housing and at the same time do not provide the financial incentives and the comprehensive employment services that residents currently get from Jobs-Plus. Although Sankofa offers services to all the housing authority developments, its case managers are based in Park Manor and are able only occasionally to visit residents at home. Residents must instead make appointments to see case managers at Park Manor, whose large caseloads and paperwork responsibilities often limit them to providing basic assessment services.

Jobs-Plus offers children and youth an on-site after-school tutoring program to improve their reading and math skills. Taught by two teachers from Dayton's public school system, the program operates throughout the school year from Tuesday to Friday and is open to any school-age child in the development, as long as one parent has enrolled in Jobs-Plus. However, this program has not attracted a large number of teens.

At one point, the Jobs-Plus staff included a youth coordinator whose activities for youth — including a popular photography club — drew many teens from the development. The staff member was promoted to Sankofa's main office, and the youth of DeSoto Bass Courts must now rely on the activities of the housing authority's Youth Program initiative. However, because its coordinator and his assistant are stationed at DeSoto Bass Courts, many of the Youth Program's activities are held on-site. For instance, during the summer of 2002, the Youth Program hosted two-day camps for children that were open to all developments but were held at DeSoto Bass Courts. Moreover, the Jobs-Plus staff remain closely involved with the youth in the development, attending their sports activities, correcting their manners at the lunch table during the tutoring program's daily meal, and offering a supportive ear. The development's young men can also participate in a basketball league, described in the next section.

SERVICES FOR UNREGISTERED MALE RESIDENTS

The staff and residents across the Jobs-Plus developments frequently referred to male residents who resided illegally with female partners and relatives as "the men." Felony convictions often barred them from legally joining the lease as well as from legitimate employment. Of particular concern to Jobs-Plus was the frequent tendency of these men to undercut the efforts of the women in the household to get and keep a job. "[The boyfriends] blatantly tell them they had better not leave the unit," said a staff member in Dayton. "Or the boyfriend will say he'll watch the children. But when it's time for her to go to work, he won't watch the children. We've heard both." Such situations sometimes escalated into physical abuse. The women were often reluctant to come to Jobs-Plus for help. And if any of these men asked for services, most Jobs-Plus programs could only offer unofficial referrals to employment assistance, treatment programs, and the like, since the men were not legal residents of the developments.

However, Jobs-Plus in Dayton benefited from funds allocated by the executive director of the housing authority so that the program could conduct outreach and offer substance abuse and employment services to the fathers of children who resided at DeSoto Bass Courts, including men who were not legal residents of the development. The executive director was hoping to challenge the pervasive drug culture in Dayton's developments in a manner that built rapport with the young men and that strengthened their capacity to support their families. Jobs-Plus was particularly creative in using these funds to sponsor community-based, informal outreach activi-

ties to build trust and encourage these men to give Jobs-Plus a “look-see.” The program’s philosophy was: “If you can straighten up the men, the women tend to follow their lead.”

One activity that has been very successful is the Summer Basketball League. The league began in summer 2001 under the sponsorship of Sankofa’s substance abuse services and Men of Standards, a group of recovering addicts who provide support to other recovering addicts and whose members include residents of DeSoto Bass Courts. Since many of the young men in the development could often be seen during the day shooting baskets in the basketball court, holding basketball tournaments offered an informal, nonthreatening, and entertaining way to engage “hard-to-reach” young men, ages 18 to 24, both legal and illegal residents, who had not yet become involved in Jobs-Plus. Men of Standards recruited residents for the league by going door-to-door and hanging out with the young men, and then they served as the league’s coaches and referees. Turnout was high — rising to 120 residents in summer 2002 — and the league eventually expanded to include two other housing developments. The league also extended the age range of participants to include residents who were ages 14 to 23. The younger members served as scorekeepers and team assistants. Sankofa’s youth coordinator and Men of Standards are responsible for organizing and operating the league. (The women of the housing developments have recently begun expressing interest in forming teams of their own.)

League tournaments were held in conjunction with family picnics as part of Jobs-Plus’s FUN (Family Unification Network), an effort that drew entire families to watch the games. The games therefore offered the staff an opportunity to catch up not only with the men but also with the women whom they had not seen in awhile. The Jobs-Plus staff set up information tables and circulated among the residents, having friendly conversations during which the staff asked about people’s lives and work and informally offered information about employment services and help for problems with mental health, substance abuse, child support, felony convictions, and driver’s license retrieval. A number of young men have reportedly gone to the job developer to get employment assistance as a result of these events.

Through these activities, Men of Standards has been able to build relationships with the developments’ young men and to encourage some of them to join the support group that Men of Standards operates. This support group assigns male residents to mentors who live outside the developments and who meet monthly, alternating between DeSoto Bass Courts and Parkside Homes, to discuss such issues as relationships with partners and children, employment, addiction recovery, and community responsibilities. The participants recently completed the eight-week Common Sense training program for parents, which examines such issues as child development and appropriate discipline techniques. Boys Town chose some of the participants to become trainers for this parenting course.

Financial Incentives

The program in Dayton implemented the financial incentives component of Jobs-Plus in May 2000. The financial incentives are designed to lower the cost of entering the workforce and to reward working residents' efforts to stay employed. The incentives plan in Dayton offers working households the option of a flat rent based on the number of bedrooms in the unit instead of the traditional public housing rent, which is calculated as a percentage of the family's income. The rents paid by working residents who are enrolled in the incentives plan do not automatically rise when earnings increase, thereby allowing participants to net more of their earned income. Jobs-Plus's flat rents are set at a percentage of the flat rents mandated authority-wide by the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act (QHWRA) (see Table 4.1). The QHWRA flat rents are based on local market rates for housing that is available in the community.

Table 4.1

The Flat-Rent Structure of Jobs-Plus in Dayton

	One Bedroom	Two Bedrooms	Three Bedrooms	Four Bedrooms
Step 1	\$75	\$90	\$110	\$125
Step 2	\$117	\$140	\$172	\$195
DMHA's flat rent ^a	\$230	\$275	\$337	\$383

NOTE: ^aCalculated from Jobs-Plus flat-rent definitions.

The incentives plan in Dayton involves a two-step system that increases the rent paid by the residents after their first year of enrollment. The steps are intended to encourage residents to hold onto their jobs and to get better-paying ones in preparation for the higher rents that they will face when they move into the private rental market or return to the authority-wide rental structure at the end of the Jobs-Plus demonstration. Working residents who are enrolled in the program may still choose the traditional income-based rent option if it is beneficial to them. However, even part-time work usually pays more under the flat-rent system.⁴

⁴Residents who lose their job would be better off paying the income-based rent.

All new enrollees in Dayton's incentives program begin at Step 1 and remain there for one year from the date of their enrollment.⁵ Step 1 flat rents are approximately 30 percent of the flat rents that are offered authority-wide. After the first year in the program, participants pay Step 2 flat rents for the rest of their time in the housing development while the demonstration continues. Step 2 rent levels are approximately 55 percent of the authority-wide flat-rent levels. As of August 2002, 101 households at DeSoto Bass Courts were receiving the financial incentives.

Jobs-Plus staff report that the financial incentives have been one of the most popular features of Dayton's program. According to the job developer, the incentives have encouraged some unemployed residents to go to work and have brought many working residents into Jobs-Plus for the first time. The incentives program also promotes job retention, because participants who lose their job and report this to the management office are dropped from the program and cannot reenroll until the next lease-year. Participants are thus encouraged to keep their job or to secure alternate employment before leaving a job.⁶

In order to enroll in the incentives program and remain enrolled, a resident must agree to and comply with the following conditions:

- Be officially enrolled in Jobs-Plus.
- Be employed, either full time or part time.
- Pass the housing authority's annual housekeeping inspection and comply with the terms of the lease.
- Contact the Jobs-Plus case manager bimonthly, by telephone or in person.
- Report any changes in household composition or income to the management office and to Jobs-Plus.
- Complete a consumer credit counseling course.
- Attend six Resident Advisory Council meetings per year.

No residents have been removed from the financial incentives rolls, except as a result of nonpayment of rent or failure to comply with the terms of their lease with the housing authority.

⁵This is an example of a "relative time" rent calculation. Other Jobs-Plus sites are using a "calendar time" calculation, in which the clock for a resident's financial incentives program starts on the date when the incentives were implemented at the site; new enrollees enter at whichever step is currently under way at that site.

⁶The potential loss of financial incentives may also discourage some residents from reporting job losses to Jobs-Plus until the next lease-year. Jobs-Plus case managers mentioned instances in which they inquired about a resident's progress at one employer only to learn that the resident no longer worked there and had secured employment at another firm without reporting it to Jobs-Plus or to the management office.

Indeed, the lead case manager reports that the participants in the incentives program are the residents who are most likely to comply with the housing authority's lease requirements. However, Jobs-Plus staff have had a harder time enforcing compliance with the Jobs-Plus-related requirements of the incentives program, such as attending financial management workshops and resident council meetings. Jobs-Plus does not plan to remove participants from the incentives program for failing to attend workshops and meetings.

The incentives program also seems to have stemmed the tide of working residents who have been moving out of DeSoto Bass Courts. A Jobs-Plus staff member reports that it is common at other housing developments in Dayton for residents to move out as soon as they become employed, since affordable private housing is readily available in the city. But many of the working residents at DeSoto Bass Courts who have been employed for more than a year continue to live at the development. Overall, however, turnover remains high, and many residents indicated in interviews that the financial incentives are welcome but are not sufficient to encourage them to stay at DeSoto Bass Courts if a better opportunity arises. The management office's administrative assistant reported in May 2002 that more than 40 evictions were pending, some of which involved rent incentives participants. According to a Jobs-Plus staff member, some residents may have stopped paying rent because they planned to leave the development soon and decided to save money in that way to prepare for their move.

Community Support for Work

Jobs-Plus in Dayton consistently offers support services and community activities in an inclusive manner that seeks to strengthen the networks among residents that support their employment efforts. Over the past two years, however, the community support for work component in Dayton has also taken the institutionalized form of building captains — a system of outreach that is operated by the Resident Advisory Council to strengthen the networks and flow of communication between the program and residents. The building captains are residents of DeSoto Bass Courts whose primary task consists of distributing flyers with information from Jobs-Plus, the Resident Advisory Council, and the housing management office about employment opportunities and services offered by Jobs-Plus and other entities. The building captains go door-to-door to speak with the residents, and they also relay residents' concerns to the various staff members. The building captains receive a monthly rent credit in the amount of \$5 per hour of work completed each month (not to exceed their total rent).

Currently, the lead case manager supervises the building captains, establishing their work objectives and facilitating their regular meetings. The resident outreach worker manages their daily activities, providing them with weekly packets of flyers, keeping track of their hours, and spot-checking their performance by asking residents whether they are getting the information that they are supposed to receive. But Jobs-Plus's success in helping residents secure em-

ployment has also made it difficult to retain building captains. Of the 20 who were originally recruited, only 5 remain; the others secured full-time employment and could not continue with their duties. The lead case manager is working to increase the number of building captain by focusing on the senior residents and others who might have time during the day for such work.

Jobs-Plus also works closely with the Resident Advisory Council of DeSoto Bass Courts to build resident leadership and promote positive, resident-led changes in the community. In 2001 and 2002, the Jobs-Plus staff helped the council conduct its election and increase participation in its meetings and activities by conducting extensive outreach and providing door prizes and food for the meetings, until council officers took over these tasks in mid-2002. Jobs-Plus has made it a requirement to attend six council meetings in order to receive the financial incentives. The council meets monthly on a Saturday morning; the meeting day and time were changed from a weekday to accommodate the increasing number of working residents.

When Jobs-Plus was still an unknown entity in the community, the Resident Advisory Council introduced the program to the residents, organized meetings, distributed information, raised funds, and recruited participants. The council continues to help Jobs-Plus to circulate employment information, and it encourages residents to participate in Jobs-Plus activities. The council was awarded a \$100,000 Tenant Opportunities Program Support (TOPS) grant, and Jobs-Plus's project director is charged with overseeing the disbursement of this money to ensure that its use complies with HUD regulations. The TOPS grant has supported various activities co-sponsored by Jobs-Plus and the council as well as residents' efforts to pursue training and education. Rather than specifying how the money is to be used (for instance, for training as a Certified Nursing Assistant), the council keeps the designation flexible, in order to better accommodate residents' needs and interests. The council president is one of Jobs-Plus's premier "success stories": She arrived at DeSoto Bass Courts without a job and with a criminal record, but Mercy Manor and Jobs-Plus helped her get a job and advance professionally. She recently purchased a home and moved out of the development.⁷

The resident council has been able to make some positive changes in the community, as the lead case manager has observed: "The drug dealing . . . has not stopped. But the activity that was outside of my building, it's lessened, because [the] resident council took it upon themselves to go to the Priority Board meeting — took it to the city."

⁷Since the apartment of the resident council president was to be demolished as part of a "density reduction" program — which would have required the president to be relocated to other housing — this resident was able to retain her position on the council even though she no longer lives at the development.

Conclusions

Jobs-Plus in Dayton has been consistently proactive and creative in finding ways to build a community of working households at DeSoto Bass Courts. With its flexible management structure, dedicated staff, and supportive collaborative partners — including resident leadership — the program has been able to offer employment and support services and financial incentives to accommodate an array of pressing needs. Currently, the focus of Jobs-Plus in Dayton is shifting from rapid job placement to employment retention and career advancement so that participants can ultimately achieve self-sufficiency. Finally, the program has helped to strengthen the bonds among residents at DeSoto Bass Courts. “I think it’s becoming more of a community,” observed the lead case manager; “I think people are taking a chance to care about their community.”

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Chapter 5

Jobs-Plus in Los Angeles: Imperial Courts and William Mead Homes

Jennifer Miller

Program Background and Highlights

Since June 1998, Jobs-Plus has been operating in two public housing developments in Los Angeles: Imperial Courts, located in the Watts neighborhood of South Central, and William Mead Homes, near the Boyle Heights neighborhood northeast of downtown. The racial and ethnic compositions of these two developments reflect the diversity of a city that has no single racial or ethnic majority — a city that is home to both one of the largest African-American populations in California and one of the fastest-growing Latino populations in the country. Los Angeles also serves as a primary West Coast gateway for first-generation immigrants — arriving from Mexico, Central America, and Central and Southeast Asia — and it is home to some of the country's most impoverished communities juxtaposed with the vast wealth generated by the city's entertainment industry. Even in the past decade, during which the country as a whole experienced tremendous economic growth, the number of people living at or below the poverty level in Los Angeles County rose from 15.1 percent in 1989 to 17.9 percent in 1999,¹ and the southern areas of the county experienced poverty rates as high as 39.9 percent.²

By including both Imperial Courts and William Mead in the Jobs-Plus demonstration, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) sought to capture the city's diversity as well as its shifting patterns of race, ethnicity, and economic conditions. HACLA also viewed Jobs-Plus as an opportunity to create community-based economic development strategies and employment programs that could effectively serve the primary population groups residing in its public housing developments: Latino, African-American, and Asian. Thus, William Mead Homes was chosen as the primarily Latino site with a smaller number of Asian residents, predominantly from Vietnam and China; and Imperial Courts was chosen as the primarily African-American site, though, as is true of much of South Central, the development's residents are now nearly 40 percent Latino, the majority of whom are recent immigrants from Central America.

¹*A Decade of Progress? The Poor and Affluent in California, 1990 and 2000.*

²Weingart Center Institute for the Study of Homelessness and Poverty, 2001.

Jobs-Plus in Los Angeles: Imperial Courts and William Mead Homes

Los Angeles is the only city with a Jobs-Plus program operating in two housing developments: Imperial Courts and William Mead Homes. Jobs-Plus is administered as a single program but is tailored to the different populations and circumstances of each development. The project director works out of the housing authority's downtown office but spends considerable time at each location, and two on-site coordinators oversee daily operations and manage staffing.

At Imperial Courts, Jobs-Plus is located in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles and serves a predominantly African-American resident population; Latinos make up roughly 40 percent of the development's population. The main program offices are in two converted housing units and are also used by colocated staff from a youth program sponsored by the housing authority, the Department of Labor's Youth Opportunity Movement (YOM) program, and the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), with additional office and meeting space at the community center in the middle of the development, where Jobs-Plus hosts job clubs, community events, and biweekly ESL classes taught by instructors from Los Angeles Southwest College. A new Head Start building and child care center have recently been erected at Imperial Courts, and construction of the development's gym and recreational center — long stymied by contract difficulties — resumed in January 2002, and the new facility opened for residents' use in December 2002.

Across the city, near the Boyle Heights neighborhood of East Los Angeles, Jobs-Plus is also located at William Mead Homes, where the resident population is predominantly Latino but includes a sizable number of Southeast Asians. The staff conduct their work in the close quarters of one small renovated housing unit, and the program was recently able to annex an additional unit across the street to house colocated staff from partner agencies including YOM, DPSS, and the East Los Angeles Women's Center. With the completion of a toxic soil remediation project at the site in late 2000, Mead's social hall and community center reopened in 2001; it provides additional meeting space and houses resident-supervised after-school programs by the Boys and Girls Club as well as the Friends of the Junior Arts Center and on-site GED classes taught by the East Los Angeles Skills Center.

Under the leadership of the current project director, the two Jobs-Plus programs in Los Angeles share many key features. The core program staff at each site are employees of the housing authority and include a site coordinator, two case managers, a job developer, resident site assistants, and administrative support staff. The case managers (some of whom are residents) assess residents' needs for employment-related assistance and support services and then refer them to appropriate job openings or service providers. The job developer works closely with the case managers to determine suitable job placements, to address barriers to employment, and to cultivate employer contacts. At Imperial Courts, Jobs-Plus can direct the residents to a computer learning center run by the housing authority to use the Internet for job search and to get computer-assisted basic education and help in writing résumés and letters of application. William Mead's computer center was the target of a firebomb in September 2001, and it has not been rebuilt.

Jobs-Plus in Los Angeles emphasizes resident empowerment through leadership development and civic participation. The programs work closely with the resident council and resident volunteers to sponsor community events and deliver services, such as food distribution. In November 2000, Jobs-Plus established the Community Coaches program as a way to formalize efforts to disseminate job-related information via resident networks and to build resident leadership capacity. The team of coaches — approximately 10 from each site — completed training in economic development and community organizing in the spring of 2001, and the coaches work in tandem with Jobs-Plus case managers and job developers to outreach to residents about the Jobs-Plus financial incentives program, the Earned Income Tax Credit, job opportunities, and community events. In March 2002, the coaches at William Mead Homes established an on-site evening GED preparation class in conjunction with the East Los Angeles Skills Center.

Jobs-Plus in Los Angeles implemented its financial incentives program in June 2000. The program was structured to freeze the rent of all residents participating in Jobs-Plus for 18 months, to encourage residents to seek work and engage in training; and to lower rents of working residents to a lowered flat rent that does not change as household income rises. The rent-freeze period ended in January 2002, and, as of December 2002, approximately 290 residents of William Mead Homes and approximately 220 residents of Imperial Courts had benefited from either the rent freeze or the flat-rent program.

The Los Angeles Jobs-Plus programs serve a broad range of participants with diverse needs and challenges different from other sites in the demonstration. Early on, the Los Angeles sites adopted an approach both of serving the residents of Imperial Courts and William Mead Homes and of opening their doors to family members and neighbors who reside outside the developments. Operating under the theory that employment can positively affect all members of a household regardless of their official status as residents, the sites drew on funding and in-kind support from partner agencies, including the local welfare and workforce development agencies — which target and serve broad categories of the unemployed and low-wage workers — to support services to nonresidents. Though staff report that nonresidents make up a small percentage of the people they serve, they frequently provide job development services and resource information and referrals to outside organizations for nonresidents. Staff also note that many of these nonresidents face a number of barriers to employment, including felony convictions, that bar them from living in public housing under current HUD regulations, making them among the hardest to serve in the program.

Jobs-Plus also serves some residents who are undocumented immigrants and do not have the legal right to work in the United States. Changes in HUD policies over the past five years have restricted the extent to which housing authorities can rent units to undocumented populations, and while families without documented members are no longer permitted to apply for public housing, undocumented immigrants are still permitted to be on the lease as long as one member of the household has U.S. citizenship or legal U.S. immigration status.³ Because Los Angeles as a whole has large numbers of undocumented residents, so too do public housing units there have more undocumented residents relative to other locations in the demonstration, posing a unique challenge to the Los Angeles sites to structure services and job development strategies to meet the needs of this population. According to Jobs-Plus staff, undocumented residents are typically employed — readily securing jobs and rarely out of work for long periods of time, as they do not qualify for unemployment benefits and welfare — albeit in jobs that are typically temporary and low-paying. Thus, undocumented residents often come to Jobs-Plus seeking referrals to better-paying jobs than those they can find on their own. But Jobs-Plus understandably has had difficulty identifying these types of opportunities, given that better-paying jobs in the formal economy require job applicants to pass background checks verifying the right to work legally in the United States. Jobs-Plus does, however, play an important role in helping

³Housing authorities are required to charge families who have undocumented members a higher, prorated rent based on the number of undocumented persons in the household so that only documented residents are receiving assistance. HACLA has responded to this diversity in its developments by trying to preserve families and connecting them to resources to reach compliance with immigration laws and regulations. Rent calculations vary widely for these families based on composition, but Housing Services staff at HACLA estimate that most of these families in the two Jobs-Plus developments typically pay an additional \$100 in monthly rent, compared with households where all members are documented.

undocumented residents connect to education and training resources, and the program has begun to foster collaborative relationships with agencies that provide legal assistance with immigration and naturalization issues.

The Los Angeles Jobs-Plus programs share the same basic service flow, staffing structure, and program components, and they have several common collaborative members. Both sites provide preemployment, job search, and job development services on an individualized, drop-in basis with few formalized or group components — which staff feel makes the program more accessible and welcoming to residents than other, more structured social service agencies. The programs place a high priority on hiring residents from their respective development as full-time staff, and they have created additional resident hiring opportunities through long-term paid internship positions and a paid work experience program. Since the early days of Jobs-Plus, both sites have had long-standing connections to three key public agencies: the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS); the state Employment Development Department (EDD); and the City of Los Angeles's Community Development Department (CDD), funded by the Department of Labor's Workforce Investment Act (WIA). DPSS has colocated part-time caseworkers at each site since 1999, providing residents with direct links to the welfare system, and EDD has colocated a full-time job developer at William Mead Homes since early 2000. Imperial Courts and William Mead have had referral relationships internally with HACLA's One-Stop employment service system funded by WIA, and in June 2002 the programs were formally linked to the system as "portals" to the main One-Stop Center. More recently, the sites have formed relationships with the Department of Labor's Youth Opportunity Movement (YOM) program, which colocates staff at both sites and brings a range of youth programming to Jobs-Plus through a combination of after-school activities, family events and field trips, and connections to youth employment services.

In an effort to respond to the specific needs of residents, each Jobs-Plus development has also fostered resource networks unique to its respective site and has capitalized on local resources by forming relationships with service providers in its respective community. William Mead Homes, for example, refers residents for education and training at the East Los Angeles Skills Center, which also provides on-site classes to prepare for the General Educational Development (GED) exam and certificate, whereas Imperial Courts staff have established a referral relationship with Los Angeles Trade Technology Center and Los Angeles Southwest Community College, which are easier for Imperial Courts residents to access via public transit. William Mead staff secured an agreement with East Los Angeles Women's Center to colocate case managers who are bilingual in Spanish and Cantonese on-site two days per week as a way to engage resident women. At Imperial Courts, staff expanded youth programming by linking to HACLA's Day Supervision Program, a state-funded anticrime and gang prevention initiative targeted to several Los Angeles neighborhoods, including South Central. Imperial Courts also

collaborates closely with the Maxine Waters Skill Center and the Watts Labor Community Action Committee.

Los Angeles adopted a two-tiered structure for its Jobs-Plus collaborative, which comprises (1) an Executive Committee formed by senior staff of the key collaborative members and (2) two site-level collaboratives made up of midlevel managers and direct services staff from these agencies as well as organizations specific to each site. Said one Jobs-Plus staff person, “The working collaborative is the one you cut deals with,” and this structure has allowed program staff the flexibility to coordinate referral relationships and service delivery more efficiently. Early on, HACLA assumed the lead role in funding and managing Jobs-Plus, with executive collaborative members providing input into certain aspects of the program design and operations as well as in-kind support and colocated staff, but without being actively involved in day-to-day oversight. Key members of both the executive- and the site-level collaboratives include DPSS, EDD, the city’s CDD programs, YOM, and the internal HACLA departments administering both the WIA One-Stops (called Work Source Centers) and the Department of Labor’s Welfare-to-Work program.

The site-level collaboratives share several operations-level staff from DPSS, EDD, and YOM and several other agencies whose services are in demand at both developments. Partner organizations include The Workplace, which provides job placement assistance for residents with criminal records and joined the Jobs-Plus collaborative in 2002, and the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department, which helps noncustodial parents negotiate issues related to child support and custody. In addition, each site has collaborative members from organizations located in the local communities in which the developments are situated.

The two Jobs-Plus sites are jointly overseen by a project director — providing overall program direction — who is located off-site at HACLA’s downtown offices and who has primary responsibility for fundraising, hiring and evaluating staff, and coordinating with internal HACLA departments such as Housing Services (for administration of the Jobs-Plus financial incentives program) and the Application Center, which promotes enrollment in Jobs-Plus to new residents. The project director has also devoted considerable time to establishing a presence for Jobs-Plus in the context of the numerous other programs that HACLA administers. In an environment in which programs are pushed to collaborate in order to achieve high outcomes and reduce service duplication while at the same time competing with each other for funds, this has been one of the most demanding of the project director’s tasks, particularly as the demonstration nears its end and plans for program sustainability become more pressing.

Imperial Courts and William Mead Homes each have a site coordinator who oversees day-to-day operations and who reports to the project director. The two site coordinators supervise the staff and the colocated partners from outside agencies, facilitate administration of the

financial incentives program with the on-site Housing Services offices, and oversee the delivery of employment and training services and community support for work activities. The core services staff at each site include the site coordinator, one senior case manager/community organizer, one case manager, one job developer, one resident services site assistant, and a typist-clerk. Each site then has a varying number of internship and work experience positions as well as colocated staff from its respective partner agencies.

Jobs-Plus in Los Angeles implemented the financial incentives component of the program in June 2000. The basic eligibility criteria, enrollment processes, and division of labor with the Housing Services office are identical at William Mead Homes and Imperial Courts, with some minor variation in site-level operations and participant tracking. The program is structured in two 18-month phases, with Phase 1 beginning in June 2000 and ending in December 2001 and Phase 2 continuing from January 2002 through June 2003. The financial incentives component comprises three main elements:

- A rent freeze during Phase 1 of the program only, available to all working and nonworking residents whose rent is at or below the flat-rent level
- A reduction of ceiling-rent levels to a flat rate for working residents who are currently paying rent above the flat-rate level, available during both Phase 1 and Phase 2
- One month of free rent for residents who were unemployed or on welfare at the time of their enrollment in the program and who maintained consistent employment or training for 12 consecutive months during Phase 1

The structure of the rent freeze offered in Phase 1 was unique among Jobs-Plus financial incentives programs in that it was available to both working and nonworking residents. It was designed with the dual goals of engaging a large number of people in Jobs-Plus services and creating an incentive for residents to pursue both education and training during the first 18-month period. The flat rent is available to working residents only, and it reduces rents to approximately \$100 below the HACLA-wide ceiling rent (Table 5.1).

While targeted to nondisabled working-age residents between the ages of 18 and 65, Jobs-Plus does not automatically exclude older residents or those receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) from enrolling in the financial incentives program. Because Los Angeles requires that the leaseholder sign the incentives agreement — regardless of whether he or she is the household member who is employed — Jobs-Plus staff realized that even though the leaseholder might be retired, receiving SSI, or permanently disabled, there might be other working-age residents in the household who might be eligible for and who would benefit from the financial incentives program. Further, the project director explained that the goal — particularly with

Table 5.1

Ceiling Rents Versus Flat Rents of Jobs-Plus in Los Angeles

	One Bedroom	Two Bedrooms	Three Bedrooms	Four Bedrooms
Ceiling rent	\$337	\$397	\$496	\$556
Flat rent under Jobs-Plus	\$275	\$275	\$320	\$340

the rent-freeze option — was to engage as many residents as possible in the program, connecting them to services and promoting employment and training opportunities for the entire household. Jobs-Plus’s policy has therefore been to enroll all residents in the financial incentives program, though case managers and Housing Services staff report screening out those who are clearly unable to work or who have no intention of working. The rent incentives program has been particularly beneficial to working families who have undocumented members paying a higher, prorated rent based on their immigration status, as described above. Information about administration of the financial incentives is outlined below, in each of the two site-specific sections of this chapter, and a report on the Jobs-Plus financial incentives discusses these issues in detail.⁴

Both Imperial Courts and William Mead Homes based their early approaches to the community support for work component on organizing large-scale community events to promote the Jobs-Plus program and the services of their collaborative members. The Resident Advisory Councils at both developments actively participated in organizing these events, which helped engage the community and establish trust between residents and the program. In November 2000, the sites implemented the Community Coaches program as a way to formalize efforts to foster work-related social supports. Ten residents from each development were recruited for the program, and they completed training in community-organizing and economic development principles such as researching labor market information for their neighborhoods and connecting residents to jobs with local employers. The training was facilitated by the Community Development Technologies Center, a Los Angeles-based economic development organization. Soon after completing the six training sessions in March 2001, the coaches began working with Jobs-Plus staff to increase outreach and dissemination of job-related information to residents. The coaches also began planning larger-scale projects that would help meet employment and service needs in their communities. The coaches at William Mead Homes, for example, established on-site GED preparation classes beginning in March 2002. (The two site-specific sections of this chapter provide more detailed information about the coaches’ activities.)

⁴Miller and Riccio, 2002.

HACLA funded the Community Coaches program with a grant totaling \$90,000, which covered the cost of training and allowed Jobs-Plus to provide stipends for the coaches, who receive \$100 per quarter for their outreach and program planning efforts. HACLA has expressed strong support for the Community Coaches program and for the community-building aspects of Jobs-Plus. HACLA's executive director views this as one of Jobs-Plus's biggest assets and a valuable counterpart to the more "formal" services offered by programs like the WIA One-Stops, saying: "You can buy welfare-to-work [for example], a bundle of services. But you can't buy Jobs-Plus." HACLA has recently indicated interest in expanding the Community Coaches program to other housing developments.

Since operations began in 1998, the Jobs-Plus staff at both sites in Los Angeles have been successful in establishing a range of on-site employment services, administering the financial incentives program, and developing their approaches to community support for work. At the same time, both programs have weathered a number of challenges arising from particular circumstances at their sites, along with long-term staffing vacancies in several key positions. During these periods, staff have had to focus on providing basic services rather than on program development or expansion, resulting in periodic slumps in enrollment and outreach activities. Imperial Courts, in particular, has endured several rounds of staffing shortages, and the core staff carried on operations with no full-time site coordinator and a vacancy in the senior case manager position from February 2001 through March of the following year. At William Mead Homes, during much of 1999 and early 2000, the program was heavily affected by resident unrest and gang-related violence owing to a contentious toxic soil remediation project. The office was closed briefly during this time to relocate to a new space; the program experienced rapid turnover in a number of staff positions, and residents' use of services and participation in activities was low during this transition.

In the face of these challenges, however, both sites have developed programs and delivered services that residents report add value to their communities. A Jobs-Plus staff member observed that the program has inspired residents to create a vision for their lives that they otherwise would not have — a vision that directs them to pursue education, establish careers, and engage in legitimate employment activities, helping them see a range of new possibilities for work and education beyond the borders of the public housing developments. In short, Jobs-Plus has forged a positive link to the "outside."

IMPERIAL COURTS

The Housing Development and Its Population

The low, two-story cinder-block buildings of Imperial Courts stretch out over 36 acres of the Watts neighborhood of South Central Los Angeles. With a total of 86 buildings and 489 housing units, Imperial Courts is home to more than 1,500 residents and is located within a 2-mile radius of three other major public housing developments. The area immediately surrounding the development is primarily residential, with a few small, locally owned convenience stores and auto repair shops. Across a busy street and under the highway is a larger shopping complex with a grocery store, shops, and fast-food restaurants. At the center of Imperial Courts is an area roughly three blocks square, where the development's Learning Center, computer lab, and gym and recreation center are located, as are buildings that house the local 4-H program, Head Start, and a small child care center that is expected to open by late 2002.

The buildings are brightly painted in turquoise, yellow, and peach, and small yards stretch out to the front and the back of each apartment. Some residents have planted flowers and gardens in this space; some have put out patio furniture, grills, and laundry lines. There are a number of open, parklike areas throughout the development, some of which have been converted into playground areas with sandboxes, swing sets, and jungle-gym equipment. Other areas attract groups of young men — registered residents and nonresidents alike — who hang out there throughout the day. One area across the street from the Learning Center is commonly referred to as “The Island” and has long raised concern because drugs are often dealt in this area.

This area of Los Angeles is known in part for its economic hardships and crime. It is situated at the intersection of two of the city's major highways and two light rail lines that connect the area to the downtown financial center to the north, the airport to the west, and the ports of Long Beach and San Pedro to the south. Yet the residents of Imperial Courts often speak of feeling isolated in a place where there are few economic opportunities nearby and where incidents of crime hinder them from moving freely in and out of the development. One staff member explained that even though residents can access services such as WIA training vouchers at one of the adjacent developments, they are hesitant to apply for them for fear of retaliation for encroaching on the “turf” of rival gangs. Although Jobs-Plus's small staff cannot provide the comprehensive range of services that the residents need, staff members often report being unable to encourage residents to go off-site to seek services from other programs.

Concerns for safety also impact residents' decisions about employment, and Jobs-Plus staff are also confronted with the challenge of helping residents weigh the advantages and disadvantages of working versus leaving their children unsupervised. One single-parent resident whose oldest child had been the target of violence by a group of young residents described find-

ing herself in the difficult position of commuting long hours to a low-wage job to support her family without welfare and also needing to spend more time at home so she could ensure her children's safety. The resident expressed the strong desire to work: "I like to work, because I don't like to be dependent on nobody. . . . I like to make my own money. All the stuff I've been getting, I've been getting for my kids." But at the same time, her concern for her children's well-being — coupled with frustration over low wages and a cutback in hours at her job — led her to quit so she could be at home supervising her children before and after school.

A central concern of the Imperial Courts community has been the demolition of the development's gym and social hall, which took place in 1997. The city's Department of Recreation and Parks was to manage the rebuilding of the facility, but stalled funding in the City Council and mismanagement by early contractors resulted in the project's being abandoned shortly after it began. A half-finished shell and piles of unused bricks and concrete were all that existed for years in the field where the gym formerly stood. With few alternative venues for adult and youth social and recreational activities, tensions between residents and the housing authority over the construction of the gym mounted over the years until a group of vocal residents organized in the fall of 2001 and contacted the newly elected City Council member in their district, demanding that the project be finished. This culminated in a community meeting held in November 2001 with City Council representatives, senior management staff from HACLA, staff from the Department of Recreation and Parks, and the contractor recently hired to finish the building. Construction began in January 2002, and the gym opened officially in mid-December 2002. The Jobs-Plus job developer and the resident services site assistant established a close relationship early on with the construction company that has contracted to complete the gym, providing application assistance and screening and facilitating the hiring of more than 25 residents on the project.

During this period, Jobs-Plus stepped in to coordinate and provide community and youth services that were formerly offered at the gym. For example, Jobs-Plus assumed duties as the coordinating entity for the HACLA-wide youth sports program, sponsored field trips and karate and aerobics classes for adults and kids, and organized summer classes in silk-screening and printing for resident youth. In some cases, these events and services were not directly related to employment. Staff note that spearheading this type of programming has been an important part of their outreach efforts to involve parents in the program. In the larger context of their community supports for work component, they supported parents who were working by providing supervised activities for their children in the after school hours.

For several years, however, the events surrounding the gym compounded the general sense of distrust that many Imperial Courts residents express for government and social service agencies — including those run by the housing authority, like Jobs-Plus. Even after construction on the gym had been under way for several months, a resident said: "Yeah, maybe they'll even

finish it this time. I'll believe it when I see it." Residents often comment that since the social unrest of the 1960s, service providers in Watts have come and gone, often in a short-lived blaze of media attention, leaving behind little in the way of long-term investments needed to bring about change in their community. These sentiments have also been echoed by seasoned social service providers who sit on the Jobs-Plus collaborative, and Jobs-Plus itself is often implicated in these conflicting relations. The delay in implementing the financial incentives component of the program did not improve the situation, and residents' discontent over the late arrival of the incentives has periodically been compounded by HACLA's procurement and hiring policies, which have resulted in both Jobs-Plus sites' experiencing long delays in filling key staff positions and acquiring basic office equipment.⁵ Thus, building trust between the program and the residents has been one of Jobs-Plus's biggest challenges, and the effort makes up a considerable part of the staff's ongoing work at the site. As one resident said: "It doesn't take too many times to break promises before people are like, 'Forget it.'"

Jobs-Plus at Imperial Courts is also at the center of another set of dynamics generated by the rapidly changing demographics both of the development and of South Central as a whole. When the demonstration began in 1998, the population at Imperial Courts was 78 percent African-American, 20 percent Latino, and 2 percent Caucasian.⁶ In just five years, these proportions have shifted considerably, and the population is now 54 percent African-American, 44 percent Latino, and 2 percent Caucasian.⁷ "It's like a whole different culture down here," said one HACLA staff member. Some residents express concern over these changes, and staff report that cultural and language differences tend to keep the African-Americans and Latinos from interacting with one another. Jobs-Plus has made a concerted effort to address cultural barriers on a number of fronts, primarily by hiring a complement of staff who reflect the ethnic composition of the community. Spanish-speaking staff members are available to welcome and assist the Latino residents, and Jobs-Plus regularly hosts community events that celebrate racial and ethnic diversity as part of the program's community support for work approach.

Program Infrastructure

Staffing and Management

The core Jobs-Plus staff at Imperial Courts consist of one site coordinator, a senior case manager/community organizer, a case manager, a job developer, a resident services site assistant, and one administrative intern who staffs the front desk. The site does not have a permanent

⁵These issues are addressed in more detail in Kato and Riccio (2001).

⁶MDRC calculations based on HACLA data from tenant rosters in October 1997 (Riccio, 1999, p. 22).

⁷Based on HACLA resident rosters, September 16, 2002.

typist-clerk — as William Mead Homes does — filling this position instead with two long-term interns. All staff members are employees of the housing authority. The small core staff have experienced a number of lengthy vacancies over the past two years and are, therefore, accustomed to “wearing many hats,” providing services that are not part of their official job description. Typically, staff responsibilities are organized as follows:

- The **site coordinator** oversees staff, interns, work experience participants, colocated staff from collaborating agencies, and the community support for work activities. The coordinator is the link between the sites and the downtown HACLA offices and participates in program planning processes as well as overseeing the site-level collaborative, and engaging new partner agencies.
- The **case manager** is responsible for intake and assessment, helping residents identify and address barriers to work, administering supportive services, providing ongoing case management, and coordinating job preparation activities with the job developer. The current case manager — a long-term resident of Imperial Courts with strong ties to the community — also fulfills outreach duties and organizes community events.
- The **senior case manager/community organizer** performs all case management duties, such as intake and assessment, in addition to overseeing enrollment in the financial incentives program and coordinating with the on-site Housing Services office. She is assigned to coordinate activities of the Community Coaches program with support from the case manager. The current staff person is bilingual and takes responsibility for providing case management for Imperial Court’s Latino residents.
- The **job developer** provides job search assistance, including help with résumé writing, applications, and interview preparation. He cultivates referral relationships with local employers and updates the job postings in Jobs-Plus’s resource room. The job developer also coordinates the biweekly pre-employment workshops and on-site hiring opportunities, such as the gym construction project.
- The **administrative intern** and **resident services site assistant** greet residents as they come into the office and make general referrals to appropriate Jobs-Plus staff and outside agencies. The position of resident services site assistant is staffed by an Imperial Courts resident who also conducts outreach and plans community events. The current staff member filling this position is also a member of the Resident Advisory Council. The administrative intern is bilingual and assists in providing services to Latino residents.

The case manager, resident services site assistant, and job developer have all been with the program since 1999. The current project director — who now oversees the programs at both sites — began with Jobs-Plus as the Imperial Courts site coordinator in July 1999 and assumed responsibility for both programs in May 2000, ending a period of heavy turnover that had characterized the position since the program began in 1998.⁸ Hired from an affordable housing development organization that worked in Latino communities, she came to Jobs-Plus with both knowledge of program operations and a commitment to community-building and resident-driven services. She effectively (and sometimes unwittingly) used her status as an “outsider” who had not yet learned the official bureaucratic processes at HACLA to secure resources for the site, reconfiguring the front desk and reception area with chairs and resource information for residents and equipping the office with computers and phone lines. She recalls later being told that there were processes for all these requests, “but it would have taken a year . . . more! to get all of that done.” After a year-long vacancy in this position beginning in February 2001, a new site coordinator joined Imperial Courts in March 2002. A seasoned HACLA employee and an astute manager, she quickly reengaged collaborative members, capitalizing on her relationships with a number of service providers in the South Central community. She reviewed staff responsibilities and program components with a strategy of reestablishing a more structured program flow and formalizing the preemployment components as ways to improve residents’ job retention. As do other staff at Imperial Courts, the site coordinator has a strong interest in developing the program’s youth services for residents from ages 16 to 24, noting that “the youth are the future of this community, so we have to focus on developing opportunities for them.” An overview of Imperial’s youth services is provided below.

The program also offers residents employment in two administrative intern positions and in a maximum of four work experience positions per year. Participants in the work experience program can work either in the clerical/office skills or janitorial area, and they typically work under the close supervision of a Jobs-Plus staff member who is supposed to coach them in technical and soft skills. The presence of residents as staff members — including one of the case managers — has helped to establish Jobs-Plus’s credibility in the development. One of the resident staff members emphasized the importance of staff members who share the perspective

⁸When the current project director assumed her position, William Mead’s former job developer was promoted to the position of Imperial Courts site coordinator. Over the next eight months, he split his time between Imperial Courts and William Mead Homes, after the latter lost its site coordinator in the fall of 2001. He assumed full-time duties as site coordinator at William Mead in early 2001. From February 2001 to March 2002, the positions of both site coordinator and senior case manager at Imperial Courts were vacant owing to staff promotions and transfers and HACLA’s lengthy hiring and interviewing processes. The project director filled in as site coordinator of Imperial Courts at this time, spending mornings or afternoons at the site several times per week. While the remaining staff worked during this period to continue administering and providing the core Jobs-Plus services, other activities (community support for work, outreach, and engagement with collaborative members) were scaled down.

and experiences of the residents: “You have to talk to them on their level. I never think that I’m better than they are. That could be me there on the other side [of the desk].”

Three partner agencies have also assigned staff to Jobs-Plus to provide on-site services. A caseworker from the Department of Public and Social Services (DPSS), the local welfare program, has been colocated on-site for two half-days weekly since 1999. DPSS formally transferred the cases of all Imperial Courts residents to this worker. Using a computer connected to the DPSS network, residents can access the full range of enrollment, eligibility, and case management functions from the Jobs-Plus office, though residents newly enrolled with DPSS must go to the local welfare office to complete the required orientation and job preparation workshop. For a brief period in mid-2000, the state Employment Development Department (EDD) outstationed a job developer in a small office adjacent to the reception area, but funding constraints kept EDD from maintaining this staff member.

Since the fall of 2001, two full-time staff members from HACLA’s Day Supervision program work out of the Jobs-Plus office to coordinate youth programs as part of its gang prevention program, including after-school tutoring, weekly movie nights in the Learning Center, and field trips. The staff report that an average of 10 youth per day access tutoring and homework assistance and that approximately 20 youth attend the movie night each week. The Day Supervision program also works with a half-time staff from the local probation office to assist youth involved in the juvenile justice system and to provide counseling services to their parents.

Two staff members from the Watts division of the Youth Opportunities Movement (YOM) program also occupy office space at the Jobs-Plus office, linking Imperial Courts youth ages 14 to 21 with local employment and internship opportunities. The program offers counseling on careers and higher education as well as assistance with job applications and résumé writing. YOM staff primarily use the Jobs-Plus office as a hub from which to conduct outreach, offering most of their services off-site at the main YOM office. In contrast, the Boyle Heights division of YOM — which has assigned staff to Jobs-Plus at William Mead Homes — emphasizes less centralized operations and encourages colocated staff to run activities at the sites where they are located.

YOM, DPSS, and the Day Supervision program all have separate enrollment forms and maintain separate files for participants in their programs, although they share information with the Jobs-Plus office as residents’ needs require. Information and data sharing between Jobs-Plus and these partners happened primarily on an informal, as-needed basis until the spring of 2002, when the site coordinator instituted monthly meetings of service providers as a way to formalize communication.

The Jobs-Plus staff take the lead role in managing and planning the program, consulting with members of the Resident Advisory Council and the community coaches for additional

resident feedback about services and areas for improvement. In summer 2001, several new resident council officers were elected who have full-time employment, resulting in less frequent communication between the council leaders and Jobs-Plus. The current council is also pursuing several projects independently of Jobs-Plus, although the council worked with Jobs-Plus and the coaches to establish weekly distribution of free bread. And one of the Jobs-Plus staff is also a member of the Resident Advisory Council and helps maintain connections between the two entities. Site-level collaborative members help in managing Jobs-Plus by coordinating services between Jobs-Plus and their individual programs and by making suggestions for improving these processes. But they do not play a formal role in governing Jobs-Plus.

As at William Mead Homes, the presence of undocumented residents at Imperial Courts has meant that some residents — even those who are documented but may have undocumented family members in their households — are reluctant to enroll in formal programs like Jobs-Plus out of fear that the program will report them to immigration authorities. Distrust and confusion about how the complex system of immigration works mean that these fears, whether founded in suspicion or fact, loom large in residents' judgments about whether or not to engage in programs. Establishing trust with residents who are concerned about immigration issues has been a continual challenge for both of the Jobs-Plus sites in Los Angeles.

Facilities

The Jobs-Plus office at Imperial Courts first opened its doors in two converted housing units across the street from the Housing Services office and next door to the Resident Advisory Council offices and Project Build, another on-site service program. The site coordinator, core staff, and work experience participants have their offices there in a space that also accommodates a small resource room with tables, chairs, job postings, and resource information from collaborative members and other community agencies. Residents can conduct self-directed job search here, using two computers with Internet access dedicated for this purpose and which also have software for résumé writing and keyboarding practice. A photocopier, fax machine, typewriter, and phones are also available for job search purposes. The resident services site assistant's desk is located adjacent to the resource room so that she can easily be available to answer residents' questions or assist with applications. The staff use the resource room as their common meeting space and the larger facilities across the development at the Learning Center for job preparation classes, collaborative meetings, community gatherings, and employer recruitment sessions. In the early years of the program, the DPSS caseworker also occupied a small office at the Learning Center. Staff often noted, however, that the distance hampered their efforts to coordinate with her in working with the site's recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); so, in early 2002, she began offering services directly from the Jobs-Plus office, sharing space with the resident services site assistant.

In late 2001, Jobs-Plus annexed an additional unit immediately adjacent to the main office. This unit now houses the two part-time staff from YOM, the two full-time Day Supervision program staff, and the half-time probation officer. Residents can enter the office through a separate outside entrance or through an access way that connects it to the Jobs-Plus office. This office is also wheelchair-accessible, which is a requirement in order for Jobs-Plus to be certified as a portal to the HACLA One-Stops.

Program Flow

Jobs-Plus at Imperial Courts is striving to assist residents who have a wide range of employment needs and skill levels and who are at various stages of job readiness. Jobs-Plus has therefore adopted a flexible service approach that emphasizes “meeting residents where they are” and providing services based on individual need rather than emphasizing progression through a standardized sequence of services in a group context. The staff also try to accommodate the dislike that many residents express for social services that require clients to complete lengthy assessments or mandatory workshops. Indeed, at the outset of the program, 70 percent of Imperial Courts residents were receiving cash assistance through the welfare system and were mandated to participate in off-site work activities. In this context, it was important for Jobs-Plus to build on and not replicate services that residents were already receiving or that they were required to get elsewhere.

Consequently, until more recently, Imperial Courts required residents to complete few mandatory steps in the Jobs-Plus program and instead provided services more on an “as requested” basis; the sequence and length of services varied considerably from resident to resident. In addition, in the early years of the program, staff adopted the policy of not requiring residents to produce extensive identification documents in order to receive services and of giving residents the option of not answering detailed questions on the intake form. This approach also stemmed from residents’ concerns that HACLA might have access to their information, which might put their housing at risk. The staff feel, for example, that they cannot record specific information about requests for assistance from residents who may have criminal records, since these residents might then be targeted for eviction under HUD’s One Strike policy. At a minimum, residents were required to fill out the intake form with the Jobs-Plus case manager so that there would be a record of their having accessed services, but there were residents who were not formally enrolled in the program who would drop by simply to see job postings, talk with the job developer about employment leads, or receive bus tokens.

Jobs-Plus’s efforts, however, to respect residents’ desire for informal, short-term services that require limited procedures and paperwork posed challenges to the program because there were few methodical efforts to track residents’ progress and ensure that they were taking the longer-term steps needed to progress toward self-sufficiency — which was particularly

problematic at Imperial Courts, which is home to a high percentage of welfare recipients, many of whom will begin meeting time limits on their benefits in January 2003⁹ and who may need both job retention services and additional education and skills to qualify for better-paying jobs with benefits.

Since the arrival of the new site coordinator in March 2002, however, several aspects of Imperial Court's program flow have been formalized. Staff now follow a standardized intake process, and all residents enrolling in the program are required to complete an assessment with a case manager. The site designed the family action plan — which is also used by Jobs-Plus staff at William Mead Homes — in an effort to capture a more client-centered approach to their services and a holistic sense of residents' goals for work, education, and family, and to allow the resident to map out and assess his or her own aspirations, strengths, and potential barriers in these areas. The family action plan guides residents through a self-assessment process focused on strengths and skills and asks the residents to map out ways that they can work with the Jobs-Plus program and other service providers to address any barriers that might keep them from achieving their goals. Residents are also now required to attend an orientation session about Jobs-Plus and the program's goals and services. These are offered biweekly, as are preemployment workshops jointly facilitated by a Jobs-Plus staff member and a staff person from the Maxine Waters Skill Center. Staff have also made efforts to conduct case conferencing meetings as a way to facilitate communication between the job developer and case managers and to formalize their follow-up procedures regarding working residents' employment status, education and training interests, and needs for support services.

Recruitment

Jobs-Plus at Imperial Courts has used a number of recruitment methods to engage residents in the program, with door-to-door outreach and large-scale community events being the two most common approaches. In the early days of the program, staff worked in close conjunction with members of the Resident Advisory Council to promote the program, sponsoring an initial kickoff event in the spring of 1998 that was attended by over 200 residents. The resident council played an important role in helping Jobs-Plus establish itself as a legitimate program in the community and in working with the staff to identify effective outreach and engagement strategies, as well as services that were needed in the community. Currently, the resident services site assistant is in charge of coordinating outreach and works closely with the community coaches in scheduling door-to-door outreach sessions, which happen on a weekly basis. Coaches distribute flyers about job leads and community events as well as a monthly commu-

⁹In California, welfare recipients who reach their time limits lose only the adult portion of their grant and can retain benefits — including Food Stamps and Medicaid — for their children for as long as they continue to meet the income requirements of these programs.

nity activity produced by Jobs-Plus, which lists all events and services being provided by all the programs located at the site.

Once financial incentives were implemented and Jobs-Plus began working more closely with the Housing Services staff to administer the program, Jobs-Plus also engaged the other staff in helping with outreach efforts. Flyers advertising Jobs-Plus services, job fairs, and community events are routinely displayed in the Housing Services office, and Jobs-Plus staff assembled “welcome packets” containing brochures and resource information for new residents entering the development, which Housing Services staff distribute during their initial interview. The assistant housing manager also makes “reverse referrals” to Jobs-Plus — for example, when she is completing a review with residents and notes that they have not yet enrolled in the financial incentives program. Housing Services informs Jobs-Plus of these referrals on an informal basis, primarily when the assistant housing manager and the Jobs-Plus senior case manager meet to reconcile their financial incentives enrollment records, and it is the expectation that Jobs-Plus staff will follow up with these residents.

As a way to further target new residents for enrollment in Jobs-Plus, the project director began working with HACLA’s Application Center, which is located in the downtown administrative offices and is responsible for processing applications for housing and assigning new residents to various developments. The project director oriented the staff there so that they could explain Jobs-Plus’s basic services and supports. The center’s staff now tell new residents who are moving into Imperial Courts and William Mead Homes that there is a strong expectation that they will participate in the program as a condition of accepting housing at these two developments, with the goal of sending the message that Jobs-Plus is an added benefit of living in these communities and to create the expectation that residents will engage in work-related activities. The Jobs-Plus staff also receive information from Housing Services on residents moving into Imperial Courts, and the community coaches have developed a “welcome packet” for these residents with information on Jobs-Plus services and the financial incentives program, which they deliver in person as part of their door-to-door outreach work. The site coordinator reports that this has increased the recruitment of new residents into the program.

At various times, despite these efforts, Jobs-Plus at Imperial Courts has experienced difficulty establishing a distinctive identity in the development. Interviews of residents reveal gaps in their awareness of Jobs-Plus’s presence in the development and in their knowledge of its role as an employment program. Chronic gaps and turnover in staff and site leadership throughout the demonstration have contributed to this challenge, undercutting this program’s ability to establish a clear employment-related identity and a consistent set of services. “Jobs-Plus is so old now,” one staff member said; “but people still don’t know. People still say: ‘What do they offer? What do they offer?’” For instance, even some financial incentives recipients did not realize that their benefits were part of the Jobs-Plus program, while others vaguely associated Jobs-

Plus with the resident council and assumed that the program was involved in community organizing rather than employment assistance.

Enrollment, Orientation, and Assessment

The majority of Imperial Courts residents who come to the Jobs-Plus office seeking services are working-age individuals who are targeted by the demonstration. But Jobs-Plus also enrolls youth, senior citizens, and people who reside in the larger community surrounding Imperial Courts, and it provides services to both legal and undocumented immigrants. As noted above, the program adopted this approach in an attempt to engage whole family units in Jobs-Plus services, regardless of their resident status.

A resident who is enrolling in the program for the first time meets with a case manager or the senior case manager to fill out a two-page basic intake form that records contact information, family size, job skills, employment interests, and work history and that asks the resident to self-identify barriers to employment.¹⁰ The case manager goes through each section of the form with the resident and provides a short orientation about the services available through Jobs-Plus and its collaborative partners, particularly to help address any barriers that the resident has identified. Residents can also learn about Jobs-Plus by attending a biweekly group orientation and preemployment session that is described in the next section. The case manager also completes a family action plan with the resident at this time and may recommend that the resident complete an assessment as a way to more effectively target job search skills and educational goals, but this is not mandatory. Jobs-Plus offers residents opportunities to complete the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASSAS), which evaluates education levels; and the Individual Self Strategy (ISS) Plan, which measures employment interests and skills. Both DPSS and the WIA One-Stop system also use the ISS assessment tool.

Job Readiness and Job Search

Jobs-Plus offers job readiness and job search assistance at Imperial Courts primarily on an individualized basis, including help with résumé writing, filling out job applications, seeking job opportunities, and identifying and applying for education and training opportunities and tuition assistance. Beginning in fall 2001, the job developer established an agreement with the Maxine Waters Skill Center to jointly offer biweekly preemployment classes on-site for Imperial Courts residents, in an effort to formalize job preparation services offered by Jobs-Plus. These sessions give residents a brief orientation to the Jobs-Plus program, emphasizing the financial incentives program and community events, and they cover basic principles of successful

¹⁰As described below, under “Financial Incentives,” an additional form must be completed and signed by the leaseholder in order to enroll in the financial incentives program

job search and interviewing and address such job readiness issues as making adequate child care and transportation arrangements. Staff at the on-site Computer Learning Center also contributes to the preemployment class, helping each resident complete a résumé by the end of the session. From 5 to 10 residents attend each session. The job developer routinely invites employers to make presentations and conduct on-site recruiting at the workshops, noting that attendance is significantly higher at sessions when employers are present.

Residents who come for job search help include new job-seekers who have little or no work experience as well as residents who come with work experience but who have lost a job or are looking for better-paying work. The residents may see one of the case managers or the job developer or the resident services site assistant, depending on the type of services they are seeking and on any relationships they have established a particular staff member. The staff routinely make “internal referrals” to one another if they are unable to meet a resident’s needs, and most residents who request assistance identifying job leads are referred directly to the job developer. Residents can also use the resource room for self-directed job search using the bulletin boards and announcements that the job developer routinely posts.

Job Development and Job Creation

Since Jobs-Plus has access to only a relatively small pool of qualified job applicants at the developments, neither Imperial Courts nor William Mead Homes has been able to establish exclusive hiring relationships with local employers. However, Jobs-Plus has been successful in facilitating a number of sizable hiring efforts. For example, the job developer collaborated with HACLA’s Department of Labor Welfare-to-Work program to hold development-wide application sessions for positions with a newly opened Krispy Kreme donuts production facility located in the neighborhood just north of Imperial Courts. Welfare-to-Work offered soft-skills classes in conjunction with the application sessions, which helped residents prepare for Krispy Kreme’s interview process. Jobs-Plus also linked a number of residents to jobs with the Alameda Corridor project, a multimillion-dollar freight rail line linking the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, and to positions with the U.S. Census Bureau during the census count in 2000. The job developer has also been successful in establishing relationships with smaller employers in the area as well as in helping residents apply for positions within the housing authority.

Jobs-Plus has attempted to create jobs on a small scale, developing a short-term paid work experience program that serves approximately six residents per year at each site and establishing long-term resident intern positions with two slots at each site. The work experience positions are offered both in the clerical/office skills area and in janitorial skills, with the job developer overseeing the work of the janitorial worker and the site coordinator supervising the clerical/office skills positions. The internship positions in clerical and office skills can become full-time positions, depending on the resident’s availability, and the positions are available for as

long as there is funding to support them. Additionally, the Day Supervision program offers one youth internship position, and the staff collaborated with Southwest College as part of Imperial Court's youth employment activities to create a summer work experience program that served approximately 25 Imperial Courts youth. Jobs-Plus used Drug Elimination Program funds available from HACLA to provide stipends for resident youth placed in these positions.

Education and Training

Imperial Courts has developed links to a number of local education and training institutions, and residents are encouraged to seek out these services as a way to improve their long-term job prospects. Residents can pursue self-directed skill development such as keyboarding, basic computer skills, and GED preparation at the on-site Computer Learning Center. In October 2002, Imperial Courts began offering on-site English as a Second Language (ESL) classes through a partnership with Southwest Community College. Classes quickly filled to capacity with 18 residents, and Jobs-Plus is negotiating for additional classroom space at the gym so the program can accommodate continued demand for these services. Residents seeking other types of training or more formal education are referred to providers off-site. Key referral partners are the Los Angeles Trade Technology Center, the Maxine Waters Skill Center, Compton Community College, Southwest College, and Jordan-Locke Schools, where residents can access GED preparation and Adult Basic Education courses.

From time to time, gang-related turf issues have discouraged some residents from venturing to the center at nearby Nickerson Gardens to apply for these funds. However, a former Jobs-Plus staff person now working at Nickerson's Community Service Center has worked with the Jobs-Plus staff and project director to create safe and ready access to the center's services. Residents are often transported to the center for appointments and to fill out paperwork, and Community Service Center staff also come on-site to the Jobs-Plus office to assist residents as needed.

Job Retention and Career Advancement

The focus of Jobs-Plus at Imperial Courts has so far been on preemployment, job readiness, and job search services. The site does not have a formal strategy for increasing job retention and promoting wage progression and career advancement among working residents. The staff as a whole have increased their ability to identify and help residents address barriers to work, which they see as a key part of promoting job retention. And the staff provide informal counseling, particularly when residents return for services after losing jobs or as a result of layoffs. But the absence of a site coordinator for a lengthy period in 2001 hampered the program's ability to develop this aspect of the program. The need of residents for formal, systematic assistance from the program in stabilizing their employment and getting better-paying jobs with fringe benefits, however, continues to grow, particularly for welfare recipients who face lifetime

limits on their benefits. A DPSS caseworker at Imperial Courts observed that Jobs-Plus has a reputation among her clients for only getting entry-level, part-time jobs without benefits. “What I find is that people who go to Jobs-Plus and want jobs right away can do that. They can get a job right away . . . but many times it’s entry-level jobs.” “It’s not like they are making decent wages to begin with,” acknowledged a Jobs-Plus staff member; “they’re entry-level, minimum-wage [jobs].” Unlike the households at William Mead Homes, the households at Imperial Courts are mostly headed by single young women who need additional training and education to qualify for better jobs, and many of them will soon face TANF’s time limits.

Support Services

Assistance with Employment and Life Skills

Jobs-Plus at Imperial Courts provides a limited number of services to support residents’ preemployment activities, to help them become job-ready, and to promote job retention and advancement. The support includes assistance with transportation, books, tuition and fees associated with training, and work-appropriate clothing and uniforms. FAME, a local faith-based organization, provides bus tokens that residents can use for general transportation needs such as medical appointments and grocery shopping. Residents can also apply for passes for the bus and light rail line. These are given primarily to residents who are working, in training, or need assistance traveling to and from job interviews. Case managers or the site coordinator administer these services. With the exception of bus tokens, which are distributed by staff at the front desk, residents must meet with the case manager or site coordinator to receive services. The funds are flexible and can be used to cover transportation costs, union dues, child care, tuition and books, or uniforms required by employers. Funds are limited, so residents are first encouraged to apply for resources through other programs — for example, through HACLA’s One-Stops or the Welfare-to-Work program or, if residents are receiving TANF, through their DPSS caseworker.

Since 2000, Jobs-Plus staff and community coaches have made concerted efforts to increase residents’ knowledge of and participation in the Earned Income Tax Credit and to promote the use of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program run by the City of Los Angeles. Imperial Courts has also provided residents with links to financial planning and credit repair assistance through a long-standing relationship with Operation Hope, a nonprofit financial institution that provides services to low-income communities and individuals with a poor credit history, who are typically unable to open accounts with larger, for-profit banks. In 2000 and 2001, staff from Operation Hope provided several informational sessions on-site about budgeting, financial planning, and credit repair; these sessions were temporarily suspended because of staffing changes and organizational restructuring, but they resumed at the site in the summer of 2002.

The Jobs-Plus staff also provide life skills counseling on an informal basis to help the many young, single mothers at Imperial Courts learn to maintain their households as well as their jobs. As one staff person put it: “A lot of people don’t understand [how to organize bills and monthly expenses]. They’re young. A lot of people at Imperial Courts are young. . . . You have to teach them to prioritize.” The staff help residents prioritize their bills and manage money so that their rent is paid on time, their checkbooks balance, and they find affordable phone service. Many times such counseling occurs outside the program offices and business hours — for instance, while talking about parenting during a visit to a resident’s home or while showing someone how to shop economically at the grocery store. A staff member recalled: “I remember taking a young lady to the grocery store. She had Food Stamps. And when we finished grocery shopping, she said, ‘Wow! I never had this much food and this many Food Stamps left over.’ I teach and I train them. Why are you going to buy this little-bitty can of whatever that costs \$2 when you can buy the big economy can that will last longer?” The staff person emphasized that these types of services are things that Jobs-Plus “should just do,” saying: “It never occurs to me that what I’m doing is helping. I’m just doing it — doing it because I care about the people.”

The staff also report spending more of their time assisting residents who face multiple barriers to employment. The residents and staff commonly cite such barriers as criminal records, lack of child care or youth supervision, domestic violence, and complications from arrears in child support payments — particularly among single men residing in the development. Residents are referred to a range of local agencies for specialized services in these areas.

Services for Children and Youth

Since the early days of the program at Imperial Courts, the Jobs-Plus staff have focused considerable attention on providing services for youth. These activities are seen as an early intervention strategy to prevent gang activities, a way to support working parents by providing supervision for their children and a way to help compensate for the absence of a gym and recreation center at the site. Jobs-Plus taps into a number of funding sources to support these youth programs, including the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the Youth Opportunity Movement (YOM), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds available through the city, and HUD’s Drug Elimination Program funds. Several of the site’s early community events were targeted to youth, including back-to-school events, field trips to local amusement parks, and after-school activities.

Jobs-Plus’s relationships with the Youth Opportunity Movement and with HACLA’s Day Supervision program have added formal youth services to the site. Day Supervision provides the bulk of on-site programs, while YOM links resident youth to services in the broader Watts community. Day Supervision staff host daily after-school tutoring sessions attended by

eight to ten children per day, weekly movie nights in the Learning Center, and recreational and educational field trips. Through YOM, youth have access to job preparation and job search services, assessments for interests and skills, job and college fairs, counseling about education and careers, and field trips to colleges and universities in the area.

More recently, the site coordinator has focused on building a strong relationship with the WIA One-Stop at Nickerson Gardens to further expand youth services, noting that this has now become Jobs-Plus's largest source of youth services and programming. Jobs-Plus was able to secure dedicated slots for Imperial Courts youth to receive employment services and job and career counseling there, as well as connections to funds for training. In addition, Imperial Courts now collaborates with Nickerson Gardens to host youth-oriented community and cultural events. In past years, turf issues related to competing gangs have often prevented residents of Imperial Courts from seeking services at Nickerson Gardens. In response, Jobs-Plus staff negotiated to have staff from the Nickerson One-Stop come on-site on a weekly basis, and they also devised strategies to transport and accompany residents to and from Nickerson Gardens, reducing the potential for retaliation.

Jobs-Plus has also undertaken its own efforts to increase summer employment opportunities for youth. In the spring of 2002, staff secured funds from HACLA's Drug Elimination Program to establish work experience positions for approximately 25 resident youth. Jobs-Plus worked with Los Angeles Southwest Community College — one of its collaborative partners — and with HACLA's maintenance and landscaping department to place youth in a range of positions in the college's summer recreation programs for elementary school children; and in gardening and landscaping positions at various housing developments. Jobs-Plus staff helped the youth of Imperial Courts through the application and interview processes for these positions. Such efforts to engage the development's youth have been highly praised by members of the community. One resident said: "Stuff like that is really good for the kids. I think if [Jobs-Plus] had more money, they would do more. But with what they've had, they've aced it with the children. Things like that . . . brought the community together. . . . Jobs-Plus did bring a kind of family-oriented mind that has really changed the residents."

Child care resources are limited for Imperial Courts residents, with one on-site facility operated by Head Start serving preschool-age children. However, the program operates in two shifts so that full daycare is not available, which staff report makes the service of limited use to parents who work full time. An additional daycare center was constructed in the winter of 2002 and was expected to open in the spring under the direction of Kedren, a local child care provider, but to date the facility has not opened. The staff note that once these services are available, the program will be able to accommodate only about 30 children at a time, which they feel is not sufficient to meet demand. To help residents cover child care expenses, Jobs-Plus both

refers them to the DPSS caseworker and offers a limited number of child care stipends, primarily to residents who are in the job search process or who have just begun work.

Financial Incentives

To enroll in the Jobs-Plus financial incentives program at Imperial Courts, the head of household must apply at the Jobs-Plus Office with either the case manager or the senior case manager, who explains how the financial incentives operate, what the household qualifies for, and how the incentives will impact the family's rent. The resident and the case manager fill out a one-page enrollment form that explains the terms of the program and gives an estimate of the rent calculation under the incentives program. A resident who has not yet completed the intake forms for Jobs-Plus also does this at the same time. The case manager delivers a copy of the financial incentives enrollment form to the Housing Services office for processing, keeping the original at the Jobs-Plus office and entering the resident's name and unit number into a spreadsheet to track dates and status of enrollment. Early on in the program, there were instances of lost applications and long delays in processing as the financial incentives participant caseload grew and the paperwork increased for both Jobs-Plus and Housing Services staff. To ensure that enrollment forms are processed in a timely manner, the assistant housing manager and the Jobs-Plus case manager now meet regularly to review the status of recently submitted enrollment forms and to resolve any discrepancies in their respective tracking systems.

While the Jobs-Plus case manager is responsible for assessing a resident's initial eligibility and explaining the rent incentives, Housing Services staff determine of the amount of the new rent after reviewing the resident's file. Housing Services staff stated that, during Phase 1 of the program, eligibility determination was not a complicated process because the majority of residents did take advantage of the rent freeze, for which all households were eligible.¹¹ For residents seeking to take advantage of the flat rent under Phase 2, however, Housing Services staff must verify

¹¹Housing Services staff stated that making the transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2 of the financial incentives program was time-consuming and could have benefited from more advance planning. At the time of the transition, 209 households were enrolled in the program, and Housing Services had to review the files for each household, verify their employment status, and send out written notices to inform those who did not qualify for the flat rent that the rent freeze would end and they would be returned to the standard rent calculation (30 percent of income). For Housing Services staff who normally complete between 20 and 40 reviews per month, this was a considerable effort, and Jobs-Plus staff worked with them to help prepare notices of rent change. Housing Services staff speculated that of the 209 households receiving financial incentives, roughly 50 experienced an increase in rent when the rent freeze ended, which required giving residents a 30-day notice before the change could be put into effect. The volume of the work — coupled with short staffing at both the Jobs-Plus and the Housing Services offices — caused a month's delay in the implementation of Phase 2, from January 2002 to February 2002.

their employment.¹² In some instances, Housing Services staff stated that they discovered through this process that a household was not eligible for the financial incentives program. In the majority of the cases, however, the Jobs-Plus staff had made accurate determinations.

At the end of Phase 1, calculations to determine eligibility for the rent credit also had to be completed. To be eligible for the credit of one month's free rent, residents had to be either unemployed or receiving welfare at the time of enrollment in the financial incentives program, and then they had to maintain 12 consecutive months of either employment or training during the 18-month period. But the main HACLA database used by Housing Services was not set up to track this level of specific information, and the downtown Housing Services staff felt that tracking the information by hand would be onerous. So it was left to the Jobs-Plus staff to track this information, though they lacked an automated database system to do so. Staff therefore had to call residents directly to verify how long they had been working or in training, and in some cases staff called the employer or the training institution to double-check the information, which was then submitted to Housing Services for processing. Given these difficulties, only 15 residents at Los Angeles's two developments were identified as qualifying for the rent incentives credit.

Community Support for Work

At the outset of Jobs-Plus at Imperial Courts, community support for work efforts focused on hosting large-scale community events to increase the visibility of the program in the development and to promote the services available through Jobs-Plus and collaborative members. The project director, who at the time was the Imperial Courts site coordinator, also noted that a key goal for these events was to counteract the sense of isolation and distrust that are prevalent in this and many public housing communities. Furthermore, the absence of the gym meant there were few venues at which residents could meet each other socially and at which the development's African-American and Latino populations could interact informally. Staff agreed that, as one of the prominent service providers in the development, Jobs-Plus could play an important role in helping facilitate communication between the two groups, realizing that building trust through informal social interactions was one important step in helping people develop and capitalize on their social networks. This theory still forms the cornerstone of Imperial Courts' approach to community support for work.

Early events were typically organized around a theme, such as holidays, ice-cream socials, back-to-school celebrations for resident youth, and Father's and Mother's Day events. Jobs-Plus has also sponsored a number of job fairs featuring on-site recruitment and interview-

¹²Housing Services uses a third-party verification system to confirm employment and wage rates for all residents who report employment to HACLA. A form is faxed to the resident's employer, requesting verification of the date of hire, the hourly wage, and the hours worked per week.

ing by area employers as well as health fairs that offer free or reduced-fee health services through mobile medical units. These events are typically attended by collaborative members, who are available to meet residents, pass out information about their programs, and answer questions about available services. One of the larger events was a college fair held in the summer of 2001. Spearheaded by two Jobs-Plus resident staff, 13 colleges, universities, and training institutions attended the event, including representatives from the California State University system, the University of California at Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Trade Technology Center, and several community colleges. In the past three years, Jobs-Plus at Imperial Courts has increasingly focused on sponsoring events that celebrate multiculturalism and residents' diversity, including dinner events and youth art contests centered on Black History Month and Cesar Chavez Day.

Efforts to establishing more formal mechanisms for fostering work-related social networks evolved more slowly at both sites in Los Angeles. Imperial Courts briefly considered implementing the Time Dollar program, a community-building approach developed by the nonprofit Time Dollar Institute in Washington, D.C. This involves organizing a group of volunteers who earn credits — or “time dollars” — for sharing such services as child care, tutoring, help with meals, and rides to work or appointments. The credits can then be used to purchase a service that the volunteers themselves need. Jobs-Plus hired two resident work experience participants to coordinate the program, but after holding a number of community meetings to describe and promote the concept, there was not sufficient interest in the community to launch the Time Dollar program at a scale large enough to justify the time that staff spent on the project, and so it was terminated at the end of 1999.

In November 2000, the Community Coaches program got under way at both Los Angeles sites, and Jobs-Plus staff began recruiting interested participants for the community economic development training described in the introductory section of this chapter. An average of eight Imperial Courts residents attended each of the six trainings, along with several staff who rotated responsibility for arranging transportation to and from the training site and participated in the sessions. It was near the end of the training sessions that Imperial Courts lost both its site coordinator and its senior case manager/community organizer; because of short staffing in the following months, the community coaches focused primarily on outreach and on assisting the Jobs-Plus staff with the planning and coordination of community events.

With the hiring of the site coordinator in March 2002 and the promotion of the case manager to the senior case manager/community organizer position, Jobs-Plus at Imperial Courts has again turned its attention to working with the community coaches to identify employment-focused projects. Since the spring, the coaches have been working in conjunction with the Resident Advisory Council to undertake projects to address unmet food needs among residents, which a recent Jobs-Plus survey of the development revealed is of particular concern in the

community. To that end, the resident council and the coaches are collaborating with a local nonprofit organization, Skid Row Ministry, to offer weekly on-site distribution of free bread and baked goods. This has also proved to be a great outreach method to spread the word about activities sponsored by Jobs-Plus.

Conclusions

Jobs-Plus at Imperial Courts offers a core set of employment, training, and support services. Now that the position of site coordinator has been filled after a long delay, the program can turn its attention to improving service delivery structures — notably, to better assist residents who face serious barriers to job retention and who need help qualifying for better-paying jobs with fringe benefits. The emphasis on hiring Imperial Courts residents both for full-time staff and for temporary internship and work experience positions has helped the program gain community acceptance. Bilingual staff members have increase the participation of Latino residents. The resident staff and community coaches at Imperial Courts also provide important models of trust and cooperation between African-American and Latino residents. Additionally, Jobs-Plus's youth-focused activities are highly regarded by the community and contribute to the program's efforts to support working families.

WILLIAM MEAD HOMES

The Housing Development and Its Population

William Mead Homes is located north of downtown Los Angeles, in an area that borders the Boyle Heights neighborhood to the east, Chinatown to the southwest, and Dodger Stadium and Lincoln Heights to the north. The area immediately surrounding the development is characterized primarily as light industrial and includes several wholesale food and Asian import distributors, a sheet-metal factory, and a poultry-processing plant located within a half-mile radius. William Mead Homes also sits in the shadow of the county jail and the Metropolitan Transit Authority. It is a quick car ride from the residential and commercial shopping centers of Lincoln and Boyle Heights. But those who do not have cars have access to only one bus line that makes its last trip past the development at 6 P.M.

The two- and three-story red brick buildings of William Mead Homes were constructed in the late 1940s, and the orderly, well-maintained development is home to nearly 1,300 residents. The units have ample front and back lawn space, where many residents have planted gardens, and several paved common areas separate the buildings and display collections of lawn chairs and laundry lines. The development lacks playground equipment but is adjacent to Ann Street Elementary School, which has large playground areas and basketball courts where William Mead children often go to play. The development's community center, or Social Hall, is near the south entrance of William Mead Homes, and a baseball diamond and large, grassy field are located just behind it. Several murals around the development were painted by residents and other local artists and colorfully depict themes of resident empowerment, the central place of the family and children in the community, and religious faith.

The demographic characteristics of the residents at William Mead Homes have been relatively stable over the past five years. When the Jobs-Plus demonstration began, in 1997, the development was 80 percent Latino, 13 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 6 percent African-American, and 1 percent Caucasian. In 2002, these figures looked roughly the same: 81 percent Latino, 11 percent Asian/Pacific Islander (roughly 2 percent Chinese and 9 percent from Southeast Asian countries, primarily Vietnam), 6 percent African-American, and 2 percent Caucasian. The community's Latino residents are primarily from Mexico, and many have lived in the development for years — some, for generations. Residents say that this lends a unique sense of stability to the development.

The residents and HACLA staff alike say that work is the norm among members of the community. An on-site Housing Services staff member observed: "Residents here really value work, and they work hard. It's not easy for them, but they do it to support their families; it is a

very strong sentiment here. They were working before Jobs-Plus, but [the program], it really supports their efforts.” This means that Jobs-Plus has had to address a range of employment needs, both before and after residents have found jobs. One HACLA senior staff person explained: “At William Mead, it’s more of a retention and wage progression issue. Versus [other sites], which [focus on initial] employment. I think we talk about career over here versus entry-level there.”

The residents and housing authority staff speculate that a significant number of residents work in the underground economy, particularly those with undocumented legal status, and Jobs-Plus has made a number of efforts to provide job development services that meet the needs of these residents, as well as to establish links to agencies offering immigration and naturalization assistance. Asian and Latino residents alike who are legal residents but have limited English skills also make ends meet by earning money “under the table.” These residents sew clothing for local garment makers, prepare food to sell at parks, work as day laborers in construction and gardening, and make catalogue sales for cosmetics, Tupperware, and vitamins. Like many HACLA developments, William Mead Homes has small candy stores that residents operate out of their units. Not officially sanctioned by the housing authority, they are periodically shut down, only to reopen again in another location. Several Latino vendors sell tamales, Mexican sodas and pastries, and fruits and vegetables from food trucks, stationing themselves at the outskirts of the development throughout the day.

The staff and residents note that the Asian residents — who make up a significantly smaller percentage of the development’s population — are often isolated from services and activities that are heavily geared toward serving the Latino residents. In the past year, the program has made a number of efforts to better serve Asian residents by forming referral relationships with local organizations such as the Little Tokyo Service Center, the United Vietnamese Community Council, and the Chinatown Service Center. To facilitate interaction among the various ethnic groups at the development, Jobs-Plus has also hosted a series of lively community events that feature foods typical of the different groups and entertainment ranging from mariachi bands to Chinese acrobats.

In a community that appears outwardly calm and serene, the site has experienced a number of episodes of violence since Jobs-Plus began that have undercut the program’s ability to recruit participants and consistently deliver services. The first of these incidents grew out of residents’ anger in 2000-2001 about the toxic soil remediation project undertaken by HACLA at William Mead Homes under the direction of the California Environmental Protection Agency. Parts of the east side of the development had been built over an oil refinery and oil storage tanks, and, in 1994, HACLA began the process of evaluating the site for contamination and potential health risks to residents. Because of lengthy testing processes and administrative delays, the housing authority did not begin the remediation effort until May 2000 — nearly five years

after the toxic soil had first been identified. The residents of approximately 40 households living in the six buildings on the east side of the development had to be relocated to off-site housing, and they remained in temporary housing for nearly a year.

The project drew extensive attention from the local media, political figures, and environmental groups, and residents' anger about delays in the cleanup process flared in a surge of gang-related violence at the development. The situation was compounded by the death of the resident council's president, who was also an influential leader in the community, after a battle with cancer. Many residents attributed the cancer to the soil contamination, and though others acknowledged that this could not be proved, the association helped fuel the already-high tensions at the site. During the months that followed, the Housing Services office was firebombed, damaging the Jobs-Plus office that was at the time located next door. A bomb also destroyed a HACLA van belonging to the on-site relocation office. And while Housing Services bore most of the responsibility for informing residents about remediation activities — and residents' discontent was largely directed at staff there — Jobs-Plus was also called on during this time to distribute notices relating to the cleanup, and animosities spilled over to the program, causing a decline in overall participation. These incidents caused Jobs-Plus to temporarily suspend its services in the winter of 2000 and to reconstitute the program at another location in the development in March of that year.

The soil remediation project seemed to conclude without incident until residents were relocated back to their apartments and took issue with a number of logistical factors in the relocation process, which led to several heated community meetings with residents, the resident council, and HACLA senior management. In September 2001 — roughly corresponding with this series of complaints — the Jobs-Plus office was vandalized and was emptied of computer equipment, fax machine, printer, and a small amount of funds set aside for support services and transportation. Also that month, the site's Computer Learning Center was the target of a bomb, and the building was so badly damaged that it was razed. No one claimed responsibility for either of these incidents, and no one has been prosecuted. The Computer Learning Center has not been rebuilt, and its destruction was lamented by residents and staff who noted the importance of this resource to the community, especially to the youth of William Mead Homes. The loss of the computer facility prompted some residents to organize and bring to the site other activities for children and youth (described below).

The program has subsequently worked hard to establish cooperative relations with the Resident Advisory Council. For instance, the site coordinator who was assigned to Jobs-Plus in spring 2000 to reconstitute the program hired a council member for a work experience position, and this person was also a prominent leader in the community who believed strongly in the mission of Jobs-Plus. Newly elected council members expressed appreciation for Jobs-Plus's support during the council's own period of transition that year, and they began participating more

regularly in events and activities sponsored by Jobs-Plus. The two entities now cooperate in organizing and designing activities and in recruiting participants for Jobs-Plus services.

Program Infrastructure

Staffing and Management

The Jobs-Plus staff at William Mead Homes include a site coordinator, a senior case manager/community organizer, a job developer, a resident services site assistant, a typist-clerk, an administrative intern, and a youth services intern — all of whom are employees of the housing authority. The staff share a small office space that has no partitions or cubicle walls to separate their desks, so there is a great deal of informal communication among them about their caseloads. They also help one another carry out their responsibilities, so it is not uncommon to see the job developer distributing bus tokens or the resident services site assistant doing intake. The site has had one persistent vacancy, in the case manager position, and the administrative intern has taken on a number of case management duties under the supervision of the senior case manager. In addition to the two intern positions, which are reserved for residents, the site also has two resident work experience positions that are typically in the clerical/administrative field. There are currently three full-time bilingual Spanish speakers on staff, a full-time bilingual Vietnamese speaker, and a full-time intern who speaks Cantonese. Staff duties are organized as follows:

- The **site coordinator** oversees operations, staff, interns, and work experience participants. Coordination of the on-site partners is also under the site coordinator's purview, and he spends considerable time managing the site's collaborative and recruiting new members. Having worked previously at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) and at the HACLA Community Service Centers, the current staff person is also knowledgeable of services and benefits available to residents through these systems, and he facilitates links to both.
- The **senior case manager/community organizer** is responsible for intake, enrolling residents in the financial incentives program, helping residents identify and address barriers to employment, distributing supportive services, and providing case management. She also coordinates services with DPSS and the East Los Angeles Women's Center, and she is the primary contact with the on-site Housing Services office for the rent incentives. A former DPSS worker, the senior case manager routinely helps residents navigate welfare-related services.

- The **job developer** oversees the provision of job preparation services, including job search assistance; helping with résumés, applications, and mock interviews; collecting job leads and distributing them via the community coaches; and developing relationships with employers. The job developer is also knowledgeable about education and training resources in the community and helps residents access these as well as training funds available through the WIA system.
- The **typist-clerk** staffs the front desk, answering phones, greeting residents, and providing resource information as well as informal outreach and marketing of Jobs-Plus services. He also helps to coordinate logistics for community events and secures HACLA vans to transport residents to and from events when necessary. The typist-clerk speaks Spanish and English and is often called on to provide translation services.
- The **resident services site assistant** oversees the Community Coaches program, directing outreach efforts centered on “campaigns” with employment themes, organizing weekly meetings with the coaches, and helping the coaches develop and execute plans to bring work-related services to the site. She also participates in coordinating and staffing many of the youth activities at the site, lending direct Jobs-Plus support to the youth services collaborators.
- The **administrative intern** works closely with the senior case manager and the site coordinator on data collection, in addition to providing case management support. Because the site does not have a fully automated database to track enrollment and participation, the intern has created smaller databases and spreadsheets to help organize data, primarily concerning the rent incentives program and residents’ contact information.
- Established in June 2002, the **youth services intern** is a new position at William Mead Homes and is funded jointly by DPSS and the Los Angeles Unified School District. The intern is charged with facilitating coordination among the youth programs now offered on-site. She also directs youth who come to the main Jobs-Plus office to services and programs and ensures that any information about job leads that is in the Youth Opportunity Movement (YOM) database is shared with the core Jobs-Plus staff.

DPSS has assigned an on-site caseworker to William Mead Homes two half-days per week to provide case management for residents receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). As at Imperial Courts, all DPSS cases have been reassigned to the on-site caseworker, who can provide most TANF-related services from the Jobs-Plus office so that

residents do not have to travel to the main DPSS office. But the caseworker reports that she is providing employment services to few adults at William Mead Homes, because most of the welfare cases there are “child-only,” meaning that the parent does not qualify for TANF benefits but the child remains eligible.¹³ There are currently only 11 “adult” cases on the DPSS worker’s caseload. She monitors their progress on their employment plans, processes their requests for supportive services including child care and transportation, and provides job leads. The case worker has on-site access to the DPSS database and can assist clients with some eligibility redetermination processes and paperwork, and she serves as the communication link between residents and their eligibility workers.

A job developer from the state Employment Development Department (EDD) also works out of the Jobs-Plus office three days a week and was, for two and a half years, assigned to William Mead Homes on a full-time basis. He works with the Jobs-Plus job developer to identify and connect residents to job leads, offers preemployment job readiness counseling, and helps firms recruit residents for job openings. His presence provides residents with access to the statewide CalJOBS database of job opportunities. Additionally, he can assist residents in filing unemployment claims.

In March 2000, Jobs-Plus arranged with the Youth Opportunities Movement (YOM) to assign two full-time staff to the Jobs-Plus office. Their services are targeted to youth ages 14 to 21 from both William Mead Homes and the surrounding communities (see “Services for Children and Youth,” below). The East Los Angeles Women’s Center began colocating staff at Jobs-Plus two half-days per week in March 2002, with a bilingual Spanish speaker coming one day and a bilingual Cantonese speaker the other. The center provides family counseling and case management, domestic abuse counseling, and referrals to shelters and safe houses. The two on-site staff members have also worked to inform Latina and Asian women at William Mead Homes of their rights as employees, connecting them to legal services that address incidences of sexual harassment and wrongful termination. Other collaborative partners provide in-kind services or referral assistance and include the San Fernando Interfaith Council’s Immigration and Citizenship Services, The Workplace, Valley Economic Development Center, and Barrio Action.

Facilities

Jobs-Plus at William Mead Homes is located in a three-bedroom unit that has been converted into offices. The program moved there in March 2000 after its original office in the

¹³This is typically the case for families in which the parents are undocumented and thus do not qualify for TANF services but the children are citizens and are therefore eligible for benefits. In some cases, the parent’s portion of the grant has been sanctioned (reduced) for noncompliance with TANF regulations, though, as noted earlier, families in California continue to receive the child’s portion of the grant.

Social Hall complex was damaged during the firebombing incident at the Housing Services office. Space is extremely limited, and staff members often share offices to conduct confidential interviews with residents. The front door opens into a small reception area where the typist-clerk sits, generally with an intern or one of the community coaches staffing another desk in this area to greet and direct residents as they arrive. This small area has become an informal meeting place and is often crowded with residents and children. There are two private office spaces — one upstairs and one downstairs. The downstairs area was converted into a resource room, allowing Jobs-Plus to be certified as a portal to HACLA's One-Stop system. Residents can undertake self-directed job search there, and staff periodically use this room to conduct meetings and intake. The site coordinator occupies the upstairs office, which the senior case manager often uses for intake or to have confidential discussions with residents. The program must schedule space in the Social Hall for larger meetings, which have become increasingly necessary as the number of youth and community programs at William Mead Homes has grown.

In December 2001, Jobs-Plus annexed additional space across the street that was formerly occupied by HUD's Drug Elimination Program. This now houses staff members from YOM and the East Los Angeles Women's Center. In addition to a reception area, the youth have access to a small computer area to practice keyboarding, write résumés, and conduct Internet searches.

Program Flow

After acquiring a full complement of staff in the fall of 2001, Jobs-Plus at William Mead Homes has been able to offer a coherent set of services and to expand its activities. During earlier years of the demonstration, staffing shortages and the problems described earlier surrounding the soil remediation project undercut the program's efforts to offer services reliably, to recruit and retain participants, and to build a credible reputation in the community.

Jobs-Plus staff at William Mead Homes have also faced the challenge of establishing a consistent program flow in a development where residents often express a dislike of programs that have strict procedures and that require a lot of paperwork to access services. One resident complained about having to sign a daily log of visitors to the office in order to see a case manager or job developer, claiming: "All they have you do is fill out applications so they can show others that they are service people so they don't lose their jobs." Jobs-Plus therefore assists residents primarily on an individualized basis; residents follow no typical trajectory in accessing services but instead use services as needed, perhaps beginning with job search and coming back later for further case management and assessment when they want training for a better job. However, as at Imperial Courts, efforts to respect residents' desire for limited bureaucratic procedures can make it difficult for Jobs-Plus to track participants and follow up service referrals

and job placements to ensure that residents receive the services they need in making long-term progress toward self-sufficiency.

This site has the difficult challenge of accommodating residents with a wide range of employment backgrounds and skill levels, many of whom have extensive work experience but lack the English skills to secure high-paying jobs in the United States. Residents and staff identify these issues as the most prevalent barriers to work at the development — along with inadequate public transportation and child care resources and issues relating to unpaid child support among male residents.

Recruitment

To engage the residents of William Mead Homes, Jobs-Plus relies primarily on word-of-mouth referrals and door-to-door outreach by resident leaders, community coaches, and staff. A member of the resident council described Jobs-Plus as a “hub” of information in the development: “We come every day. We ask, ‘Do you have something new? Something to tell us?’” They then take “the news” back to their families and neighbors. Some residents will not open their doors to these outreach efforts. But generally the residents express their preference for this direct contact, and they seem to equate the frequency of outreach efforts with the program’s level of involvement in the community. The senior case manager also regularly produces newsletters that feature residents’ success stories in employment, education, training, and the financial incentives program. Jobs-Plus also publicizes its services by sponsoring popular community activities that include entertainment and food — for instance, on Mother’s Day.

The housing authority’s Application Center also informs new residents of William Mead Homes about Jobs-Plus, encouraging them to enroll in the program. The Jobs-Plus staff report that the on-site Housing Services office is also supportive in referring residents who have not yet enrolled in the program. A staff member said: “If they get someone new in the development, right away they tell them about our program and refer them over to us. We get support not only from the assistant manager but from the manager [too].”

Enrollment, Orientation, and Assessment

Residents who are enrolling in Jobs-Plus for the first time meet with the senior case manager or the administrative intern to fill out a two-page form that asks about contact information, family size, job skills, employment interests, and work history. Residents are also asked to self-identify their barriers to employment.¹⁴ The staff encourage all residents to fill out the in-

¹⁴This intake form and the financial incentives enrollment form are identical to the ones used by Jobs-Plus at Imperial Courts.

take form, although some may not do so if they are just dropping by to look for job leads or to use the fax machine — or if they express a strong preference not to fill out the form. Enrollees get a verbal orientation and an overview of Jobs-Plus’s services while filling out the intake form. And they are given the opportunity to complete a basic skills assessment at this time, although this is not mandatory in the enrollment process. The program currently uses the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) to assess educational attainment.

In January 2002, William Mead Homes developed and began using an additional intake form, called a “family action plan,” as a way to help residents begin mapping out their education, employment, family, and personal goals. The family action plan is more of a descriptive tool than intake form, and the senior case manager sees it as a way to facilitate a conversation with residents about how work fits into their lives, what they want for themselves and their family, what barriers might stand in the way of achieving their goals, and how Jobs-Plus can help overcome the barriers. This form is an optional part of the intake process, and it is kept to a maximum of two pages so that residents do not feel overwhelmed by the additional paperwork. The staff at Imperial Courts also contributed to the development of the family action plan, and they began administering the form on regular basis in the early summer of 2002.

Working residents must fill out an additional form to enroll in the financial incentives component of Jobs-Plus. The staff verbally explain the requirements and benefits of the incentives program while completing this form with the residents. The financial incentives form must be completed and signed by the leaseholder.

Job Readiness and Job Search

Jobs-Plus at William Mead Homes offers job preparation and job search assistance on an individualized basis. Early in the program’s development, the site had attempted to establish job club workshops for groups, but inadequate space at the Jobs-Plus office and consistently low turnout led the program to abandon these in favor of one-on-one sessions. Residents who request a more formal setting for preemployment services are referred to such Jobs-Plus partners as Goodwill Industries. The senior case manager and the job developers assist residents with job search, job applications, interview preparation, résumé writing, and identifying and applying for education and training programs and tuition assistance. Many residents who seek these services have extensive work histories and are already employed but are looking for better-paying jobs. Therefore, the job developers and case managers often discuss plans for career advancement and strategies for retaining employment. The job developer from the state Employment Development Department (EDD) is also qualified to help residents who have been laid off to access unemployment insurance from the Jobs-Plus office.

However, the staff at William Mead Homes face a difficult challenge in helping to find employment for adults whose English skills are limited or whose undocumented immigration status prevents them from working legally. The program is therefore trying to form referral partnerships and even to colocate agencies that assist with legalizing residency and securing permission to work in the United States. These residents need affordable bilingual legal counsel, financial assistance, and local sponsors for what is invariably a lengthy, costly, and complex process.

Job Development and Job Creation

Since the early days of the program, Jobs-Plus at William Mead Homes has benefited from additional job development support through an EDD job developer who is colocated on-site three days per week. In addition to helping residents access unemployment insurance, EDD also provides an on-site link to the statewide CalJOBS database of employment opportunities. The same staff person has filled this position since late 1999, and, in addition to his regular duties, he supports the Jobs-Plus staff by helping with community events and job fairs and by directing residents to appropriate internal Jobs-Plus services or outside resources. He has brought to the site a number of connections to large employers, including FedEx, United Parcel Service (UPS), and Macy's department stores. This site has a number of working residents who routinely communicate with the job developers to inform them of open positions with their employers and to help recruit William Meade Homes residents for these positions.

The job developers from both Jobs-Plus and EDD contribute to the production of a weekly flyer of "hot job leads," which the community coaches distribute to residents each week. The job developers and their counterpart from Imperial Courts participate in the Job Development Network, a group of job developers from HACLA and other social service agencies that shares job leads and employer contacts and is attempting to better coordinate job development services in various parts of the city and county. The site coordinator was heavily involved in organizing the group, which meets monthly.

In general, like other Jobs-Plus sites, the program at William Mead Homes has had difficulty establishing exclusive hiring relationships with employers, due to the program's relatively small size and small pool of potential job applicants. One exception has been a connection to the local UPS facility, which a resident and community leader who is employed there helped Jobs-Plus to establish and which has resulted in a number of job placements for residents.

As at Imperial Courts, job creation strategies here have been limited to the work experience and internship positions at the Jobs-Plus office. Most job leads come from smaller businesses, and the site has also been successful in linking William Mead residents to both temporary and full-time jobs within HACLA, helping residents to navigate the application processes and prepare for the civil service exams required by many HACLA positions.

Education and Training

Many residents at William Mead Homes express a strong desire to pursue education and training. Indeed, parents and older siblings in both Latino and Asian families will make considerable sacrifices so that younger children can pursue higher education. Jobs-Plus plays a critical role in helping residents identify training programs, apply for community colleges and universities, prepare for entrance exams, and secure funds to pay for tuition, registration fees, books, and supplies. Jobs-Plus's support has made an important difference in enabling residents — who are often unfamiliar with higher education and vocational training systems — to enhance their knowledge and skills. A resident said: “[T]hey pay for our books and supplies. Since these can run from \$60, \$100, or more per class per semester, this is a big help. And they help us apply for scholarships and grants. It’s great. It’s just up to us to use the opportunities.”

For instance, residents can apply for training funds and supportive services at the HACLA One-Stop at a neighboring public housing development. But the area is “controlled” by a rival gang, and many William Mead residents express hesitation about venturing there because they fear turf-related retaliation. Jobs-Plus staff members often accompany residents to the One-Stop for the formal intake and enrollment process. Furthermore, a number of Jobs-Plus staff have worked for the One-Stops and are familiar with the process for applying for training funds, and so they often help residents fill out forms and assemble supporting documents at the Jobs-Plus office.

The community coaches also took the lead in organizing an on-site GED class for Spanish speakers in March 2002. Resident demand for GED services is high, since employers typically use the General Educational Development certificate as a screening mechanism. “FedEx, UPS — you need a GED just to lift a box,” said one Jobs-Plus staff member. The coaches negotiated with the East Los Angeles Skills Center to bring a GED instructor to the Social Hall two evenings a week. The first week of classes drew more than 40 residents. The coaches went door-to-door to recruit residents for the class, and they rotate responsibilities for ensuring that the space is set up for classes every evening. The coaches also organized on-site child care in the office spaces adjacent to the Social Hall — a service that was quickly filled to capacity. An average of 25 residents attend each session, and, to date, four have secured GED certificates. Jobs-Plus uses supportive service funds to help residents pay the fee required to take the GED test. The class is currently conducted in Spanish, and several non-Spanish-speaking residents have requested that an additional class be scheduled for English speakers.

Classes in English as a Second Language (ESL) are offered at the adjacent Ann Street Elementary School, but only during work hours; therefore, many residents cannot attend. Jobs-Plus also has referral relationships with a range of educational and training institutions. These include the East Los Angeles Skills Center, Valley Economic Development Center, Los Angeles Community College, Evans Adult School, California State University Los Angeles, and

Goodwill Industries. Jobs-Plus has also facilitated enrollment of a number of William Mead residents in the Multi Media Academy, a skills training program jointly run by HACLA and the University of Southern California. The program involves an intensive 500 hours of training in various aspects of the media and communications industries and combines training with work experience positions in the entertainment industry and a concerted focus on soft skill development. Ten William Mead residents graduated from the program in May 2002

Job Retention and Career Advancement

Job retention and career advancement services at William Mead Homes primarily take the form of identifying and addressing barriers to employment and helping residents access education and training opportunities. Jobs-Plus has been successful in engaging a sizable number of residents in education and training to improve their job prospects. But foreign-born residents must often become more proficient in English before pursuing further education and training. The staff meet at weekly conferences to discuss cases and coordinate their efforts to provide residents with services, referrals, and job leads in order to ensure that these lead to long-term job placements or successful completion of postemployment programs. The site conducts some informal follow-up with working residents to check on their progress at work and their need for services. The staff would like to do this more formally and regularly — for instance, by having access to information that residents are required to report to the Housing Services office about any changes in their employment and wage income.

Support Services

Assistance with Employment and Health Concerns

Both William Mead Homes and Imperial Courts provide a similar level of support services to residents to cover work- and training-related expenses such as transportation, child care, books, tuition and training fees, clothing, and uniforms. Because funds for these services are limited, requests must be approved by the senior case manager and are reviewed by the site coordinator. Residents are also encouraged to seek other sources of funding — for example, through the DPSS caseworker and the WIA One-Stop system.

This site's job preparation and employment services strongly focus on identifying and addressing barriers to employment as a way to ensure that residents will retain the jobs they acquire. Both William Mead Homes and Imperial Courts have focused in particular on domestic violence, mental health, and criminal backgrounds. Both programs have benefited from a number of trainings to increase the staff's ability to identify barriers to work and to increase their knowledge of local resources that residents can seek out to get specialized assistance. The two sites have formed a relationship with the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Depart-

ment (CSSD) to help noncustodial parents with issues pertaining to unpaid child support. These arrears can result in residents' wages being garnished at high rates, which therefore creates a disincentive for some noncustodial parents to work in the formal economy. The CSSD program helps residents adjust their court-ordered child support amount to accurately reflect their current income and any informal payments that they might be making. And it helps these residents to get their drivers' license reinstated and to set up a manageable payment plan for arrears in child support payments. To date, eight residents have received services through this program.

In October 1997, in an effort to respond to residents' concerns about the potential health risks of the contaminated soil at the housing development, HACLA contracted with the Community Health Foundation to offer health care services at an on-site clinic located in two renovated housing units. A full-time physician, nurse, and nurse's assistant tested for the toxins found at the contaminated site and also provided basic health care services for adults and children. The clinic also served residents who did not have health insurance, and it helped them to apply for Medicaid and other publicly funded health care services. In June 2002, however, the clinic was forced to close because of state funding cutbacks, and no replacement provider has yet been identified. Two working mothers emphasized that this was a major loss to the community and that the on-site clinic was very convenient for working families with hectic schedules. "It was helpful for the elderly, too, who didn't have transportation," said one resident, noting that families are now depending heavily on friends who work in the medical field for medical advice and free prescription samples.

Services for Children and Youth

The residents of William Mead Homes often cite the lack of adequate child care resources as the biggest unmet need in the community. Working mothers emphasize the need for child care subsidies for the working poor and the difficulty of finding reliable providers — especially nearby, for parents who do not own cars. "I think it's one of the most basic needs around here," said one Jobs-Plus staff member. Although William Mead Homes does not have an on-site child care center or Head Start program, Ann Street Elementary School does offer some after-school programs, and Jobs-Plus and resident leaders have organized several additional after-school programs for children and youth.

In early 2000, Jobs-Plus arranged for staff from the Youth Opportunity Movement (YOM) to be assigned to the on-site office. They provide youth ages 14 to 21 from William Mead Homes and the surrounding neighborhood with after-school tutoring, field trips, job fairs, and job and career counseling. These activities complement Jobs-Plus's informal efforts to engage children and youth through social events and holiday celebrations. One of the first projects was to negotiate with community leaders for wall space at the south end of the development for youth to paint a mural. The artwork remains there two years later, greeting residents and visitors

as they enter the development. The YOM program currently has more than 40 actively enrolled youth and is continuing a rigorous schedule of after-school tutoring, facilitating links to jobs and internships, and coordinating efforts with other youth service providers that have joined the site more recently.

In early 2002, a resident who was concerned about the lack of on-site activities for children who were too young to participate in the YOM program approached HACLA for funds to support an after-school program that he was trying to organize. Jobs-Plus's site coordinator and job developer helped him assemble the multipage grant application and prepare for his interview. The resident was able to secure \$1,000 from HACLA to cover the cost of supplies, van rentals for field trips, and program coordination, which the resident provided with support from two other residents. He and his friends also gathered donations of toys and computer games, bought used equipment including a pool table and bookshelves, and went door-to-door to recruit participants. Soon the program had to turn children away for lack of enough staff to supervise them. The resident secured another grant from HACLA to continue the program and expand it to serve between 50 and 60 children. In spring 2002, the local chapter of the Boys and Girls Club approached him about integrating this program into its services, bringing a welcome infusion of funds and resources. The Boys and Girls Club hired the resident as its on-site coordinator, and the community coaches conducted door-to-door outreach. The Boys and Girls Club after-school program currently enrolls 150 children, both Asian and Latino. The Social Hall and surrounding playing field is abuzz with their activities in the afternoon hours.

In a classroom adjacent to the Social Hall, the Friends of the Junior Arts Center also provide after-school art workshops in two overlapping sessions, one for elementary school children and one for teens. The resulting art projects were featured at a HACLA-wide Art Fair in spring 2002 that focused on various cultural art forms, including Japanese screen paintings, batik prints, miniature quilts, and African masks.

Financial Incentives

The structure and basic administrative procedures of the Jobs-Plus financial incentives program are essentially the same at both Los Angeles sites. At William Mead Homes, the head of household must meet with the senior case manager, who has primary responsibility for filling out the enrollment form and explaining the terms of the program and what the resident can expect in terms of rent changes. A copy of the form remains in the resident's Jobs-Plus file, and a copy is delivered to the Housing Services office across the street. Jobs-Plus staff determine a resident's initial eligibility based on the information provided to them about employment status, and Housing Services staff then verifies this employment when they process the enrollment form.

When the financial incentives program began, staff openings at Jobs-Plus — particularly in the position of senior case manager — resulted in the program's getting off to a rough start. Residents complained about enrollment forms being lost or about long delays in processing them. Also, the Housing Services staff were not prepared for the surge in applications for the program, which require an additional lease review and notations in the resident's files in order to generate an official letter of notification about the change in rent. It took Jobs-Plus and Housing Services several months to develop effective recordkeeping methods between the two offices. The senior case manager is now responsible for coordinating the enrollment process with Housing Services, and she has adopted a practice of frequently reconciling the two offices' records to ensure that all applications have been processed. During the transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2 of the incentives program in January 2002, Jobs-Plus assisted Housing Services in identifying residents who were unemployed and thus no longer eligible for the rent freeze and in preparing the letters notifying residents of this change.

Jobs-Plus reports having engaged 294 of the 481 households at William Mead Homes in the financial incentives program, including all households enrolled in both phases of the program. Housing Services estimates that roughly 80 households exited the financial incentives program at the transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2, returning to the standard rent calculation (30 percent of income) because they did not have any earned income.

Unlike at Imperial Courts, where Jobs-Plus experienced a surge in enrollments in the month before the incentives program began, enrollments remained relatively flat at William Mead Homes for many months during Phase 1. The project director speculates that understaffing during that period may have undercut efforts to engage residents in the incentives program and in Jobs-Plus overall. The situation changed radically in the second half of 2001, when Jobs-Plus at William Mead Homes became fully staffed; the site now enrolls between 15 and 25 residents per quarter.¹⁵

Many William Mead residents have responded enthusiastically to the financial incentives program. One stated that the program allows her to work as many hours as she can and that her son is also able to work, which increases their household income. With the additional income, she was able to buy a car — allowing her to look for a wider range of higher-paying employment opportunities. A Vietnamese resident noted that the incentives program allowed several of his neighbors to cut back their work hours and take more classes, which makes them more marketable.

¹⁵Numbers are taken from site-reported data and have not been verified by MDRC.

Community Support for Work

Early community support for work efforts at William Mead Homes primarily took the form of social events and community gatherings designed to enhance Jobs-Plus's visibility and promote its services. The staff feel that these events continue to provide an important foundation for the more formalized community support for work efforts at the site, giving residents and their children informal opportunities to socialize and to connect with Jobs-Plus staff and its partners.

The Community Coaches program now forms the core of the site's community support for work efforts. Recruitment for the program began in November 2000. A total of 10 residents from William Mead Homes completed the training at the Community Development Technologies Center. During the training period, the coaches began establishing themselves as part of the Jobs-Plus staff, coming in informally to help with outreach, create flyers, and coordinate community events. They began meeting regularly during that summer for discussions about projects that they could pursue as a group to benefit the community. At that time, the resident services site assistant took responsibility for organizing the community coaches, since her duties already included outreach; she helped them organize their meetings and learn to work as a team.

In fall 2001, the coaches and resident services site assistant worked with the site coordinator to field a survey of the community to find out what the residents felt was most needed at the development. The survey identified, for instance, a strong desire for on-site GED preparation classes. The coaches negotiated with the East Los Angeles Skills Center to establish an on-site GED class for Spanish speakers. Residents attribute the high and regular turnout at these classes to the involvement of residents in planning and coordinating the GED program. And participants say that they have been encouraged to obtain GED certificates because of the example set by the coaches and other residents who have successfully completed the program.

The community coaches have adopted a "campaign" approach to outreach and information dissemination. Each month, the coaches and the resident services site assistant collectively choose a topic — such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), changes in the financial incentives program, or an upcoming community event — as the focus of their outreach efforts in the coming month. Since they also distribute the "hot job leads" flyer each week, they can inform residents about upcoming job fairs and job opportunities. They also are increasingly coordinating their outreach efforts with other on-site programs, such as the Boys and Girls Club.

Conclusions

Jobs-Plus at William Mead Homes weathered a period of low enrollment and low program activity early in the demonstration, owing to circumstances surrounding the toxic soil remediation project and to staffing delays resulting from HACLA's lengthy hiring processes. These circumstances negatively impacted both the program's ability to offer services at satura-

tion levels and the residents' perceptions of the program. However, changes in the Housing Services office and in the resident leadership in early 2000, and then the hiring of a full complement of Jobs-Plus staff in 2001, have allowed Jobs-Plus to forge ahead. The program has made major strides in improving its case management and follow-up, expanded youth services and other service referral opportunities, inaugurated the Community Coaches program, and engaged a sizable number of working residents in education and training to enhance their qualifications for better-paying jobs.

The site has made considerable efforts to serve the needs of residents whose English-speaking abilities are limited, by partnering with community agencies that provide such services as ESL instruction and assistance with immigration issues. The site has placed a priority on hiring bilingual staff, to make Jobs-Plus services accessible to both Asian and Latino residents; and on hiring residents as both full-time staff and interns, as a way to ensure that the program reflects the community's needs and interests. Jobs-Plus at William Mead Homes actively promotes resident leadership in designing and delivering services. The community coaches have helped residents establish the Boys and Girls Club, and they regularly canvas the development with information about job leads, the EITC, Jobs-Plus financial incentives, and community events and services. The coaches have been instrumental in organizing on-site GED classes through a local training institution and in coordinating child care services so that working parents can readily attend classes.

Jennifer Miller is an Operations Analyst at Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. The author gratefully acknowledges the residents and staff of the Jobs-Plus program and Housing Services offices at Imperial Courts, William Mead Homes, and HACLA's administrative offices who generously contributed their time through interviews and informal conversations over a period of years to describe their experiences and the evolving role of Jobs-Plus in their communities. The Los Angeles Jobs-Plus project director, Lourdes Castro-Ramirez, has been especially generous of her time, and her ongoing dialogue with the author has informed every aspect of this chapter. Site coordinators Connie Alvarez, Isaac Carreon, and Angela Herbs also contributed significantly to the document. The chapter also draws on 1999 versions of the site overviews and the work of field researchers Linda Kato, Susan Phillips, and Francisca Magana, who have diligently and eloquently captured the stories and input of the staff, resident leaders, and collaborative members.

Chapter 6

Jobs-Plus in St. Paul

Linda Yuriko Kato

Program Background and Highlights

Jobs-Plus has been operating at Mt. Airy Homes in St. Paul since October 1997. The program serves a diverse resident population that includes immigrants from Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America who have settled at Mt. Airy alongside U.S.-born African-Americans and Caucasians. The program has made concerted efforts to accommodate this cultural diversity: Translators are provided for orientations and other activities; several Jobs-Plus and management office staff members speak Hmong, the language of the largest ethnic group at Mt. Airy; and the program offers specialized services for various ethnic groups in partnership with ethnic and refugee organizations in the area.

Jobs-Plus in St. Paul is managed by a core group of collaborative agencies, several of which have dedicated significant resources to the program and to the Mt. Airy community. For instance, the St. Paul Public Housing Agency provides most of the program's operating funds as well as its on-site facilities. The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation employs several Jobs-Plus staff members. St. Paul Public Schools contributes the services of an employment counselor, an instructor for General Educational Development (GED) classes, and a bilingual assistant. And Ramsey County Community Human Services funds an intensive case manager, who recently joined the Jobs-Plus staff, and has placed a welfare-to-work caseworker and a financial eligibility worker on-site at Mt. Airy Homes for the convenience of clients of the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), the state's welfare program.

St. Paul was the first site in the demonstration to implement the financial incentives component of Jobs-Plus. Households began receiving benefits in November 1998. St. Paul's financial incentives plan offers working households the option of either having their rent fixed at the Jobs-Plus flat-rent level or having their rent calculated using the traditional formula of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In Year 1 of the financial incentives program, 100 percent of a participating household's earnings were disregarded in the calculation of its rent. The incentives program has been very popular among Mt. Airy's residents. The housing management office is strongly committed to the program, and staff have taken the lead in recruiting, orienting, and enrolling households; they administer the incentives efficiently

Jobs-Plus in St. Paul: Mt. Airy Homes

Jobs-Plus in St. Paul serves a diverse resident population that includes immigrants from Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America who have settled at Mt. Airy Homes alongside U.S.-born African-Americans and Caucasians. The program has made concerted efforts to accommodate this cultural diversity: Translators are provided for orientations and other activities; several Jobs-Plus and management office staff members speak Hmong, the language of the largest ethnic group at Mt. Airy; and the program offers specialized services for various ethnic groups in partnership with ethnic and refugee organizations in the area. The Jobs-Plus program is managed by a core group of collaborative agencies, several of which have dedicated significant resources to the program and to the Mt. Airy community: the St. Paul Public Housing Agency, St. Paul Public Schools, the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, and Ramsey County Community Human Services. As of June 2002, 483 residents had enrolled in Jobs-Plus.

Jobs-Plus offers employment and support services on an individualized and group basis. The offices of the staff and the on-site education and training activities are located at the Mt. Airy Community Center. Jobs-Plus helps residents with job search, employment applications, interviews, and job retention, and it has sponsored job fairs and developed customized training programs in partnership with local employers and technical schools. Residents also have on-line access in the Community Center's career resource room to a county-wide database of job openings and to a computer lab with educational programming and Internet access that is staffed by a part-time, licensed teacher of Adult Basic Education. Jobs-Plus has held life skills workshops about such issues as budgeting, consumer fraud, and homeownership, to prepare residents for economic self-sufficiency. For the many foreign-born residents at Mt. Airy Homes, Jobs-Plus offers English as a Second Language (ESL) and U.S. citizenship classes at the Community Center and meetings of a Hmong Women's Support Group to help members address mental health and cultural conflict issues and explore employment options. There is a Head Start program at the Community Center, and the children and youth of Mt. Airy have access to an array of after-school and summer activities, including an after-school tutoring program. The welfare department also assigned an employment counselor and a financial eligibility worker to the development; they work together with the Jobs-Plus staff to help TANF recipients at Mt. Airy Homes find employment and access financial assistance, child care, and other TANF benefits. Jobs-Plus also refers residents to schools and agencies in the area for additional employment and support services, including child care, driver's education, and mental health and substance abuse treatment.

Jobs-Plus in St. Paul was the first demonstration site to implement the financial incentives component of the program. Households began receiving benefits in November 1998. Participants received one month's free rent for enrolling in Jobs-Plus. In addition, during the first year of the plan, 100 percent of their earned income was disregarded in the calculation of their monthly rent. In Years 2 through 5 of the plan, rent calculations are based on a flat-rent model and are graduated over time to reflect a percentage (after utility adjustments) of ceiling rents established by the housing authority, ranging from 45 percent in Year 2 to 90 percent in Year 5. Other provisions include rent credits for sustained employment and some rent reductions during periods of unemployment. The housing management office is strongly committed to the program and has taken the lead in recruiting, orienting, and enrolling households and administering the incentives. In Year 1 of the program, 175 households signed up, and, as of March 2002, 284 households had reportedly received the financial incentives.

The community support for work component of Jobs-Plus takes the institutional form of the community outreach workers. These are residents who receive stipends to help publicize program activities and job opportunities, to recruit participants, and to relay residents' concerns to the staff. The outreach workers speak the languages of the most numerous ethnic groups at Mt. Airy Homes. In the effort to develop a stronger sense of community in this ethnically diverse development, Jobs-Plus has tried to increase residents' interaction across ethnic lines — for instance, by holding cultural appreciation events, back-to-school fairs, and community picnics.

and meticulously. In Year 1 of the program, 175 households signed up; by the end of March 2002, 284 households had reportedly received the financial incentives.¹

Jobs-Plus in St. Paul offers employment and support services on both an individualized and a group basis. The offices of the Jobs-Plus staff and the program's on-site education and training activities are located at Mt. Airy's Community Center, where residents can also get social services from a range of local agencies. For additional employment and support services, residents are referred to schools and agencies in the area, including organizations that provide specialized services for various ethnic groups. As of June 2002, the program reported that 483 residents had registered in Jobs-Plus since it began offering employment services.

The community support for work component of Jobs-Plus takes the institutional form of community outreach workers. These residents receive stipends to help Jobs-Plus publicize program activities and job opportunities, recruit participants, and relay residents' concerns to the staff. Outreach workers speak the languages of the most numerous ethnic groups at Mt. Airy.

The Housing Development and Its Population

Mt. Airy Homes is a community of 294 households (as of August 2002).² Nestled in the hills overlooking downtown St. Paul, Mt. Airy is a spacious complex of attractive, pale-gray, wood-framed townhouses with flower-lined porches and well-kept lawns. Resembling a suburban condominium development, Mt. Airy belies the stereotype of shabby, crime-ridden, low-income housing.

Mt. Airy is home to a highly diverse community of residents who have come recently or historically from Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In 1997 — the year that Jobs-Plus began — the ethnic backgrounds of the heads of households were 5 percent white, 24 percent black (non-Hispanic), 65 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 3 percent Hispanic, and 3 percent other.³ The largest bloc of residents still consists of Hmong refugees from Laos, reflecting their sizable presence in St. Paul. Since the program began, however, growing numbers of refugees have moved to Mt. Airy from East Africa — many having fled civil strife in Somalia and Ethiopia.

¹As noted on a request of the St. Paul Public Housing Agency, dated May 1, 2002, for reimbursement from HUD of lost revenues incurred from the financial incentives program. The figure excludes redundancies introduced by households that cycled in and out of the incentives program and by households that signed up only to get the month's free rent for enrolling in Jobs-Plus but that subsequently did not go to work.

²Based on tenant rosters of the St. Paul Public Housing Agency.

³MDRC calculations based on data from tenant rosters provided by the St. Paul Public Housing Agency in October 1997 (Riccio, 1999, p. 22).

Such a large percentage of foreign-born residents requires Jobs-Plus in St. Paul to address a wide range of social, personal, and domestic issues as well as work experience and skill needs that can hamper a foreign-born resident's ability to participate in the U.S. workplace. In addition to the obvious barriers that the residents face in using an unfamiliar language, a number of them are encumbered with difficulties relating to gender roles that can sometimes undermine women's work efforts; traditional childrearing practices that discourage the use of professional child care; and the psychological scars of war, torture, and famine. It is the cultural dimensions of the hurdles that foreign-born residents face in accessing services and getting jobs that prompted a Jobs-Plus staff member at Mt. Airy to exclaim: "We have issues that are so different from other [Jobs-Plus] sites that are around!"⁴

Mt. Airy Homes has a reputation among residents and the wider community as a "safe" housing development, where residents do not have to worry unduly about their property or personal security. Since these concerns can discourage residents from participating in education and training or from taking jobs during certain hours of the day or night, security in the development is a priority for the St. Paul Public Housing Agency. For instance, the agency has used federal drug elimination funds to hire St. Paul Police Department officers. A Community Outreach Policing (ACOP) program targets drug-related criminal activity, but these officers are on call to respond to the wide range of problems that can arise in housing developments. And this approach aims to build good relations between the police force and the resident community and to develop preventive strategies rather than interventions of last resort. ACOP officers can therefore be seen walking or bicycling around Mt. Airy as well as cruising in squad cars, and they participate in community activities. Many of the officers speak the languages of the immigrant groups in the development. "A lot of these officers really do form relationships with folks in the community," said a housing authority official. "They hear about things before they even happen. They have been instrumental in a lot of our drug busts." Housing authority officials report that this program has helped to reduce crime at their developments to levels lower than those for the City of St. Paul. At Mt. Airy Homes, ACOP officers recently broke up a car-theft ring that had been troubling the development and neighborhood.⁵

Mt. Airy is very near the state capitol buildings and a large medical center with several hospitals. Residents can therefore find employment in clerical work and in the health care, retail, and hospitality industries. There are also small firms in the adjacent neighborhoods of Frog-town and Midway, where residents can find work in light assembly and food production. These

⁴For more information on efforts of Jobs-Plus to provide culturally appropriate services to address the needs of foreign-born residents in St. Paul, see Kato (2002).

⁵The Bush administration has cut drug elimination funding, and so the housing authority will no longer be able to underwrite the cost of ACOP at its current levels. But the agency plans to reroute internal monies to the program, since it is deemed effective and critical.

jobs can all be reached by a long walk or a bus ride. But residents have to drive out to the suburbs to access the better-paying manufacturing and warehouse jobs in large medical and electronics firms.

Program Infrastructure

Staffing and Management

As of June 2002, the Jobs-Plus staff in St. Paul consisted of four employment counselors, one job developer, an intensive case manager, and a Vista worker. Many of the Jobs-Plus staff members are Wilder Foundation employees; one who is an employment counselor is responsible for supervising the other Wilder employees who have been assigned to Jobs-Plus. Another employment counselor is from St. Paul Public Schools and supervises a GED teacher, a bilingual assistant, and youth workers hired through the St. Paul Public Schools Center for Employment Training (CET). These two employment counselors who have supervisory responsibilities have been with Jobs-Plus since its inception — one of them having worked at Mt. Airy Homes with the St. Paul Public Schools Support for Training and Employment Program (STEP), which predated Jobs-Plus. The Vista worker and the collaborative's Engaging Residents Committee coordinate the activities of the community outreach workers. Figure 6.1 presents the organizational chart for Jobs-Plus in St. Paul.

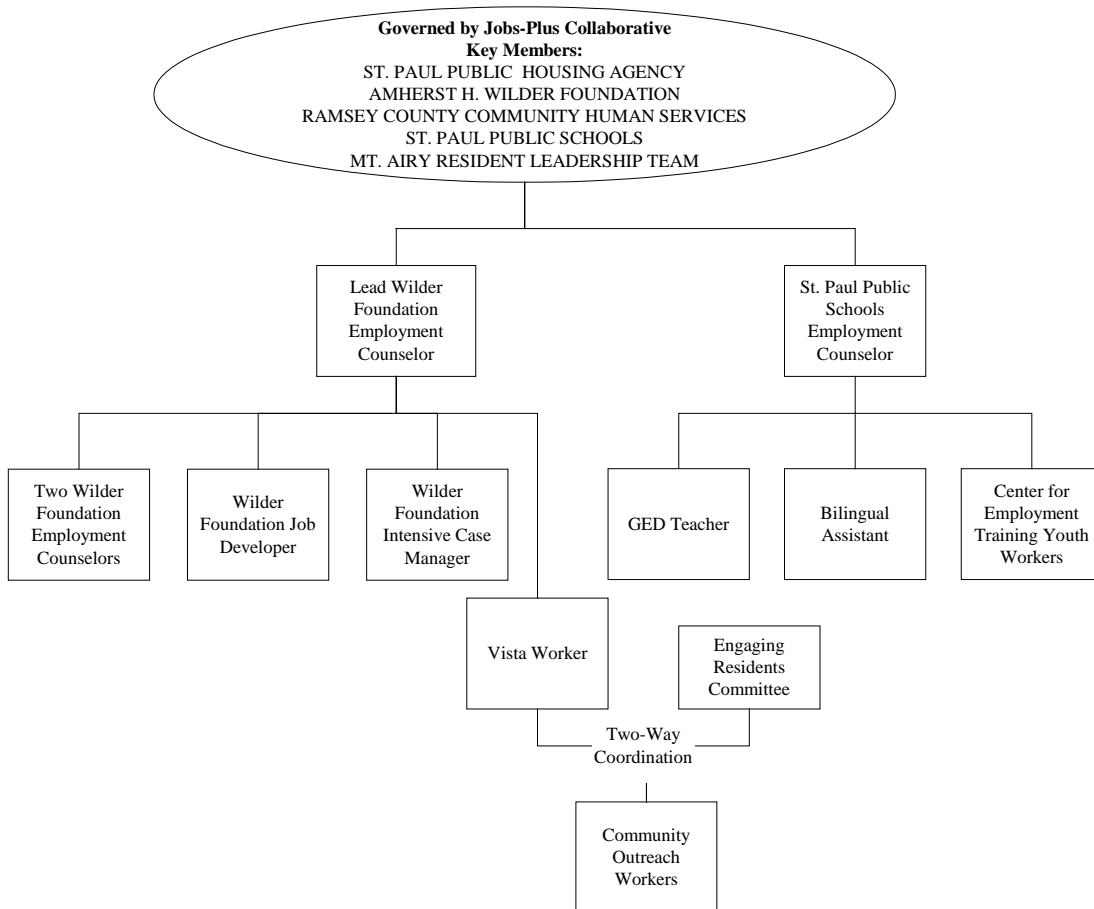
- The **employment counselors** are responsible for intake and assessment of enrollees and for case management to help residents acquire the education, training, and support services they need to prepare for employment, overcome job retention problems, and advance into better-paying jobs.
- The **job developer** helps residents with job search, identifies employment opportunities in the area, and also assists working residents with job retention and career advancement. During periods when the job developer's position has been unfilled, the employment counselors also assumed responsibilities for job search and job development.
- In 2001, an **intensive case manager** funded by Ramsey County Community Human Services and employed by the Wilder Foundation was assigned to Jobs-Plus to follow up MFIP clients at Mt. Airy Homes who are facing lifetime limits on welfare cash assistance. The first of the lifetime limits in Minnesota was scheduled to go into effect in July 2002. Most of the residents who were subject to this cutoff were working but were having great difficulty retaining employment and were earning too little to maintain their households without welfare cash assistance. The intensive case manager works

with the employment counselors to prompt residents to file for extensions of their time-limited benefits and to help them stabilize their employment.

- The **Vista worker** and the **Engaging Residents Committee** are primarily responsible for developing ways to implement the community support for work component of Jobs-Plus. So far, this effort has involved recruiting, training, and coordinating the community outreach workers; working with the resident council on behalf of the program; and producing a newsletter about the program.

Figure 6.1

Organizational Chart for Jobs-Plus in St. Paul



Since their responsibilities for monitoring and supporting participants are complementary and overlapping, the Jobs-Plus staff work closely as a team. For instance, every week they hold case conferencing meetings to discuss cases that have been selected for team review. The staff members recognize that working with some of the harder-to-serve residents requires a cooperative effort and that the specialized skills and experience of other staff members can be helpful to the one who is responsible for managing a case.

Jobs-Plus in St. Paul has also benefited from staff members who speak the languages and share the backgrounds of the foreign-born residents at Mt. Airy Homes. Two of the employment counselors and a senior housing management administrator speak Hmong, and a social worker at the management office speaks Vietnamese. They bring a welcomed appreciation for and sensitivity to the cultural dimensions of residents' concerns, many of which they share. Like the foreign-born residents, these staff also made the journey from refugee camps to St. Paul; some were even residents at Mt. Airy in the past.

Residents who are Jobs-Plus participants have also been hired by the housing authority for various positions in the Mt. Airy Community Center, such as the receptionist at the front desk. Since residents tend to rely on the advice of other residents in making decisions about whether to participate in Jobs-Plus activities, resident staff members are an important "face of Jobs-Plus" in the community. They play a critical role in informing residents about the program, clarifying misunderstandings, and relaying residents' concerns to the staff. "I tell them how good the Jobs-Plus program is," said one of these resident staff members, describing how other residents approach her about Jobs-Plus at the Community Center or informally, around the housing development. "I try to talk to them from a resident's point of view."

Unlike programs in the other demonstration sites, Jobs-Plus in St. Paul does not have a project director. A program manager was hired in summer 2000 and was responsible for staffing the collaborative and being the liaison between the program and the collaborative, for handling communications between the program and external entities like MDRC, and for implementing the community support for work component. But she did not have the authority to hire or supervise the staff involved with employment services, because they were employees of other agencies already under contract with the housing authority for Jobs-Plus. The Wilder Foundation and St. Paul Public Schools both provide services through these contracts for Jobs-Plus, and they supervise their own employees. Although the program manager met regularly with the entire employment services team to ensure coordination and communication, she moved on to other employment after a year, and the position was discontinued.

The Wilder Foundation's lead employment counselor is responsible for supervising the foundation's employment staff, while the daily operation of employment services is an effort shared by this employment counselor and the one from St. Paul Public Schools.

The program in St. Paul is governed by a collaborative of Jobs-Plus's primary sponsors, under what its members call a "shared leadership model." Although a long list of organizations signed on to the original Jobs-Plus application, a few core partners known as the Key Collaborators emerged as the program's governing body. These partners are the St. Paul Public Housing Agency, the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, Ramsey County Community Human Services (which houses the welfare agency), St. Paul Public Schools, and the Resident Leadership Team (RLT), which represents Mt. Airy's resident council. The program's staff members ultimately report to the collaborative member agency that funds their position and/or is in charge of their function.⁶

The Wilder Foundation, one of Ramsey County's largest philanthropic and service organizations, plays a particularly active role in Jobs-Plus. Founded in 1906, the foundation works through a number of divisions that focus on early childhood development; operation of child care centers and training of child care providers; mental health services; and services to the elderly, immigrants, and refugees. Jobs-Plus refers residents frequently to a wide range of the foundation's services, and many staff members are employees of the Wilder Foundation. The foundation has also provided extensive technical assistance to Jobs-Plus, including leadership training and facilitation and translation for meetings.

Until recently, the members of the Resident Leadership Team were active participants in the collaborative. Recruited and elected by the resident council, they helped the program recruit participants and design the incentives, and they also conducted an asset mapping and informed the collaborative and staff about residents' concerns. But as more residents got full-time jobs, they had less time for the collaborative, and it became increasingly difficult to recruit replacements for the RLT. So Jobs-Plus now focuses instead on recruiting residents to be community outreach workers who are responsible for promoting participation in the program and relaying residents' concerns to staff. (The roles of resident outreach workers are discussed near the end of the chapter, under "Community Support for Work.")

The collaborative is responsible for setting the program's overall agenda, for identifying and filling staffing needs, and for developing a budget to support both program and collaborative activities. The collaborative carries out most of its work in specialized committees, which currently include the Employment Committee and the Engaging Residents/Community Support for Work Committee. Meetings of the full collaborative are held once a month. Between these meetings, each of the two committees is also scheduled to meet monthly. The St. Paul Public Schools employment counselor and the Wilder Foundation's lead employment counselor attend

⁶For a broader discussion of the role of the collaboratives in designing, implementing, and governing the Jobs-Plus programs, see Kato and Riccio (2001).

the collaborative meetings. Jobs-Plus staff members are assigned to the specialized committees and attend their meetings.

Facilities

Jobs-Plus activities take place in Mt. Airy's Community Center — a spacious, modern, and well-maintained facility operated by the housing authority. In addition to the offices of the Jobs-Plus staff, the center contains a large community room with a kitchen, several meeting rooms, a computer laboratory, a career resource room, and classrooms for Head Start and English as a Second Language (ESL). It also houses several social service providers, including an MFIP employment counselor who has office hours four days a week, an MFIP financial eligibility worker who comes once a week, a public health nurse, the Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program, and a food pantry operated by the nonprofit agency Neighbor-to-Neighbor. Residents who are employed by the housing authority work as receptionists at the front desk. Children and youth also have access to activities after school and during the summer vacation, offered by the Ramsey County Sheriff's Department. During the summer as well, the St. Paul Public Schools Center for Employment Training (CET) employs youth who reside at Mt. Airy Homes to help with the computer lab and with the free breakfast and lunch programs for the children. Jobs-Plus is well situated at the Community Center, since it is the bustling heart of community life at Mt. Airy, and the traffic of residents of all ages and ethnic groups is constant, both day and night.

Program Flow

The following sections describe the official process for enrolling in Jobs-Plus in St. Paul and the formal employment-related services that the program offers. As noted earlier, assistance is usually provided on an individualized basis in order to accommodate the wide variation in residents' employment backgrounds and service needs and to address their language-related and sociocultural barriers to employment. It has been difficult for Jobs-Plus to deliver standardized services in a group context, particularly across the many ethnic and language groups at Mt. Airy Homes.

Nor do the residents necessarily use the services in the traditional, continuous sequence. Most turn to Jobs-Plus for quick relief in a crisis, when they actually need emergency food, job leads, child care, or the financial incentives safety net after losing a job. As explained by one Jobs-Plus staff member:

[T]he "stop-and-start" is based on need. Where they think the job counselors can be a resource, then they call. Otherwise, if things are going good for people, they don't call. "Going good" might mean not having pressure from their

[welfare] counselor for the moment, or their employment is steady, or they have child care for their kids for the summer. “Going bad” is facing eviction or missing a training mandated by a [welfare] counselor.⁷

Such patterns of participation require the staff to make additional efforts to encourage residents to take up educational and training opportunities and to ensure that they are making progress toward the long-term goals of career advancement and self-sufficiency.

It is also important to emphasize that the staff assist residents in ad hoc, informal ways outside the program’s offices and normal business hours, helping with a variety of factors that can affect employment — for instance, by accompanying residents to medical and family court appointments and job interviews. Staff play an especially important role in helping residents access services at other agencies, by working with staff counterparts to cut through the red tape. Many residents are involved with a number of agencies, including welfare-to-work programs and refugee assistance organizations. Each provider, including the housing authority, requires clients to comply with its own — sometimes competing — procedures and requirements. One Jobs-Plus staff member emphasized that the situation can be a major source of anxiety, confusion, and frustration for the residents:

[The residents] come here, and they have their financial worker, and then they have me. And those who have a job have a child care worker if they’re getting their child care subsidy. If they’re divorced, they have a child support worker. Just think of what they have to go through annually [just to get all of this reauthorized]!

A resident contrasted the welcoming and accommodating “can-do” attitude of the Jobs-Plus staff with the abrupt and inflexible treatment that she typically encounters at the downtown welfare office: “[The Jobs-Plus staff] are pleasant. They’re not rude to you. They try to help you make things work.”

Recruitment

Participants in Jobs-Plus must be legal residents of Mt. Airy Homes in good standing with the management office and at least 18 years old. This includes seniors and recipients of Supple-

⁷The intensity of residents’ involvement with the program varied over time and was difficult to gauge by simply asking residents at a point in time how often they had contact with Jobs-Plus. For instance, a resident in search of a job might make a series of calls and visits to Jobs-Plus, especially if the resident was new to the workforce and needed help filling out résumés, preparing for job interviews, or learning how to use public transportation to get to work. Once the resident was employed, however, the calls and visits generally tapered off until, for instance, the resident lost the job and requested the safety net or sought the program’s help in getting a GED or further training or education to qualify for a better position.

mental Security Income (SSI) who reside in the development, since they may also want to work part time and are members of the community. Jobs-Plus has sometimes provided informal assistance to those who do not reside in the development, by referring them to off-site services, but the program cannot officially enroll nonresidents. Children and youth under age 18 receive services available to them as members of Mt. Airy households; examples include an after-school homework program in the computer laboratory and a weekly group for girls age 12 or older.

At the beginning of the program, Jobs-Plus and housing management staff and Resident Leadership Team members undertook extensive efforts to inform residents about the program and encourage them to enroll. Outreach methods included going door-to-door to distribute flyers and brochures, putting articles in the community newsletter and inserts into rent notices, making phone calls, and holding community meetings. For instance, the management office sponsored a community celebration — “a Jobs-Plus kickoff” — that offered food and games for the children. Housing authority officials talked about the program, and the Jobs-Plus employment counselors and management staff introduced themselves and discussed their roles. Efforts were also made to inform other programs at the Community Center about Jobs-Plus so that they would refer their clients to the program. Jobs-Plus was also advertised at resident council meetings.

Prior to Jobs-Plus, residents at Mt. Airy Homes had access to employment services through the Support for Training and Employment Program (STEP). In 1992, the St. Paul Public Housing Agency and St. Paul Public Schools jointly founded this program, which offers education, training, and employment opportunities to public housing residents. The housing authority contracts with the public school system to provide the employment services. STEP is available to residents at all four of the city’s family housing developments, and staff were stationed at Mt. Airy and at McDonough, one of the comparison developments. An employment counselor from STEP was assigned full time to Jobs-Plus at Mt. Airy (though she continues to report to St. Paul Public Schools). STEP participants were already familiar with the concept of an on-site employment program, and they were enrolled directly into Jobs-Plus.

Much of these early outreach efforts was focused on promoting the Jobs-Plus financial incentives. For instance, the management and Jobs-Plus staff held numerous orientations “on days, nights, and weekends” to explain the incentives and invite residents to sign up for them. The incentives proved to be a compelling reason to enroll in Jobs-Plus. Between the program’s inception in late 1997 and the end of October 1998, only about 50 to 60 residents had enrolled. But stepped-up efforts to enroll residents after HUD’s approval in September 1998 of the initial year’s financial incentives resulted in 178 additional households joining the program by the end of March 1999.

Mt. Airy’s management office continues to include flyers about the Jobs-Plus financial incentives in the monthly rent statements, urging residents who still have not enrolled to do so.

And the program's resident outreach workers go door-to-door with flyers and are trained to answer questions about services and benefits. ("Community Support for Work," near the end of the chapter, discusses these residents' outreach role.)

Between formal outreach and informal communications among residents, everyone at Mt. Airy seems to know about Jobs-Plus. Residents may not be familiar with all the program's services and all aspects of its financial incentives, but they know that Jobs-Plus can help them find employment and that it offers working residents a break in the rent. A management staff member insisted: "I would really fall over if anyone in Mt. Airy didn't know what Jobs-Plus was by now."

Orientation and Enrollment

Residents of Mt. Airy Homes can enroll in Jobs-Plus to access its employment services at any time of the year, simply by going to the Community Center and asking to see an employment counselor. But those who also want to enroll their household in the financial incentives can do so only by meeting with the housing management staff, who consider it their responsibility to explain the benefits and obligations under this rent program:

We're explaining *three* different rents to them. . . . I can understand why it's confusing to them. There's the ceiling rent, which is across the housing authority everywhere in St. Paul. Then we're talking to them about the 30 percent [of income rate]. And then you're going to go back and say, "Okay, but there's also a flat rent." So it's really hard. You have to explain it to them. And if you have to explain it to them three or four times, you have to do it.

Until the second half of 2001, residents could sign up for both financial incentives and other services — and were encouraged to do so — at group orientations held jointly by the management and the Jobs-Plus staff. A management staff member explained the financial incentives, and a Jobs-Plus staff member described the employment and support services available at the Mt. Airy Community Center. In the early years of the financial incentives, these jointly held group orientations were offered two or three times a month, in both daytime and evening hours. The proceedings were translated into Hmong, Vietnamese, and Cambodian.

Now, however, because the number of residents enrolling in the financial incentives for the first time is small and is limited primarily to newcomers, the management staff use a "move-in interview" to introduce new residents to the rent plans. A Jobs-Plus staff member also attends this interview and describes the program's employment and support services. New residents are given a packet of materials about Jobs-Plus and are offered the opportunity to enroll on the spot. This includes even residents who are not working at the time of the interview and thus are not eligible for the incentives. "We do go over the Jobs-Plus program even if they are not em-

ployed, just to let them know that they have the opportunity to join at any time,” said a management staff member. The hope is that the financial incentives will spur these new residents to look for work.

By filling out the Jobs-Plus Membership Agreement, residents enroll for that year of the incentives program, and their household is entitled to one month’s free rent for joining Jobs-Plus. If a member of the household is working at the time of enrollment, signing the agreement also registers the household for the rent credit and for the rent reduction part of the incentives program (if the resident chooses the flat-rent option rather than the traditional method of rent calculation). The agreement specifies membership benefits and responsibilities, including the need to be lease-compliant. Everyone in the household — not just the leaseholder — who is age 18 or older and is eligible for membership must sign on to this agreement. It requires household members who do not have a GED or a high school diploma to visit an employment counselor at the Community Center for an educational assessment. They must also continue to contact the employment counselor every month and must have a face-to-face interview at least once every quarter. (The program has not been able to get all participants to comply with these contact requirements.)

For a household to be officially enrolled, the membership agreement must be signed by both a Jobs-Plus employment counselor and a management staff member, whose signature certifies that the household is lease-compliant and is therefore eligible. To receive the financial incentives, residents do not have to produce any documentation to verify their employment other than what they routinely provide to the management office for lease recertification. This involves a two-part form that residents sign to give the management office permission to contact their employers.

The only other paperwork needed to enroll in Jobs-Plus is an intake form (officially called the “Face Sheet Form”), which elicits such information as the applicant’s education level, primary language, and household income and size. If this is the resident’s first point of contact with the program, she is asked to go to the Community Center sometime to talk with an employment counselor. Because the jointly held orientations with the management staff have to cover a lot of information, Jobs-Plus staff have no time at those sessions to assess individual residents and discuss their employment needs.

Finally, unlike the other sites’ programs, Jobs-Plus in St. Paul requires those residents who are enrolled in the financial incentives to reenroll every year. Since 2001, the management staff and the Jobs-Plus staff discuss and enroll residents for the next phase of the financial incentives program during lease recertification interviews.

Assessment

Residents who enroll in Jobs-Plus when they apply for the financial incentives are assigned to an employment counselor, and they are called by phone to schedule an appointment with that counselor at the Community Center. Residents who drop by the Community Center to enroll in Jobs-Plus are referred to an employment counselor for a face-to-face assessment of their employment goals, assets, and barriers. The employment counselor uses a form (“Jobs-Plus Case Notes”) that elicits information about the resident’s employment status and any employment barriers, such as the need for a résumé, a GED, transportation, child care, English instruction, or a work permit. When the employment counselor judges the resident ready to begin job search — sometimes after several meetings — the resident meets with the case manager and the job developer, showing them a referral form that indicates, for instance, the resident’s MFIP benefits, length of unemployment, job interests, and whether child care and transportation needs have been addressed. During periods when the job developer’s position was unfilled, the employment counselors also helped residents with job search. Now they focus on helping residents address employment barriers by accessing support services and preemployment education and training.

The job developer frequently also conducts an informal assessment of residents’ skills by asking them to fill out a job application. This requires residents to demonstrate their skills in English grammar, spelling, and reading comprehension while also providing information about their work history. Furthermore, the job developer probes for job retention problems by reviewing the application form with the resident and asking direct questions: “You’ve had a lot of jobs. Why did you leave this job? What caused that job to end?”

Jobs-Plus is currently in the process of implementing a new assessment instrument called the Minnesota ABE Employability Skills Assessment. It covers such parameters as learning skills, knowledge of appropriate dress and hygiene, and self-management skills (for example, “Does the client come to class or appointments on time?”).

The program in St. Paul refers residents to other agencies for diagnosis and treatment of problems relating to substance abuse, domestic violence, learning disabilities, and mental illness. But Jobs-Plus staff members indicated that residents are usually careful not to disclose such problems, especially during early assessment. Substance abusers, particularly, are afraid of incurring the management office’s scrutiny, which could lead to their eviction: “That’s why people are very hesitant to talk about because of the ‘one strike you’re out’ policy [of the housing authority against drug abuse].”

Job Readiness and Job Search

Jobs-Plus in St. Paul does not offer a daily job club that operates in two- or three-week cycles. (The last formal job club at Mt. Airy Homes operated in the fall of 1999, but it was sus-

pended because of poor attendance and the impending maternity leave of the job developer at that time.) Instead, the job developer posts regular office hours once a week for a “job club,” but residents generally seek the job developer’s help on an individualized, drop-in basis. Those who want group-based help are referred off-site to a program such as Skills First, a six-week program at St. Paul Technical College that also includes basic education, ESL, and computer skills.

Jobs-Plus has also been encouraging working-age disabled residents at Mt. Airy Homes to consider part-time employment as a way to improve their quality of life and psychological health — “Not just for monetary reasons,” explained a staff member, “but also for all those non-tangibles that come with working.” Many of these residents are foreign born, and their sociocultural isolation has been intensified by lack of daily exposure to the workplace. Jobs-Plus arranged for an officer of the Social Security Administration to visit Mt. Airy to talk with disabled residents about regulations governing how much income they can earn without jeopardizing their SSI benefits.

Since 2001, the job developer and a Hmong-speaking job counselor have been steering the Hmong Women’s Support Group in the direction of job exploration. Members of the group who are not working because of mental or physical disabilities are taken on field trips to workplaces within easy commuting distance of Mt. Airy, including food production factories, an outdoor nursery, and a hotel. “The more factories that we’ve taken them to, the more experiences we’ve given them, their questions seem to become more employment-focused,” said a staff member. “They’re getting a lot closer to considering it.” The field trips have also had the benefit of putting these residents in contact with nearby employers who usually do not advertise job openings to the general public.

The majority of residents who come to the program for job search assistance have recently lost their jobs. Very few of them have not been working. Residents typically get help on an individual basis. Although the job developer has primary responsibility for job search assistance, a resident may instead prefer to go to a familiar, trusted employment counselor. (To facilitate this, the job developer distributes a list of job leads every week.) The job developer and employment counselors help residents to look up job listings in newspapers and on such Internet Web sites as JobLink, and they help them to prepare résumés and job applications. The staff members also coach residents for job interviews. The job developer emphasized the importance of accompanying residents to places of employment to pick up an application, to attend an interview, and to show them the commute route: “That may not seem like much, but there is a lot of modeling that goes on when you go to places like that. I tell them, ‘You need to dress better than that when we go. Don’t crumple up your application like that.’”

The staff members follow residents’ job search efforts, informing them about additional job openings, inquiring about their interviews, and offering encouragement as needed. One resi-

dent said: “[Staff member X] helps me with résumés. If she sees job openings, she calls and leaves it on my voice mail. She’s gotten to know me and my kids. She always lets me know what’s coming up, what’s going on. She keeps in touch. . . . She doesn’t let time go by. She makes sure to ask, ‘Are you doing okay? Is your job working out all right?’”

Residents can also search for jobs on their own, at the Community Center. Its career resource room contains computers with access to JobLink and other employment Web sites, telephones for contacting employers, tip sheets on job search and interviewing, and books about preparing a résumé. The bulletin board in the front hall of the Community Center displays job announcements — including some that the housing authority and other collaborative partners have posted.

Jobs-Plus is in the challenging position of having to introduce some residents to the world of work and the job search process for the first time. These residents may be in their thirties or forties but have little or no knowledge of the workplace and the skills required for better-paying jobs. “Their self-perception is so high that they refuse to see anything,” said a staff member of the inflated assessments that some residents have of their skills and prospects for employment. For instance, a resident who had been terminated from her position as a teacher’s aide after a few months because of excessive absences insisted that she qualified for better jobs than those that the staff were recommending. But her work history was limited to spotty attendance at work experience positions for welfare recipients. And even though she did not have a GED, she was not interested in skills development.

Nor do some residents appreciate how demanding and time-consuming job search can be. Instead, they look to Jobs-Plus simply to place them in a job that meets their specifications, with little or no effort on their part. One resident complained:

[T]he thing is that you could job-search for 24 hours a day, but you can’t make anyone hire you. They could show you all of these jobs, pull off all types of jobs from the computer. But it doesn’t make a difference. . . . You’re still where you started out at. You don’t know whether or not they’re going to hire you. You don’t know whether or not they’re going to return your call. What you do here at Jobs-Plus you can basically do at home.

Staff members therefore have to teach such residents about their responsibilities in the job search process and the limits of what they can expect from an employment program. For instance, a staff member talked about trying to get some residents not to come to her for help in scrambling together a résumé for a competitive job within a few hours of the application deadline: “That might have worked in high school. But in the real world it does not. It doesn’t operate on that same system.”

In contrast, some middle-aged Southeast Asian immigrants at Mt. Airy were willing to work hard in difficult conditions, but their options even for entry-level employment were limited by their lack of English proficiency and problems following written and oral directions on the job. The staff observed that the men tended to seek jobs as machine operators, mechanics, and medical assembly workers or to work in graphic arts. The women asked for jobs as production workers in light assembly or as seamstresses, cashiers, and cleaners in hotels. (Because of child care responsibilities, the women generally had less education and social exposure beyond their homes than the men.) Language difficulties discouraged these residents from considering other kinds of jobs and the education and training needed to improve their employment prospects. Staff members talked about getting requests from some residents for jobs that do not require a résumé and interview and about having to explain that the staff cannot spruce up a résumé to the point that an employer will expect someone who is proficient in English. Staff have tried to locate firms whose supervisors speak the residents' languages, but the recent economic downturn has caused many such firms to lay off workers or shut down.

Education and Training

Residents of Mt. Airy Homes have access to introductory English and remedial education courses on-site at the Community Center. An instructor from the Lao Family Association teaches English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in the mornings and evenings Monday through Thursday. These classes are well attended by foreign-born residents of many ethnic backgrounds. An instructor from the St. Paul Board of Education also offers GED classes two mornings and two evenings a week in the center's computer laboratory. Residents work individually with the instructor on practice tests and assignments. Attendance tends to be sporadic — as is often the case with GED classes.

The GED examination is particularly difficult for the foreign-born residents who lack English proficiency. Preparing for the examination can take years, so that residents who do enroll often become discouraged and drop out. (This is a serious barrier to career advancement for Mt. Airy residents, because local employers screen out applicants for better jobs who do not have a GED or high school diploma.) The GED instructor also assists residents who come to the computer lab during the scheduled hours to use the Plato software, which offers instruction in Adult Basic Education for learners with a primary language other than English.

Vocational training at the Community Center currently consists of short-term courses and workshops offered periodically in response to identified needs. For instance, for residents who already have some clerical skills, the employment counselors teach a “brush-up” course in filing, data entry, receptionist, and other skills. Those who complete this training can apply for the housing authority's pool of residents who are on call to temporarily replace clerical staff when the need arises. Several residents have gotten positions in the housing authority and in

other firms through the work experience that they acquired through these temporary clerical assignments. In 2002, the Support for Training and Employment Program (STEP) also offered an eight-week series of “Office PRO” workshops at the Community Center to prepare residents for clerical employment. Jobs-Plus staff members helped to teach the workshops, and participants earned a certificate for each component that they completed.

Previously, in 1997, Jobs-Plus arranged for St. Paul Technical College to offer training in electronics assembly, keyboarding, and forklift operation, and Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training was available at St. Mary’s Nursing Home. Lack of funding ended most of these courses after one year, however, although CNA training continued through 2001. In 1997-1998, Jobs-Plus also arranged for several residents to receive training to become licensed child care providers.

Residents who seek vocational training and postsecondary education are usually referred off-site to community colleges and technical schools. For instance, East Metro Occupational College offers a six-month program that prepares students to work in the medical assembly firms in the suburbs of St. Paul. Jobs-Plus offers financial aid counseling and small scholarships for tuition and expenses. The GED instructor also provides college counseling and helps residents to prepare for college admissions and placement tests. An employment counselor emphasized the importance of assisting residents with financial aid and college applications, which can be complicated and quite daunting to the residents, especially if English is their second language.

Job Development

The job developer and employment counselors at Mt. Airy Homes have endeavored to cultivate local employers in the hopes that they will contact Jobs-Plus when they have job openings. Staff members keep an eye out especially for firms in the surrounding area that are accessible to residents without cars. For instance, the job developer identified a wide range of potential employers nearby while setting up field trips for the Hmong Women’s Support Group. Furthermore, although these firms typically do not advertise job openings to the general public, the field trips also introduced the program and the residents to the employers for future hiring consideration.

As at the other Jobs-Plus sites, it has been difficult for the program in St. Paul to build preferential hiring relationships with employers to any scale, because the pool of applicants is limited to the residents of Mt. Airy who happen to be looking for work at the time. Jobs-Plus therefore cannot offer employers a sizable, continuous stream of qualified applicants. In general, the staff members try instead to help the residents obtain and do well in jobs that employers advertise, so that those employers can be called and asked to contact Jobs-Plus when they have

other openings. The staff also keep in touch with residents who do get jobs, asking them to notify the program when their employer is hiring.

The job developer also meets local employers and acquires job leads by participating in the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce and various employment associations. One of these is Job Connect, a network of job developers; employers attend its meetings to discuss available jobs and their hiring requirements.

Job Creation

In earlier years of the program at Mt. Airy Homes, Jobs-Plus helped several residents start child care businesses at home. The program helped five residents apply for grants and get access to start-up resources, such as money for fire extinguishers. One resident was able to recruit her first clients from neighbors who had completed the CNA training program sponsored by Jobs-Plus and who needed child care in order to go to work. The providers drew on a scholarship fund — operated with funds from an Economic Development and Supportive Services (ED/SS) grant to the St. Paul Public Housing Agency — to help pay for the continuing education that is required in Minnesota to maintain a child care license.⁸ The Wilder Foundation also helped these women meet quarterly for support and networking, by providing food and other logistical support for their meetings.

Jobs-Plus staff have emphasized that self-employment of any kind is challenging and that operating a child care business at home is particularly demanding and not to be undertaken lightly. Yet residents of Mt. Airy Homes who are having job retention problems often tell the staff: “If all else fails, I can do home child care.” In addition to completing the training for certification, however, child care providers have to ensure that their homes comply with state safety regulations, must convince the community that they are trustworthy in order to build a client base, need to keep the children in their care occupied and safe for the entire day, and have to manage the business accounts. The staff members try to help residents understand that in-home child care is not something one does as “work of last resort.”

Job Retention

Helping residents get a job was sometimes just the beginning of Jobs-Plus’s challenges. Some residents — referred to as “cyclers” — experienced repeated job loss and could manage

⁸The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides ED/SS grants on a nationally competitive basis to public and Indian housing authorities for creating and operating programs that increase employment and self-sufficiency among working-age nondisabled residents and/or support independent living for elderly and disabled residents. Up to 25 percent of the ED/SS program beneficiaries can also be Section 8 residents. For further details, see <http://www.hud.gov:80/progdsc/ed-ss.cfm>.

to stay employed for only a few months or even weeks. They often had little work experience and major problems with tardiness and absenteeism, especially if they were juggling child care and commuting on public transportation for the first time or were struggling with substance abuse, domestic violence, mental illness, or a chronically ill family member. For instance, a single mother who had recently been fired because of tardiness was upset by the hours that she was expected to keep, even though these are typical for a working parent nowadays: “They wanted me to be [there] at 8:30 in the morning. But then I had to be up in the morning to take my child to child care and then be there by 8:30 on the bus line. [This meant] that I had to be up at 6:30 or 7 o’clock in the morning. I didn’t think that was fair to me.”

Jobs-Plus has struggled to keep working residents involved with the program in order to stabilize and extend their employment. Welfare-to-work programs and other employment programs for low-income communities around the nation have had a hard time convincing clients who have gotten jobs to come back for services to stabilize their employment and prepare them for better jobs.⁹ Jobs-Plus staff members conduct formal follow-up inquiries of working residents through letters or phone calls after 30, 60, and 90 days on the job, and they also maintain extended office hours on some weekday evenings to be accessible to working residents. But residents typically said that they were too busy at work — or were preoccupied with families after work — to drop by the office or respond to staff inquiries.

The financial incentives program in St. Paul has offered Jobs-Plus staff an official and regular opportunity to meet with working residents. Residents must reenroll in the financial incentives each year at the same time as the annual recertification process for their lease. Since 2001, both Jobs-Plus and housing management staff have met together with residents at their reexamination interviews. Because residents have to attend these, Jobs-Plus staff have the opportunity to catch up with the residents about their jobs and can remind them of available employment services: “This is a sure thing,” said a Jobs-Plus staff member. “Eventually, they have to show up for their reexam.”

Furthermore, the financial incentives program has offered a safety net to residents who lost their jobs “through no fault of their own.” They could apply for two months of \$25 minimum rent while they looked for another job. Since residents had to go to Jobs-Plus instead of the management office to apply for the safety net, the financial incentives program gave Jobs-Plus staff another opportunity to reengage working residents. “I never got around to it,” said a

⁹Participation rates in job retention and advancement services and work support programs are typically low. Recent studies show that numerous barriers make participation in these programs difficult, such as lack of adequate child care during training, the difficulty for welfare recipients of meeting work requirements while participating in training programs, and the challenge of balancing work, family, and school. See Anderson, Miller, and Bos, 2002; Golonka and Matus-Grossman, 2001.

resident who had not used Jobs-Plus's employment and support services until she lost her job and applied for the safety net. At her interview, she and the case manager also worked on problems she was having retaining a job because of her child's disabilities. "Sometimes it brings people back [to the program] because they see something that can really help them," said a Jobs-Plus staff member.

During and after office hours, the Jobs-Plus staff also capitalize on being on-site by going to visit working residents at home. "I think [home visits are] very helpful," said a Jobs-Plus staff member. "I may not have seen a client for one or two months. They may have some needs, but they don't have time to call you." Even residents who are home during the day might not have phones. While this staff member usually calls or sends a note in advance, she never hesitates to drop in if she has not heard from the person. "I have a couple of cases . . . I couldn't reach them. I sent letters. No response. So what I did was just go down there and knock on the door. If they're home, I speak for 10 or 15 minutes just to see how they are. They usually welcome [me]." Home visits permit the staff to learn about people's lives and "see things happening in the family," where the domestic problems that undercut job retention occur. Home visits also help break down cultural barriers with foreign-born residents, making it possible, for example, to encourage anyone who suffers from domestic problems or mental health issues to consider referrals for professional help.

Mediating with employers has been particularly important in helping foreign-born residents settle into the workplace and retain their jobs. Staff members talked about working with employers' supervisors to find ways, for instance, to accommodate the headscarves, loose clothing, and prayer times of Muslim residents or to address workers' problems communicating in English. A staff member described one resident who did not understand that she was entitled to take a lunch break and was angry because she felt compelled to work through the entire shift. The staff member clarified the situation for the woman and explained to the employer that her lack of English had caused the misunderstanding.

Some senior housing authority administrators in St. Paul expressed the belief that Jobs-Plus contributed to higher levels of steady employment at Mt. Airy Homes than at the comparison sites. "In spite of the challenges in a [tougher] economy," said a senior administrator, "we continue to see a steady level of employed households [in the Jobs-Plus development]." Another administrator said: "I find that the other [developments] have more residents that are employed, laid off, employed, laid off, then back on the job again." These housing authority administrators attributed the differences at Mt. Airy Homes to the financial incentives and "the intense employment-related services" that Jobs-Plus offered: "You may feel that you are at rock bottom, but somebody is going to be there. You're not just going to disappear. You're part of this family. [Jobs-Plus will] rally around you."

Career Advancement

Working residents at Mt. Airy Homes also need help getting better jobs with benefits. Jobs-Plus initially focused on helping unemployed residents acquire work experience through entry-level employment, and so job quality was not the program's primary concern. However, with residents facing lifetime limits on TANF assistance across the sites, Jobs-Plus staff are eager to help residents move into better jobs that can help secure financial independence. For instance, a Jobs-Plus staff member expressed concern that her caseload is earning at most \$8.00 to \$8.50 an hour — wages that are insufficient to take a family over the poverty line but are enough to disqualify them from welfare cash assistance in Minnesota, especially if both parents are working.

Jobs-Plus encourages working residents to enroll in off-site postsecondary education and training programs. The staff members have information about a wide array of programs — many of which also offer tuition funding and stipends — and staff help residents fill out enrollment and financial aid applications. Jobs-Plus offers small scholarships toward tuition and expenses. The GED instructor also helps residents prepare to take college admissions and placement tests.

However, like welfare-to-work programs around the country, Jobs-Plus has had a difficult time encouraging working residents to take up education and training opportunities to qualify for better jobs. “The challenge has been . . . in getting people to think about taking the next step,” emphasized a Jobs-Plus staff member. “People think: ‘I’ve got a job. I’m making a little money. My rent is okay. Why do I want to complicate things?’” Staff interviews attributed this attitude partly to short-term priorities, particularly among welfare recipients who had settled into temporary, entry-level jobs to comply with TANF work mandates and who were not convinced that the cash assistance, child care, and medical benefits from welfare were truly going to end. Many working residents also simply felt overwhelmed by the challenge of attending a GED or training class after a long workday and bus commute, especially if they were holding down multiple jobs and had young children or ailing relatives to tend at home. Indeed, the residents at Mt. Airy who were enrolled in training programs and GED classes and even pursuing advanced degrees while holding down jobs maintained hectic, exhausting schedules. For instance, an East African resident said that he worked as a security guard from midnight until eight in the morning and then went directly to the community college where he was studying to become a medical technician. He did not return home until five in the afternoon, when he could help his wife tend their young children for a few hours and get some sleep before having to return to work.

Moreover, the staff members view participation in Jobs-Plus as voluntary, so it is a challenge trying to balance the kind of supportive intervention that is involved in job retention and career advancement services with the desire to respect the privacy and discretion of the

residents. “We hesitate to make anyone do more,” said a staff member. “Those who say, ‘Everything is fine. I won’t hesitate to call you if I need anything,’ really mean, ‘I’ll call you if I need you. Period. Don’t bother me.’” The staff members respect this. “We try to stay out of their lives.”

Support Services

Jobs-Plus offers a number of additional services to help residents find and keep jobs. Requests for these services are frequent and also provide the staff with valuable opportunities to check on residents’ employment, to inform them about job openings, and to encourage them to seek additional education and training.

Child Care Assistance

Jobs-Plus generally refers welfare recipients who need child care assistance to Resources for Child Caring (RCC), a nonprofit resource and referral agency that acts in a brokerage capacity to help MFIP clients access child care subsidies and local providers across Ramsey County.

Mt. Airy residents also have access on-site to various subsidized child care options for preschoolers and school-age children. Head Start operates a weekday preschool program on the lower level of the Community Center. Several residents at Mt. Airy have also been trained and certified to provide in-home care to children, including toddlers. Until recently, the Wilder Foundation operated Growing Places, which predated Jobs-Plus and offered care at the Community Center for preschoolers (ages 3 to 5). Because this child care center was underutilized, the Wilder Foundation closed it in the spring of 2002 and arranged for a van to take the remaining children to one of its other centers.

Generally, foreign-born residents at Mt. Airy Homes have expressed reluctance to use professional child care services, saying that it is outside their cultural experience to entrust their children to people beyond their circle of relatives and friends. “In my culture, they believe that the only way kids get proper care is when the parents are around,” emphasized a Somali Muslim parent. “And they don’t like it if [the people who tend their children] don’t share their culture, like they’re afraid the kids will eat things not compatible with their culture.” Some residents have also cited the cost of professional child care as a problem, even though welfare recipients have access to MFIP subsidies to help pay for child care.

The residents do turn to the Jobs-Plus staff for help in finding someone to care for their children in a pinch, during the odd two- or three-hour window while they attend a job interview or citizenship class. A former Vista worker used to be responsible for organizing women in the development to offer babysitting services for families during appointments or meetings and

workshops at Mt. Airy. In some cases, MFIP funds were used to cover the entire cost of this service; in others, parents were asked to pay a fee of \$5 per day.

Services for Children and Youth

The Mt. Airy Community Center has a computer laboratory that the children use extensively after school to do their homework. The Sheriff's Department of Ramsey County also operates an after-school program at the center on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, providing homework assistance, recreational activities, and computer instruction. Near the Community Center, the Boys and Girls Clubs offer the children and youth of the neighborhood sports and arts activities, community service opportunities, and homework assistance. A group for girls ages 12 and older also meets weekly, and Jobs-Plus informs families at Mt. Airy of recreational and volunteer opportunities sponsored by St. Paul's Department of Parks and Recreation.

Mt. Airy families have also had opportunities over the years to participate in intergenerational activities. The People Assisting with Life Skills (PALS) of the St. Paul Public Schools Center for Employment Training (CET) operated a volunteer program for teens for several years. Teenage participants tutored the older residents of Mt. Airy for the first half of the session, and then they helped the staff provide recreational activities for the adults during the second half of the session. In 2002, the Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program of St. Paul Public Schools offered a focus group on-site for Hmong residents and their grandchildren. The grandparents often look after their grandchildren while working parents are away from home, and the program tried to help both groups of participants — foreign-born grandparents and children growing up in the United States — to identify sources of intergenerational conflict as well as enrichment. The two groups met jointly for part of the session and then divided into generational groupings. The grandparents learned skills for raising children in the United States, while the grandchildren learned more about the culture and customs of their grandparents.

Transportation Assistance

Jobs-Plus offers the residents of Mt. Airy Homes bus tokens to attend job interviews and 31-day bus passes to commute to a new job until their first paychecks arrive. The program no longer offers gift certificates from a local gas station to residents who have gotten a job, but it does help pay for car repairs. Staff members go out of their way to accompany residents on the bus to job interviews so that residents can learn the route, and they use their own cars to drive residents to appointments. The Ramsey Action Program also helps provide transportation to and from work. A driver's education class also meets once a week at the Community Center. Residents can apply for Jobs-Plus assistance to take a behind-the-wheel training course, and welfare recipients can apply for a loan from MFIP to purchase an auto for work. Several residents have taken advantage of these opportunities to get a driver's license and buy a used car.

Other Support Services

Jobs-Plus staff are not qualified to diagnose or treat certain conditions, and so they refer residents who are suspected of having problems with substance addiction, domestic abuse, learning disabilities, or mental illness to off-site agencies. Residents are often directed to the Southeast Asian Social Adjustment Program operated by the Wilder Foundation, to African-American Family Services, and to a range of local refugee organizations for East Africans. In 2001, the Wilder Foundation also assigned an intensive case manager to Jobs-Plus who is funded by the welfare agency to work with residents who have trouble retaining jobs, often because of these problems. The case manager refers residents to off-site agencies for diagnosis and treatment but follows up personally — for instance, to make sure that residents have insurance to cover the cost of services and that they attend their appointments.

At the Mt. Airy Community Center, residents also have access to a food pantry that is operated by Neighbor-to-Neighbor, a local nonprofit agency. And, as Jobs-Plus participants, they can get clothing at several consignment shops and church-run boutiques for a nominal price or free of charge. MFIP participants get clothing vouchers that are reimbursed by Ramsey County. And a midwife and a Hmong-speaking assistant from the birth clinic at Regions Hospital sees families at her office in the Community Center.

Jobs-Plus has also sponsored an array of life management workshops to help residents retain employment and make progress toward self-sufficiency. Topics covered by the workshops have included budgeting, homeownership, banking, filing income tax returns (including information on the EITC), and regulations governing part-time employment for SSI recipients. Jobs-Plus also encourages residents to participate in workshops offered by the housing authority to prepare for homeownership. Earlier in the program, Jobs-Plus required residents to attend various life management classes in order to receive the financial incentives. But compliance was difficult to enforce; some residents found the workshops informative and helpful, whereas others resented the requirement to attend. “They shouldn’t have pushed people into [the life management workshops],” said one resident. “[E]veryone didn’t need them. And I don’t think you should tell them that it’s mandatory in order to stay on the Jobs-Plus program.”

In contrast, large numbers of foreign-born residents attend classes at the Community Center to prepare for the U.S. citizenship test. Classes are offered in both English and Hmong and are held during the day and evening. Residents fill the center’s auditorium, where the English-language class is held, and entire households have passed the citizenship test. The Hmong residents have been in a particular hurry to secure citizenship, which is required in order to qualify for ex-servicemen’s retirement benefits. The Congress granted the Hmong — who fought with the U.S. military during the Vietnam War — a special exemption to take the citizenship test using Hmong translators, but they had to do this by the end of 2002. Other foreign-born

residents at Mt. Airy Homes are also eager to get citizenship. Some have expressed concern that heightened security in the wake of the September 11 (2001) terrorist attack will lead to increased restrictions on living and working in the United States.

Financial Incentives

St. Paul was the first site in the Jobs-Plus demonstration to implement the financial incentives component of the program.¹⁰ The residents began receiving benefits in November 1998. The housing authority has worked collaboratively with the residents to develop an incentives plan that tries to reward families who work more, and to protect families who are unable to work, while minimizing rent losses to the housing authority.

In Year 1, all enrollees — including the elderly and people with disabilities — received one month of free rent up-front, regardless of whether or not they were working. (Program years refer to public housing lease years that begin on December 1.) Rents for households without working members were calculated according to the traditional HUD formula of 30 percent of adjusted household income. But the earnings of household members who were working at the time of enrollment or who subsequently began to work were totally disregarded in rent calculations that year.

In Years 2 through 5, the program has had the following features, including a series of graduated flat rents based on apartment size:

- One month of free rent to all households when they enroll;
- The option of the Jobs-Plus flat rent for working households, established annually according to the household's apartment unit size, or the traditional rent calculation of 30 percent of adjusted household income.¹¹ Flat-rent levels are graduated over the course of the four years and reflect a percentage (after utility adjustments) of the housing authority's ceiling rent, from 45 percent to 90 percent;

¹⁰For an extended examination of the financial incentives plans of the Jobs-Plus sites and the policy principles behind the program, see Miller and Riccio (2002).

¹¹As noted, the residents also have a third option: a flat rent that is available throughout the St. Paul housing authority to households with at least one working member. The authority-wide flat rents are part of the agency's efforts to implement the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act (QHWRA) of 1998, and they are the same as the agency's ceiling rents. In contrast, Jobs-Plus's flat rents are a percentage of the agency's ceiling rents, with the percentage increasing each year, beginning with Year 2 of the incentives program. Year 2 was 45 percent of the ceiling rent; Year 3 was 60 percent; Year 4 was 75 percent; and Year 5 is set at 90 percent, effective December 1, 2002. Also, a \$100 average utility allowance was subtracted from the Jobs-Plus flat rent.

- One rent-free month each year for families who show continuous employment over the year;
- A deferred rent credit of \$25 per month for each month that a household has wage income. This credit is held in escrow and is to be used for future rents after the program ends or will be provided to the household as a lump sum if they move from public housing in good standing before the program ends; and
- A safety net that allows working families who lose all their wage income to pay a minimum rent of \$25 per month for up to two months out of each calendar year.

At the end of each lease year, the housing management office informs participating households at Mt. Airy Homes about the number and value of the rent credits that they have accumulated under the Jobs-Plus incentives plan. If participating households want to continue to receive the incentives, they must reenroll the following year. They may also choose to leave the incentives program during the course of the year — if, for instance, they face cutbacks in work hours or a layoff, so that their income declines to the point that the flat rent is no longer a better deal than the traditional rent calculation. (However, households that drop out at midyear can enroll again only at the beginning of another lease year.) As a result of these regulations, the number of households enrolled in the incentives program can vary by year and can increase or decrease over the course of a year.

The financial incentives program in St. Paul entered its fourth year in December 2001. As the difference between the ceiling and the flat rents declined over the years, the management staff said that some working households shifted back to the traditional 30 percent formula. These included households headed by single female parents in low-wage or seasonal jobs who were not earning enough to make the flat rent a good deal. However — surprisingly — most of the working households preferred to remain on the financial incentives in Year 4, even in some cases where flat rents were higher than 30 percent of adjusted household income.¹² Management staff members speculated that these households might have been expecting a promotion with a raise or were moving into a job with a higher wage. And Job-Plus continues to be a good deal for enterprising households with multiple workers. However, staff do not think that households will continue to reenroll at this level during the final year of the program.

Certainly the financial incentives have been popular with the residents, who generally observed that the program encourages members of the household to get jobs and work addi-

¹²On August 27, 2002, the St. Paul Public Housing Agency reported that, during Year 4 of the incentives program, only 9 of the 151 households at Mt. Airy Homes that had at least one employed member chose the traditional 30 percent formula rather than the Jobs-Plus flat rent.

tional hours. “You know, people know three things here,” insisted one resident. “The deferred rent credit. Receiving one-month free rent. And the money you can save to buy something for yourself.” Residents have been able to accumulate savings, and more than two dozen households have purchased homes. “When I leave here,” said another resident, “I’m going to have some money to use on a down payment for my home.”

Since the inception of the Jobs-Plus incentives program, the St. Paul Public Housing Agency has shown strong and steady support for it — and ownership for its administration. This is true both of the executive director and administrative divisions at the downtown office and of the frontline housing management staff at Mt. Airy Homes. For instance, the incentives required the approval of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). After receiving HUD’s one-year approval for St. Paul’s incentives plan in September 1998, the housing authority began implementing the incentives at Mt. Airy Homes, initiating extensive outreach activities and enrolling residents with the intention of operating the program through November 30, 1999. But HUD had to withdraw its approval in the face of issues that had unexpectedly arisen “between HUD and the congressional committee that oversees HUD’s total departmental budget over how to cover the potential losses in rent revenues to local housing authorities that might result from these rent reforms.”¹³ Resolving this issue took months of negotiation and delayed the implementation of the incentives at the other Jobs-Plus sites. In St. Paul, this impasse threatened to undermine the credibility of the housing authority and Jobs-Plus with Mt. Airy residents at a critical time in the program’s introduction. “It was bad enough for them to have to wait the first time [for HUD’s approval],” said a senior housing authority official. “But then to take it all away. It was awful.” Therefore, the housing authority asked the St. Paul Public Housing Agency Board of Commissioners for permission to continue the financial incentives. Although the costs could have added up to over \$450,000 for Year 1, the board made the commitment to continue enrollment in the plan through March 31, 1999.¹⁴

The management staff at Mt. Airy Homes emphasized that this painful experience bonded them with the downtown housing authority staff over Jobs-Plus, and they have remained supportive of one another in administering the incentives and strongly committed to the project ever since. “We fought HUD together,” said a staff member. “That united downtown and here. We never fought each other. It’s not like they’re making us do Jobs-Plus or vice-versa.”

¹³Kato and Riccio (2001, p. 21).

¹⁴In late July 1999, HUD agreed to cover the housing authority’s rent revenue losses through the end of HUD’s fiscal year (September 30, 1999) by allowing the agency to tap Section 8 project reserves. The St. Paul Public Housing Agency Board of Commissioners would then take responsibility for revenue losses in October and November 1999.

Community Support for Work

As at the other Jobs-Plus sites in the demonstration, the community support for work component at Mt. Airy Homes primarily takes the form of institutionalized outreach by residents. The community outreach workers are Mt. Airy residents whose responsibilities consist mainly of going door-to-door to inform households about opportunities available to them through Jobs-Plus and other local programs for employment, training, education, and social services and to publicize community-wide activities in the housing development. For roughly five hours of work per week, the outreach workers receive a stipend from Jobs-Plus of \$100 every two weeks.

The outreach workers are assigned to different sectors of the development, although their deployment also tries to accommodate the residents' various language needs. Usually the outreach workers are required only to leave flyers in the mail slots on the doors of the units, but sometimes they are asked to knock on the doors and talk to residents. For instance, in early 2002, the outreach workers went door-to-door to remind the residents that lifetime limits on MFIP's cash assistance were scheduled to begin taking effect in July 2002 and to encourage residents who faced limits on their benefits to contact Jobs-Plus for help in filing for an extension. The outreach workers did not have to say anything complicated, since the flyers (in Hmong, Spanish, Somali, and English) described MFIP's policies on lifetime limits and the conditions for an extension of cash assistance. The Vista worker summarized the script as: "Here's the information. Think about your time limits. Are they coming up? Talk to your counselor. Find out what's going on." The outreach workers helped the staff carry out a concerted and ultimately successful effort to ensure that every resident who was facing time limits in summer 2002 applied for an extension.

The outreach workers are also required to communicate to staff any program-related concerns and ideas that residents share with them. The outreach workers can use a "rapid response form" to report residents' comments and get prompt attention from specific staff members.

The four community outreach workers at Mt. Airy Homes in July 2002 were Hmong, Egyptian, Laotian, and Somali. They represented several of the major language and cultural groups at the development, and all were bilingual. Most were working full time and/or participating in training or education, so they were exemplary role models for the other residents. Outreach workers are recruited by posting flyers to advertise the position and by asking for referrals from Jobs-Plus staff and the resident council. But the program has had a difficult time recruiting and retaining outreach workers, since many residents are working or are providing care for family members. Moreover, Mt. Airy Homes has not historically had "building captains" or similar positions. And the desire to maintain a group of outreach workers who reflect the development's ethnic diversity further complicates the recruitment effort.

The Vista worker coordinates the outreach workers. Since they are busy working, studying, and looking after families and have different schedules, she meets with them regularly on an individual basis. Early in 2001, the community organizer and the program manager provided some training to deepen the outreach workers' understanding of the Jobs-Plus program and of their outreach responsibilities. Currently, the Vista worker has developed a schedule of weekly activities to help the residents become more effective at outreach and community-building in this multicultural development. For instance, one week she showed them a videotape entitled *The Shadow of Hate: The History of Intolerance in America*, and then the group discussed race relations and the challenges that immigrants face in the United States. The Vista worker is also trying to establish a working relationship with the resident council at Mt. Airy Homes, because its support is essential for institutionalizing and sustaining Jobs-Plus among the residents.

Jobs-Plus in St. Paul regards the various community activities that it sponsors for the entire Mt. Airy development as part of its community support for work. For instance, one year Jobs-Plus organized a Wellness Day that focused on health and well-being as a major foundation for employment. Vendors who provided information, demonstrations, and coupons included alternative healing practitioners (who are very popular among the immigrants), nutritionists, health services for children, a dentist, a health insurance company that presented information about options for low-income households and how to apply for insurance, and a wellness center that offered coupons for various services and activities.

Some of the community activities that Jobs-Plus sponsors are not directly related to employment but are intended to build community by giving residents opportunities to interact across ethnic groups and generations. The quilting class that is held at the Community Center on Thursday afternoons every other week has had an enthusiastic turnout. Initially it drew younger people of all ethnic backgrounds, but members of the Hmong Women's Support Group have also become active participants. A quilting teacher instructs the classes, with assistance from a high school student who works part time as a bilingual office assistant at the Community Center. The enjoyment that the residents derive from this shared activity helps them transcend the linguistic and cultural barriers that previously kept them apart.

Conclusions

Jobs-Plus in St. Paul has succeeded in offering its benefits and services at a saturation level to the demonstration's target population of work-eligible residents. It seems unlikely that any household at Mt. Airy Homes would still be unaware of the program's financial incentives and employment services. Most households with work-eligible members are enrolled in the

program.¹⁵ Jobs-Plus continues to work to increase employment levels among the residents at Mt. Airy and to help those who are already working to stabilize their employment and improve their wages and fringe benefits.

Jobs-Plus is a valuable work support center for Mt. Airy residents, who generally agree that the financial incentives encourage employment, job retention, savings, and asset accumulation. And the St. Paul Public Housing Agency has been exemplary in its ownership and administration of the program's financial incentives component. Furthermore, in addition to offering formal employment services and group activities, Jobs-Plus assists residents promptly, flexibly, and individually with a wide range of pressing needs that can undermine their work efforts, thereby filling a critical gap in existing service systems for the working poor. The program's services try to accommodate the cultural sensitivities and practices of Mt. Airy's foreign-born residents and to address the immigrant-related problems that can undercut their employment. Efforts to assist residents on an individualized, as-needed basis in the context of a voluntary program require the staff to develop formal and informal ways to track participation and ensure that residents are making progress toward long-term goals of career advancement and self-sufficiency.

Linda Yuriko Kato is a Research Associate at Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. The author gratefully thanks the residents and the Jobs-Plus and housing management staff of Mt. Airy Homes, the collaborative members, and the St. Paul Public Housing Agency officials, who generously shared their time and experience to talk about the Jobs-Plus program and the Mt. Airy community and to review this chapter. The chapter also draws on the observations of both the former site representative, Marilyn Price, and the current site representative, Donna Wharton-Fields, as well as on the 1999 site chapter written by Sandy Gerber.

¹⁵A review of Jobs-Plus participant case files conducted by MDRC in summer 2001 found that 70 percent of the heads of households in the 1998 cohort of residents were enrolled in Jobs-Plus. The 1998 cohort refers to all residents, ages 16 to 61, whose names appear on the housing authority's 50058 forms as residents of Mt. Airy Homes in October 1998.

Chapter 7

HOPE-Plus in Seattle

Edward B. Liebow and Gabrielle O'Malley

Program Background and Highlights

Rainier Vista Garden Community is a public housing development in southeast Seattle. It joined the Jobs-Plus demonstration in 1997. Two years later, when the Seattle Housing Authority was informed that it would receive HOPE VI funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to tear down and rebuild Rainier Vista, the national Jobs-Plus managers decided to withdraw the site from the demonstration. They reasoned that the redevelopment of Rainier Vista would make it impossible to determine whether the changes that might be observed in the circumstances of residents were a result of Jobs-Plus or of the redevelopment.

Rather than signaling an end to Jobs-Plus, however, Seattle is building on the local program and using it as a foundation for resident service provision in the context of HOPE VI. The Jobs-Plus collaborative and program elements have become the core of the HOPE VI Community and Supportive Services program. The connection between the redevelopment services and the earlier demonstration is strong enough that the housing authority refers to these services, collectively, as "HOPE-Plus." A separate evaluation of the combined program's implementation and impact is under way.

As of the end of September 2002, Jobs-Plus/HOPE-Plus at Rainier Vista had enrolled 395 residents (not all of whom are still active cases) and had made 310 job placements (representing 165 unduplicated individuals). The majority of the placements have been in full-time jobs with benefits (either at the time of the placement or after a three- to six-month probationary period). According to detailed records maintained by the employment services coordinator, the average wage at placement consistently has been around \$9 per hour throughout the life of the program, and the wage at placement has ranged from \$6 per hour to \$15 per hour. (In a few exceptional cases, the starting salary has been as high as \$24 per hour.) At least 70 raises have been documented among program participants since they began working.

HOPE-Plus in Seattle still incorporates the three core components that distinguish the national Jobs-Plus demonstration's program model from other self-sufficiency initiatives that focus on public housing residents:

HOPE-Plus in Seattle: Rainier Vista

In September 1999, the Seattle Housing Authority received notice that federal HOPE VI funds would be awarded to redevelop Rainier Vista into a mixed-income housing community. In view of the dislocation of residents and the infusion of service funds that HOPE VI would bring, Rainier Vista was removed from the national Jobs-Plus demonstration. But Jobs-Plus remains the cornerstone of employment and training services at Rainier Vista and has evolved into HOPE-Plus, a community and supportive services strategy that combines physical redevelopment with the employment saturation and community-building goals of Jobs-Plus. The renamed program also includes services for residents who are outside the labor force because of age or disability.

In this ethnically and linguistically diverse housing development, HOPE-Plus draws heavily on resident outreach workers from the major linguistic groups in the community to provide outreach in the residents' own languages. Once enrolled in HOPE-Plus, residents undergo intake and assessment activities with a job coach. Participants whose English proficiency is limited work with someone who is fluent in their own language, and they can enroll in vocational English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at the Refugee Women's Alliance, a collaborating organization that serves immigrants from all over. Participants who are proficient in English are referred to the English-language job coach and receive help with résumé preparation, job searches, and training to overcome barriers to employment, to meet employers' expectations, and to develop appropriate workplace behavior. Additional training is available to help residents who want to start their own businesses or who seek to build financial management and household budgeting skills. Professional help preparing income tax returns is available to residents each year free of charge. The job developer works with employers to find suitable positions for residents. Job coaches also follow up with retention and wage progression services.

The Rainier Vista Leadership Team (RVLT) — a council of 13 residents incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation — shares managerial responsibilities for the program, including the Job Resources Center. The RVLT receives financial and technical support from foundations and sources in the public and private sectors. It has contracts for job-coaching services and for the resident outreach workers. It has grant support to provide translators for community meetings and to develop language- and culture-specific employment training modules. The RVLT also manages the Community Shares program, a service exchange system designed to increase collaboration and support networks in the community. Based on the "Time Dollar" model, participants receive credit for contributing services to the community (for example, for attending meetings, serving on committees, providing transportation, and tutoring). In exchange for credits accumulated, participants may then request services from other residents or may exchange their credits for a \$50 reduction in rent or for material resources, such as a personal computer.

The financial incentives program at Rainier Vista involves decoupling rent increases from gains in earned income while creating interest-bearing escrow accounts into which the housing authority deposits a portion of forgone rent increase. In addition, HOPE-Plus supports Individual Development Accounts that match residents' savings for the purposes of education, small-business startup, and home ownership.

- **Employment-related activities and services**, including pre- and postemployment support, such as job search, education, training, job development, and case management, along with such support services as child care and transportation assistance
- **Enhanced financial incentives to work** that reduce the amount by which residents' rent increases when their earnings grow
- **Community support for work**, fostering work-related information-sharing, peer support, and mutual aid both among residents and with people living outside public housing

The design of the Jobs-Plus demonstration model is further distinguished by its aim to adapt these components to local conditions through the efforts of a local interagency and resident collaborative and to target them toward all working-age residents of the development. The national demonstration's designers hope that "saturating" a housing development with services, incentives, and social supports will result in a substantial majority of working-age residents' becoming steadily employed.

The Housing Development and Its Population

The housing units at Rainier Vista were originally built during World War II to help house the booming Boeing Company's aircraft workforce. The Seattle Housing Authority took over the property in 1942. Significant renovations of roofing, exterior siding, and insulation were completed in 1994, and new water and sewer lines were installed in 1997. However, projected maintenance and upgrade costs prompted the housing authority to decide that it would be more cost-effective to tear down the existing units and rebuild on the same site. The Seattle Housing Authority received a HOPE VI grant from HUD to pay for much of the redevelopment. The redevelopment plan will:

- Replace Rainier Vista's worn-out housing with new units that better meet current needs.
- Result in no net loss of rental units for very low-income households in Seattle, although some units will be replaced outside of Rainier Vista, in other parts of Seattle. (Some residents who have moved away from Rainier Vista as part of the HOPE VI relocation have chosen to do so permanently, moving to other public housing communities, to Section 8 apartments, or into the private market as renters or, in some cases, as homeowners.)

- Make homeownership possible for 200 low-income and working households. (These units will not exclusively be for public housing residents, but the Seattle Housing Authority will market them to residents of Rainier Vista and other public housing developments in Seattle.)
- Create a mixed-income community that is integrated with, rather than set apart from, the surrounding neighborhood. The redevelopment plan helps implement the more encompassing Neighborhood Plan by emphasizing transit-oriented development adjacent to the Columbia City light rail station.

The Community and Supportive Services program is a key feature of the redevelopment process. This is a combination of social, economic, and health services for Rainier Vista households during the potentially disruptive time when redevelopment requires temporary or permanent relocation of the residents and resettlement for those who choose to return to the redeveloped Rainier Vista.

As of September 2002, the west side of the development stood vacant. In September 1999 — when HUD informed the Seattle Housing Authority that it would be awarded a HOPE VI redevelopment grant — there were 481 units and 450 households at Rainier Vista. Redevelopment is to take place in two main stages, with the apartments on the west side of the development being vacated first; when new construction is completed on the west side, then the east side will be vacated for demolition and rebuilding. About 205 households were living at Rainier Vista as of September 2002, while about 120 households had moved to other low-income public housing, including the new complex for seniors at NewHolly, either permanently or temporarily. No new households have been permitted to move into Rainier Vista since November 1999. Of the households that left Rainier Vista, about 100 households took Section 8 vouchers and found rental units, many within southeast Seattle; 9 purchased homes; and about 20 moved out on their own — for instance, into the residences of family members or into unsubsidized rental units or nursing homes.

Residents who were participants in Jobs-Plus’s financial incentives program were given preference to remain at Rainier Vista, along with seniors and disabled residents, so that they could retain ready access to services.¹ Approximately 40 households left the financial incentives

¹The Seattle Housing Authority worked with the Rainier Vista Leadership Team (the development’s resident association) to establish priorities for permitting households to remain on-site that would be supported by both the management and the residents. The plan that they jointly developed gave priority to seniors and disabled residents for one-bedroom units available on the east side of Rainier Vista, and it gave priority to the participants of the financial incentives program for three-bedroom units on the east side (since fewer units were available than there were families who wanted to stay on-site and who needed that many bedrooms). All two-bedroom households were accommodated on-site. Since Rainier Vista has no four-bedroom units, all families needing these larger units had to be accommodated off-site.

program, choosing to relocate away from Rainier Vista temporarily or permanently as a result of HOPE VI (not including the four financial incentives participants who purchased homes).² Of the households that remained at Rainier Vista, 65 moved from the west side of Martin Luther King, Jr. Way to the east side. Even among those who stayed, then, many have new neighbors. Residents have been heard to say that, before the relocation, many nearby neighbors spoke the same language. Now those who speak their language are spread all over the development, and the neighbors who formerly were closest may be several blocks away.

As of September 2002, the redevelopment effort was awaiting the outcome of a lawsuit whose plaintiffs charged that the housing authority failed to follow the proper environmental impact assessment process that must be completed before redevelopment plans can be implemented. The housing authority is in the midst of preparing permit applications for the City of Seattle to review. Overall, the housing authority hopes to have its permits in hand by December 2002, depending on the lawsuit's settlement. Demolition might begin early in 2003, followed first by installation of new infrastructure and then housing construction.

The residents of Rainier Vista encompass a variety of cultures and nationalities and speak as many as 20 different languages. The immigrants have come mostly from Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam) and East Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia). It has been a major challenge for the program to accommodate the range of languages and cultural sensitivities of the residents in its service and incentives offerings. Divisions among these groups are visibly reflected in the differences among the groups that use various programs and activities. For instance, youth who have different cultural backgrounds often do not attend activities together.

Program Infrastructure

Staffing and Management

The Seattle Housing Authority employs five full-time HOPE-Plus staff members at Rainier Vista: an employment services coordinator, a job developer, a financial incentives coordinator, a community builder, and a community liaison.

- The **employment services coordinator** is responsible for the employment and training services at Rainier Vista.

²There were other financial incentives participants who purchased homes and moved out of the development before the onset of HOPE VI.

- The **job developer** is responsible for working with employers to identify suitable positions for residents and to identify residents who are potentially suitable candidates for these positions.
- The **financial incentives coordinator** is responsible for managing Rainier Vista’s rent incentives program and the Individual Development Accounts for which residents are eligible.
- The **community builder** organizes events, celebrations, and a service-exchange program called “Community Shares”; the community builder also oversees the work of the community liaison.
- The **community liaison** coordinates the work of the resident outreach and orientation specialists and helps organize community events and celebrations.

A full-time job coach — hired through a contract with the Rainier Vista Leadership Team — is an important member of the program’s staff. She provides job readiness training, supervises the Job Resources Center, and assists residents with job searches and with retention and promotion issues.

The housing authority also has a contract with the Refugee Women’s Alliance (ReWA) for the services of four part-time bilingual job coaches who specialize in working with residents who speak Amharic, Oromo, Vietnamese, Cambodian, or Somali. The contract for these coaches was funded by a Drug Elimination Program grant. Inasmuch as the U.S. Congress has discontinued such funding, this contract was renewed for six additional months using a combination of resident services and HOPE VI funding.³ Through a contract with the housing authority, ReWA has also hired a part-time instructor in vocational English as a Second Language (ESL).

The program relies regularly on the assistance of four or five resident outreach and orientation specialists to inform residents about program services and benefits and to publicize activities. The resident outreach specialists represent the major language groups of Rainier Vista and are paid through HOPE VI funds. All of the resident outreach specialists, one of the ReWA job coaches, and the community liaison live at Rainier Vista.

The employment services coordinator, community builder, and financial incentives coordinator are all housing authority employees and report to the agency’s acting Community and Supportive Services administrator. The housing authority has been reorganized over the period

³The employment services coordinator reports that she will work closely with ReWA and other service providers in the coming months to support planning for the long-term sustainability of employment services at Rainier Vista.

that Jobs-Plus has been transformed into HOPE-Plus. Currently, the staff members of the former Resident Services division who are working on services at HOPE VI sites have been subsumed under the Development division, which is responsible for overseeing HOPE VI-sponsored redevelopment. In practical terms, this administrative change has delegated a fair amount of authority from the central office to the HOPE-Plus staff.⁴

Because of the reorganization and redevelopment plans, the following housing authority staff members who were not previously involved with Jobs-Plus are now assisting with HOPE-Plus services:

- Development staff are trying to ensure that the needs of households and service providers are reflected in architectural and site planning.
- Policy specialists are trying to configure the affordable homeownership program.

The housing authority, in collaboration with the Rainier Vista Leadership Team, also hired a third-party contractor to focus specifically on assessing the residents' relocation needs and on counseling residents about their temporary and permanent relocation choices. The housing authority has another HOPE VI redevelopment project under way near Rainier Vista, and pooling of resources between the two housing development staffs has gotten under way since Rainier Vista's participation in the national the Jobs-Plus demonstration ended.

Collaboration with a variety of service organizations and the Rainier Vista Leadership Team was a cornerstone of program planning and service delivery under the Jobs-Plus demonstration,⁵ and collaboration continues under HOPE-Plus. Currently, the organizations that participate in the HOPE-Plus collaborative include the members of Jobs-Plus's collaborative along with several other local organizations that have a stake in HOPE VI. The members include the Seattle Housing Authority, the Rainier Vista Leadership Team, the Boys and Girls Club, Youth Tutoring (Catholic Community Services), RainierPark Medical Clinic/Puget Sound Neighborhood Health Clinics, the Children's Museum Art Program, PAAC (Promoting Assets Across Cultures, which is a joint venture of two community-based organizations, Asian Counseling and Referral Services and Horn of Africa Services), the Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA, which is both a collaborative member and a contractor), the Girl Scouts Council of Seattle, Seattle Neighborhood Group, Neighborhood House, the Seattle Police Department, the Seattle Community College District,

⁴The other staff members of the former Resident Services division who are working on services in non-HOPE VI sites and high-rises for senior residents have been subsumed under the Operations department of the Seattle Housing Authority.

⁵For more information on the collaborative's organization and activities, see Liebow and Conley (1999) and Kato and Riccio (2001).

Washington Mutual Savings and Loan Bank, and others. Participants from several internal organizational units of the housing authority have also become involved because of the land-purchasing, redevelopment, contracting, and financial activities associated with HOPE VI construction.

The Jobs-Plus collaborative was organized around the three main Jobs-Plus components: employment and training services, financial incentives, and community support for work. In its new configuration, the focus of the HOPE-Plus collaborative has expanded to include the entire Rainier Vista community, rather than focusing exclusively on workforce participants and their families. The collaborative now has four working committees that meet on an ad hoc basis to assist in policymaking and program guidance: Employment and Training Services, Financial Incentives and Homeownership, Youth and Children, and Senior and Disabled Services.

The Rainier Vista Leadership Team (RVLT) is an important member of the collaborative and sends at least one representative to all the committee meetings. The RVLT continues to vigilantly guard the residents' right to participate in planning decisions. The housing authority recognizes that the RVLT provides a forum in which an array of residents' perspectives will be given respectful airing.

The RVLT continues to be a powerful mechanism for promoting leadership and self-sufficiency. In 1999, the RVLT incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and hired an executive director to help with management and fundraising. The RVLT has taken over the management of the Job Resources Center, and it contracts with the English-language job coach. The housing authority provided the RVLT with its own office space because the RVLT believed that it was very important to have an identity separate from the housing authority, whose relationship with the residents is often adversarial. The board members take evident pride in representing the community, and they try to put aside personal differences to represent the best interests of the community. Although the RVLT has had to grapple with formidable challenges to get to this point, it is now (hopefully) a sustainable organization.

Moreover, the residents now have an official voice in the community, and the RVLT is forcing the housing authority to take residents' input seriously, especially with respect to HOPE VI. Previously, the residents had no way of holding the housing authority accountable for the commitments it had made. The community manager said that she has seen a real change in the relationship between residents and the housing authority since Jobs-Plus came into the community. She is now regularly invited to RVLT board meetings and believes that the board members feel comfortable speaking their mind in her presence.

The full collaborative has not met since October 2001. There was more reason for the collaborative to meet in the early stages of HOPE-Plus, when policy was being planned and there were discussions about what the new Rainier Vista would look like after the redevelopment. Now that the planning is substantially complete, collaborative members are focusing on

the coordination of services and have found that meeting one-on-one or in other venues as needed and appropriate to address particular issues is more effective than meeting with the full collaborative. For example, the executive directors of the Boys and Girls Club and Neighborhood House have been talking about a capital campaign to build a facility on-site. They have been meeting with the housing authority and other collaborative members about partnerships to leverage available resources. Unlike the housing authority, which receives federal and state funds for its capital expenditures, the nonprofit service organizations must raise the funds to build the facilities that will serve the redeveloped neighborhood. The time line for raising sufficient capital is extended and requires several years of planning.

Many collaborative members also attend a monthly interagency meeting, although the focus of these monthly meetings is not specifically about HOPE-Plus. The Rainier Vista HOPE-Plus community builder usually attends these meetings and serves as the link with the collaborative partners at Rainier Vista.⁶ The interagency meeting is the primary vehicle for discussions among those who are not on-site. The people who are on-site meet with each other frequently as part of daily interactions.

One of the outstanding challenges facing the collaborative members as of September 2002 is how they can come together to look for funding and to support each other. The housing authority is working with the collaborative partners to identify service strategies that will be sustainable, given the end of the federal grant from the Drug Elimination Program and the limited amount of HOPE VI funds available to support resident services. For the collaborative's smaller service providers, the current economic climate has been especially disorienting. Previously, the small providers' role has been to address the needs that the housing authority identified. Now the housing authority is asking its partners: "What should we be doing? You identify the needs for us." This has proved to be challenging for some of the service providers who are not set up to identify needs.⁷

Facilities

The HOPE-Plus program office occupies what was formerly a duplex apartment building in the center of Rainier Vista's remaining development. All the current HOPE-Plus staff work in the program office except for the financial incentives coordinator, who is located in the site management office next door. The Rainier Vista Leadership Team and the Job Resources

⁶The HOPE-Plus community builder also works with the community builders of the housing authority's developments that are being rebuilt with HOPE VI funds — Rainier Vista, High Point, and NewHolly — to share ideas, resources, and lessons learned from their redevelopment experiences.

⁷The employment services coordinator observed that internal discussions are also occurring within the Seattle Housing Authority about the nature and scope of the agency's role in providing services to residents and what these services should be.

Center occupy another former duplex apartment building that is across a small walkway from the program office. The building that houses the RVLТ and the Job Resources Center also has office space, a conference room, a classroom, and an area where eight public-access computer workstations are networked.

As of September 2002, the Rainier Vista Boys and Girls Club and Neighborhood House were planning to build big new buildings on-site. Providence Elder Care will provide housing and services on-site. And Housing Resources Group, in partnership with AIDS Housing of Washington, is planning housing for individuals with disabilities. Their plan includes some space for services and retail businesses. ReWA will have a new building on the northern boundary of the development. RainierPark Medical Clinic will remain in its current location, about three blocks east of the development. Other service organizations are still discussing whether or not to locate on-site.

One key difference between the current situation and what is planned is that, in the future, service organizations will have to pay more than a nominal rental fee for any housing authority facility space that they occupy. It remains unclear to some organizations whether they will be able to cover their increased operating expenses while fulfilling their missions, which for some may be more encompassing in scope than only serving public housing residents.

Program Flow

Recruitment

Jobs-Plus used an event-based approach in its early recruitment efforts. The staff made themselves visible at public events such as Crime Night Out and cultural celebrations that occurred at various times during the year. Jobs-Plus also relied on the distribution of printed materials and on personal communications, including testimonials from residents with early success stories.

The resident outreach and orientation specialists — who speak the major languages used by foreign-born residents at Rainier Vista — played an important role in informing and engaging members of the various language groups. They have also been very active in communicating HOPE VI relocation information and other changes that HOPE VI would entail.

As of September 2002, HOPE-Plus had not done any significant recruitment in recent months. Staff members feel that Rainier Vista has reached the saturation point in terms of residents' awareness of the program. And new people are not moving into Rainier Vista because of the HOPE VI relocation activities. The staff believe that almost everyone who wants to work and

is able to work is working. However, the program has had a few new enrollees in 2002 — primarily, additional members of a household that already had someone enrolled in HOPE-Plus.

Formerly, the Jobs-Plus financial incentives had brought participants into the program's employment and training services. Households would come for their annual rent review, and if their earned income had increased their rent obligation, the housing authority would refer them to the Jobs-Plus rent-policy coordinator, who would talk to them about enrolling in Jobs-Plus to take advantage of its financial incentives. In March 2001, however, enrollment in the Jobs-Plus rent incentives program was halted.

Intake and Enrollment

Although intake is primarily the responsibility of the job coaches, both they and the job developer can enroll a resident in HOPE-Plus and can complete an assessment of the individual's readiness for work. A resident who enrolls in HOPE-Plus is asked to complete a set of enrollment forms and to provide some additional background information. A job coach or the job developer may assist the resident with the intake process and may conduct an informal assessment of the enrollee's English-speaking and comprehension skills during the intake interview. The enrollment package for HOPE-Plus includes:

- An intake form (designed to resemble a generic job application form) that asks for identifying information and the enrollee's status in terms of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and also covers his or her education, training, and work history;
- A request for legal identification (such as a driver's license) and documentation of eligibility to work in the United States (for example, a Social Security card or a photocopy of a "green card");
- A HOPE-Plus membership agreement;
- An action plan that the enrollee and the job coach develop together.

There have not been many enrollments in HOPE-Plus since October 2001, when the relocation began at Rainier Vista. The HOPE-Plus staff members continue to enroll some new participants, but their primary efforts have been directed at providing services to residents who have been ongoing participants and at engaging enrolled residents who have not been very active.

Assessment

Either the job developer or a job coach can assess a resident's readiness for work. Generally, the job developer or a job coach will begin assessing the participant informally right

away. For instance, during an initial discussion, the job coach or job developer is likely to assess the participant's English language ability, expectations, skills, and work history. The job coach or job developer observes how the participant fills out the intake forms as a way to assess the client's English proficiency and marketability as a potential employee.

Each of the job coaches and the job developer has a slightly different approach to assessment. The English-language job coach's first step is "to talk with someone to establish a connection," to get some idea of the person's competencies and goals. She refers to her assessments as "asset-based assessments." When she talks with residents, she tries to get them "to identify skills they have that they didn't even know they had." The REWA job coaches also informally assess clients' skills by asking them about their previous paid and unpaid work activities.

If the assessment suggests that the participant is not yet ready for work — for example, if English language proficiency is considered a problem — then the resident will be referred to the appropriate programs to improve his or her job readiness. Residents who are assessed as ready for work will be assisted in such job readiness activities as one-on-one interview preparation, résumé construction, and job search. In practice, even those with limited English are often placed in employment because they cannot afford to not work and they need to gain work experience; several participants receive ESL instruction or tutoring to improve their language skills while they are working.

Job coaches work with participants to produce an action plan. This plan aims to help identify any issues that might interfere with the resident's ability to obtain and remain on the job. For example, if a participant needs assistance with child care, the job coach will help make the necessary arrangements. Job coaches may use this planning activity as an opportunity to try to understand how the resident thinks, and they note things like eye contact and communication skills. The English-language job coach also uses this conversation to develop marketing statements that incorporate the taken-for-granted skills of the resident and that express them in ways that will resonate with employers.

In addition to assessing skill levels and language proficiency, the job developer also assesses whether the people who come to him are "emotionally ready" for work. When he begins working with participants who have had very little employment experience in this country, the job developer tries to give them a realistic idea of the demands on their time that working will entail. If at the end of that discussion they decide that they do not want to work, he lets them know that they can always come back and talk with him if they change their mind. He might also mention a few of the residents who have decided to go to work, appealing to peer pressure and fostering the culture of work. The job developer wants to make sure that people are psychologically and emotionally prepared for the commitment of staying with a job, since his relationship with local businesses will be negatively affected if too many people leave their jobs shortly

after being placed. If residents want to work, then the job developer will help them explore the kind of schedule that best fits their life and the kinds of options that they have.

Job Readiness and Job Search

Individualized job readiness assistance helps to accommodate the wide array of residents' languages, work experience backgrounds, and levels of literacy and English proficiency — as well as their varying work schedules, now that so many are employed. Participants in HOPE-Plus receive one-on-one counseling and instruction from the job coach and/or the job developer, and at the Job Resources Center they also take part in activities about basic workplace attitudes and skills. Because this process is so dynamic and individualized, the number of residents who have participated in job preparation activities is not closely tracked.

The contract with ReWA originally included a bilingual job club to provide job readiness assistance for foreign-born residents. But now that many residents are working, ReWA has developed a program to provide vocational ESL support on a more customized basis that accommodates participants' schedules and English proficiency levels.

Individualized job search assistance works best at Rainier Vista because the residents' backgrounds and needs vary so greatly. Some people need a lot more support than others in filling out applications and arranging and attending interviews. Others need little help beyond brushing up a résumé or looking up job leads.

Residents are often directed to the Job Resources Center for job search assistance. They can get help from the English-language job coach and from the part-time assistant in the computer lab, where residents have access to eight computer workstations with high-speed Internet access. The English-language job coach has identified and bookmarked several job search Web sites for the residents to use. She also posts job openings that come to her from various listserves and local employers. Residents might also be referred to the job developer, who has been successful in finding employment for participants whose English skills are limited.

The job coaches and the job developer help participants fill out a job application or construct a generic model to use for future applications. The job developer looks at the work history portion of the application to get an idea of the resident's expectations of employment and the support services that might be needed. Because many of his clients are foreign-born, they may need more individualized attention than would be necessary and appropriate for someone who is native-born.

The staff also help participants construct résumés and cover letters. This presents another opportunity to assess participants' English proficiency and their ability to market themselves to employers. The staff point out concrete ways to use one's entire biography in promot-

ing employment-related skills and experiences. Although the ReWA job coaches also help residents draft résumés and cover letters, participants often look to the English-language job coach or to the job developer for assistance in refining these documents. The English-language job coach has particularly advanced skills in developing résumés. Whenever a client comes to her at the Job Resources Center, she creates a folder on the computer and puts that person's résumé and cover letter in it. Residents continue to call on her for years, asking for a copy of the résumé that she helped them to write.

The staff sometimes also accompany participants to job interviews. The job developer estimates that he attends about 95 percent of clients' interviews. He tries to give people a few phrases that will help them make a good impression, and, during the interview, he reassures the potential employer that he will be available to iron out any difficulties that might arise.

The job coaches and the job developer have provided job search assistance to more than half the residents who are enrolled in HOPE-Plus.

Job Development and Job Creation

The job coaches and the job developer at Rainier Vista have established relationships with local employers who sometimes call them about job opportunities for HOPE-Plus participants. The job developer is especially proactive in cultivating relationships with firms, looking for ones that provide relatively good wages and fringe benefits.⁸ The job developer also establishes new relationships through cold calls and visits to employers that he identifies by looking through the Washington State Metro Business Directory.

Efforts by the job developer to establish preferential hiring relationships with local employers have been stymied in the past by the lack of a large enough pool of residents at Rainier Vista to provide the employers with qualified candidates whenever they have job openings. This has been more of a problem since the HOPE VI relocation began, in October 2001, and the pool of work-eligible residents at Rainier Vista has decreased further. The job developer feels that the residents who are most capable and most interested in working have already found jobs. However, the job developer can now also assist residents of the nearby NewHolly public housing development, thereby increasing the pool of potential job applicants.

⁸The employment services coordinator observes that the average wage at placement (of \$9 per hour) is an achievement, given that many placements involve individuals whose English skills and/or work histories are limited. Moreover, it is notable that the average wage at placement for HOPE-Plus participants has not dropped even as the economy has slowed down. And the program has been able to maintain its focus on securing positions with fringe benefits, although — given the economic slowdown — it may now take longer for residents who are in job search to secure those positions.

Walsh Construction, a local firm, has a HUD contract to build the HOPE VI housing at Rainier Vista and is obligated by that contract to hire public housing residents. The HOPE-Plus job developer has placed Rainier Vista residents with this company at other nearby construction sites, and he anticipates several more job opportunities in the future, as the construction of HOPE VI housing at Rainier Vista begins.

As of September 2002, the abatement and demolition work on the vacant units at Rainier Vista has been delayed by a lawsuit filed by the Seattle Displacement Coalition and “Friends of Rainier Vista.” These plaintiffs argue that the housing authority failed to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and complete an environmental assessment on what can be considered a “major federal action.” The housing authority did comply with the State of Washington’s Environmental Protection Act, but this was not sufficient, in the plaintiffs’ view. The net effect of the lawsuit, however, has been to delay demolition and construction activities and to keep several residents from getting anticipated jobs in the various construction trades.

Education and Training

HOPE-Plus participants have access to education and training classes both on-site at Rainier Vista and through referrals to off-site programs. On-site classes and workshops have offered instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL), U.S. citizenship, child care, and basic computing. Participants attend local community and technical colleges and community-based organizations for instruction in ESL, for a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, and for vocational training — for instance, to become a child care provider or a Certified Nursing Assistant. One staff member emphasized, however, that some jobs, such as hotel housekeeping, can be secured without such training: “There is no point to putting someone into a multiweek training program to train them how to make a bed. It only takes 20 minutes to learn that.” Altogether, about 90 enrolled residents have participated in ESL or in other education, and about 80 have participated in vocational training (either short-term or longer, certificate programs.)

The job developer and the job coaches encourage participants to continue to enhance their skills through training and education while they are working. Many foreign-born residents need greater proficiency in English to advance into better jobs. It is often difficult, however, to pursue training at the end of a workday, in the face of household and family responsibilities. And staff members believe that the participants need work-related ESL classes (rather than more generalized language instruction) that can equip participants to get jobs in specific industries.

As a prerequisite for enrolling in the Individual Development Account (IDA) program, HOPE-Plus participants must complete a course in general financial management. Then, before they can purchase the asset that is their stated IDA savings goal — whether it be education,

small-business startup, or homeownership — they must take training that is specific to this asset. The general financial management course has been offered on-site; the asset-specific training is arranged through referrals to specialized training providers. About 20 residents have enrolled in the IDA program, although more have participated in the financial skills course since it was first offered in September 2001.

Job Retention and Career Advancement

HOPE-Plus approaches job retention as a multidimensional effort that needs to address workplace problems as well as any domestic issues that may pose retention barriers for working residents. The HOPE-Plus staff cited the following as being fairly common problems that can undermine a resident's ability to keep a job:

- Surprise and dismay over how much time work takes
- Domestic pressure from a man in the household for the woman to quit her job
- Domestic abuse
- Psychological problems
- Alcoholism or drug addiction/abuse
- A newborn child
- Child care issues
- A household breakup in which a working member moves far from the job (or even ends up in a shelter)
- Cultural issues (such as required clothing, the ability to pray at the jobsite, and gender or ethnic discrimination)

Sometimes working residents need additional skills to perform their tasks in the workplace, or they have problems with a boss or coworker. But often problems outside the workplace interfere with their employment. For instance, a staff member pointed to the importance of addressing parents' concerns about their children and teens: "[W]hen you're talking about job retention, you need to keep the children busy. If parents are worried about what their children are doing, or if there are behavior issues, that is a distraction for parents at work." One mother almost left her job as an office housekeeper because she was so worried about leaving her teenage daughter at home while she worked. The daughter had recently decided to leave her gang, and the gang members were coming to the house and threatening her. A job coach worked with the woman, her daughter, the housing authority, and the Seattle Police Department to arrange a

situation that would be safer for the woman's daughter and would contribute to the mother's peace of mind, thereby helping the mother to keep her job. "The family approach makes more sense than an individual approach," emphasized a staff member, "especially when it comes to retention. Whether or not a person is able to stay on a job is often related to a whole variety of complex family issues."

The residents of Rainier Vista seek advice from the HOPE-Plus staff on an individual basis concerning a range of job retention issues. Staff members help the residents identify the problem, approach it from different angles, and explore ways to address it — for instance, through a particular service or class. The staff have developed a positive reputation in the community for being able to provide prompt, individualized attention to a wide range of problems as they arise. The job coaches and the job developer each pointed out that when "something happens job-wise, it needs immediate attention — People don't need to be referred to somewhere else; they need the issue to be dealt with." For example, residents may need time away from work to deal with creditors or go to a doctor's appointment or class, but they may have difficulty negotiating time off, especially if they are new employees. The staff members help work out such problems — for example, by calling to change the time of an appointment or by persuading an employer to accommodate a class schedule. The job developer has been known to drive residents to wherever they need to go to take care of their business as quickly as possible. In assisting this way, the staff make every effort to coach residents and to demonstrate ways to handle such situations. And when the staff make phone calls on behalf of residents, it is from the perspective of teaching them how to handle such situations in the future.

The staff maintain contact with working residents through a variety of formal and informal means. Staff members may make regular phone calls to the residents and may visit their homes or have casual conversations with them around the development and at community events. Staff members also hear about working residents through conversations with family members or other residents. One job coach said that she encourages U.S.-born clients to contact her if they need help; she realizes that some residents are sensitive to the fact that so many agencies are "in their business" and that they would prefer to initiate contact themselves. The staff may also call the employer after a resident has been placed — if the employer and resident permit this — to find out how the new employee is working out. The staff try to address any communications problems early, before these escalate, and they offer the employer the program's assistance in working with the resident.

However, the staff can generally rely on the residents to keep in contact with the program and to ask for help — sometimes even after they have moved out of Rainier Vista. The staff believe that people keep coming back to the program because of the good service they receive. There is an open-door policy, and often a few minutes on the phone can resolve people's problems.

In general, the HOPE-Plus staff believe that assisting with career advancement is their greatest challenge. Patterns of career advancement and wage progression vary by employment sector and locality. For example, advancement opportunities in the health care sector are different from those in information technology, manufacturing, or retailing. Furthermore, the residents are not always “in the loop” about what an employee needs to do in order to advance in their firm. The HOPE-Plus employment services coordinator has been participating in the King County Workforce Development Council’s wage progression committee, both to articulate the needs of the diverse populations in and around Rainier Vista and to strategize with other committee members about opportunities to increase wage progression and job stability for those who are not currently served in great numbers by the county’s workforce development system.

The job developer is the staff member who is primarily involved in helping residents to get better jobs. It is a major challenge to motivate working residents to consider career advancement and to take the steps needed to develop skills toward this goal. Although a firm may have an upward career path, most working residents need to change employers to move up. Sometimes people become comfortable with a job and do not want to move on, even if their wages and fringe benefits are not good — for instance, because family members, friends, and neighbors are employed at the same firm. Foreign-born residents often need to improve their English skills to get better jobs. The job coach or the job developer might explore whether the idea of being able to buy a house in five years will motivate someone to think about looking for another job or going back to school or training. As of September 2002, about 250 to 275 residents have received job retention and career advancement services.

English proficiency is a major barrier to career advancement for many foreign-born working residents at Rainier Vista. However, there is often a gap between the ESL classes that ReWA offers on-site — which provide very basic instruction — and the more advanced classes that are offered at community colleges. The employment services coordinator observed that sometimes residents “get stuck in the middle” of the spectrum in ESL instruction and are unable to get the language skills needed for success in the workplace. ReWA has recently hired a new ESL program manager who will work with the HOPE-Plus job developer to revamp the English classes and provide intermediate-level, workplace-oriented ESL instruction.

Support Services

Many of the employment support services that HOPE-Plus provides have been discussed in the preceding section about job retention and career advancement. Once more, the staff work with the residents on an individualized and flexible basis to address the wide range of domestic and workplace issues that can undercut their efforts to secure and retain employment.

In addition to helping residents purchase uniforms and tools for work or finding transportation and child care options, the staff emphasize the importance of stabilizing the family to provide a foundation for residents' efforts to secure and retain employment. This often requires the staff to address the problems of someone other than the legal residents in the household, such as a domestic partner who lives in the unit but is not on the lease. For instance, a woman's partner may not approve of her working outside the home or may have substance abuse problems that are affecting the entire household. The staff may help both the listed and the unlisted members of the households to access health care, substance abuse treatment, domestic abuse counseling, parenting support, legal services, assistance with budgeting and money management, or whatever other help they need.

Residents who have problems with physical health are referred to RainierPark Medical Clinic or Harborview Medical Clinic, but it is harder to assist residents who have mental health problems, because they are often unwilling to be guided into the mental health system. One job coach has been asking people who may fall into this category whether they have a spiritual advisor to whom they can turn for help. Another job coach used to work quite a bit with the Department of Social and Human Services before many of her clients were working, and she also makes referrals to Neighborhood House for help with substance abuse problems. More recently, she has been working with Seattle Public Schools to help clients deal with child-related issues.

The HOPE-Plus staff play an invaluable role in assisting with the complicated and lengthy paperwork needed to access the services of other agencies, since eligibility requirements and bureaucratic procedures can be daunting, especially for the foreign-born residents. For instance, the welfare agency requires monthly reporting of work activity, and application forms must be read and filled out to receive subsidized child care benefits. Other benefits, such as Food Stamps or utility assistance, require still another set of forms. Helping residents work with the housing authority is part of this effort — for instance, in dealing with rent or utility problems. About two-thirds of the enrolled residents of Rainier Vista have received support services in one or more of these areas.

The staff assist and track residents by means of both individual appointments at the HOPE-Plus offices and informal interactions while walking around the site during and outside program hours. Staff members provide some services themselves but refer residents to outside agencies as appropriate. They often make phone calls or accompany participants to the referral agencies to ensure that clients do not “fall through the cracks.”

It is hard to specify an “average” caseload for the staff at Rainier Vista. There are different job coaches for the different language groups, and the HOPE VI relocation has produced dramatic changes in the resident population. However, for the smaller language groups (for example, Oromo, Cambodian), the job coaches each work about one-third time (in addition to

their ReWA responsibilities), and they each carry a caseload of about 20 residents. For the bigger language groups (for example, Vietnamese, Amharic), the caseloads are larger — about 60 for a half-time job coach and about 150 for the full-time job coach. The larger caseloads also reflect a greater range in the intensity of services; that is, some of those participants may be in touch with the program only a couple times per year, whereas others may make regular contact.

The job coaches, job developer, and employment services coordinator work as a team, meeting every two weeks to talk about case staffing, to summarize what has been going on, and to follow up clients who concern them. In addition, the job coaches and job developer prepare monthly updates for the employment services coordinator, describing their activities for that month — including new enrollees, referrals to training programs, and jobs lost or found. The employment services coordinator then enters the update forms into the HOPE-Plus portion of a very large Microsoft Access database, and a printout of the activity report is placed in clients' files.⁹

The information that HOPE-Plus collects enables staff to identify enrollees and their usage of services and benefits (including the financial incentives program), the number of times they have accessed emergency rent, their involvement in the Community Shares service-exchange program, whether they have moved away from Rainier Vista and where they are currently living, their TANF status at the time of enrollment, and their employment history (including employers, wages, benefits, raises, and promotions).¹⁰

Financial Incentives

A feature that distinguishes the Jobs-Plus demonstration model from other employment initiatives is the change that it institutes in public housing rent policies to remove the purported

⁹The database also includes information about where each relocated Rainier Vista resident went, exit-interview information, and whether the resident declined further services. In addition to the reports that the employment services coordinator sends to MDRC, she sends out monthly reports to the acting administrator of Community Support Services at the housing authority as well as a quarterly report to HUD, for HOPE VI. The tracking system was developed through an iterative process and in partnership with several organizations. A temporary employee with the Rainier Vista Leadership Team developed a very simple preliminary database, but the program switched over to a database designed by the Workforce Development Council staff (then known as the Private Industry Council). The employment services coordinator has since modified the database to better match the program's needs.

¹⁰Neither staff nor residents have consistently used Income Calculator, a Web-based software program provided by MDRC to help staff explain and "sell" employment to the residents along with the financial incentives. Either Internet access is not available in the places where job coaches prefer to interact with Rainier Vista residents, or staff members regard Income Calculator as not being conducive to the way they interact. The job coaches and job developer all believe that the software can be a useful self-study tool, but they apparently do little to encourage its use. Indeed, visits to Seattle's Income Calculator site from all sources (not just Rainier Vista residents) have ranged from 1 to 17 sessions per month, with an average of about 9 sessions per month from July 2001 to September 2002.

disincentive associated with increases in earned income.¹¹ The HOPE VI redevelopment introduced the possibility of affordable homeownership for qualified low-income residents by giving them a chance to create an Individual Development Account (IDA) — an additional incentive to increase their earnings and savings. Combined with the escrow accounts accrued through the rent incentives program, working households at Rainier Vista have an opportunity to save a considerable amount of money. As mentioned previously, HOPE-Plus works with partner agencies to conduct on-site financial management classes on general topics related to savings, budgeting, and credit as well as off-site classes specific to the IDA program and preparing for asset purchase.

Jobs-Plus began offering its financial incentives program to Rainier Vista residents in September 1999.¹² The Seattle financial incentives program is based on a series of flat steps that gradually increase the resident's rent payment to market-rate levels over several years. In Step 1, the resident's rent is frozen at its current level. After the freeze, rent increases every two years until it equals 100 percent of market rate for a given apartment size. (Step 2 is 40 percent of market rate, and Step 3 is 75 percent.) In addition, in Steps 2 through 4, the housing authority diverts a portion of the monthly rental payment into an interest-bearing escrow account that the resident can access to pay for education expenses, to start a business, or to buy a home.

For example, if a household lived in a two-bedroom unit and paid rent of \$150 per month at the time they enrolled in the financial incentives program, the household's rent would have been frozen at \$150 for two years. After the first two years, the rent would be increased to \$235. After another two years, it would be increased to \$440, and, after two more years, to a final amount of \$587. Once the household reached Step 2 (\$235 per month), the housing authority would have deposited \$58.50 per month into an escrow account. This monthly deposit would be increased to \$161.50 after two more years (Step 3) and to \$235 in the final two years (Step 4). The maximum amount that a household can accrue in an escrow account during this entire period for a one- or two-bedroom unit is \$8,000; the maximum savings for a three-bedroom unit is \$10,000.

Any Rainier Vista adult resident who was in good standing was eligible to enroll in the financial incentives program up to March 2001. This included elderly and disabled residents as well as those who were already working.

As has been noted earlier, the financial incentives program at Rainier Vista also includes Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), which are administered by the housing au-

¹¹For more detailed information, see Miller and Riccio (2002).

¹²Preparations for the financial incentives program began more than two years earlier and included an extensive series of meetings with residents to design the features of this program. And for nearly a year before the incentives took effect, the housing authority focused a good deal of attention on financial tracking, lease modifications, and other administrative details.

thority's Community and Supportive Services program. At the time that the HOPE VI redevelopment grant award notification came through, a commitment was made to build a significant number of homes. These homes are to be sold to low-income families through a complex set of subsidies for down payments and low-interest loans that aim to make homeownership affordable. Accumulating savings to qualify for the affordable homeownership assistance was presented as a potential goal to HOPE-Plus participants. The housing authority applied for and eventually received a grant from the Washington State Office of Trade and Economic Development to fund up to 30 IDAs. A second program that is federally funded and administered by the King County United Way is also available to Rainier Vista residents.

Individuals must be earning less than 175 percent of the federal poverty level to qualify for the state-sponsored IDA program. And they must commit to making monthly savings account deposits, instead of having the housing authority make a direct deposit on their behalf. The state grant matches these funds two-to-one, and the savings can be withdrawn within a three-year period for investment in one of three specific assets that has been declared at the outset as the savings goal: homeownership, education, or small-business startup.

The stated savings goal can be changed at any time. The "fine print" specifies, however, that participants must complete a general financial management course and a certified asset-specific training course before they can withdraw the funds. And participants never actually see the funds, which are provided directly to the mortgage company, the institution of higher education, or the vendor(s) supporting the small-business startup. A resident can be enrolled in both the financial incentives program and the IDA program at the same time. All IDA participants at Rainier Vista are enrolled in the financial incentives program — so they are actually accumulating funds in their incentives program escrow account as well as in the forced savings account created for their IDA (and matched by the state or federal government).

Twelve Rainier Vista residents and eight NewHolly residents had enrolled in the state-sponsored IDA program as of September 2002. None of the participants has missed a savings payment since enrollment. But the program has had difficulty connecting people to the asset-specific training that they need before they can withdraw their money. For instance, it has been hard to find training in small-business startup to meet the needs of the NewHolly residents whose English is limited. Initially, HOPE-Plus partnered with an organization called Washington CASH to provide this training. HOPE-Plus staff characterized this organization as "too mainstream," however, because its trainers expected a greater level of English proficiency than the residents had; and the trainers were not amenable to working with interpreters, saying that it "slows down the teaching." As of September 2002, HOPE-Plus was negotiating with another organization, Community Capital Development, to explore alternative approaches to provide such training.

United Way's IDA program works in a similar way, but its income eligibility guidelines are less restrictive (200 percent of the federal poverty level instead of 175 percent), and it gives participants an extra two years during which the accumulated matching savings must be spent. United Way also provides a three-to-one match, in contrast to the state's two-to-one match. Six Rainier Vista households were participating in this program at the end of September 2002.

The HOPE-Plus job coaches and the financial incentives coordinator have handled the recruitment for both the United Way and the state-sponsored IDA programs. Of the approximately 20 Rainier Vista households that are enrolled in these programs, the stated savings goals are rather evenly distributed among homeownership, business startup, and education. Enrollees can change their stated goal at any time. For example, one resident who initially declared an interest in starting a business and who went through the training for that goal then decided that it would not be an easy way to make money; the savings goal was changed to education, and the resident enrolled in a dental hygienist program at Shoreline Community College.

Marketing the Financial Incentives

The residents at Rainier Vista participated in extensive meetings to design the Jobs-Plus financial incentives program. The job coaches and the resident outreach and orientation specialists were the main sources of information for telling people about the program. The outreach specialists were hired to provide an overview of the financial incentives to each of the major language groups at Rainier Vista: Vietnamese, Cambodian (or Khmer), Amharic, Tigrigna, Oromo, and Somali. A multilingual flyer was distributed to describe the program and to provide contact information for residents who wanted to learn more. The housing management staff also received specific orientation about Jobs-Plus's financial incentives, and they were instructed to refer residents to the program if it might benefit them to enroll.

Despite this initial publicity, however, many residents reported that they still thought that they had to be enrolled in Jobs-Plus to take advantage of the financial incentives and that enrollment in Jobs-Plus was not possible if the residents was already working (or, in at least one case, if the resident was not an immigrant). These people got further information about their eligibility for the financial incentives program later, at their annual recertification meeting with the housing management staff.

The Jobs-Plus staff initially promoted enrollment in the financial incentives program as a "hook" to interest residents in Jobs-Plus and to recruit participants for its employment services. This strategy had mixed results. For some families, the incentives were attractive because they already had good, stable jobs and because the incentives allowed them to keep more of their earnings. But families who had serious problems retaining employment or advancing into better-paying jobs had trouble meeting the increased rent level at each subsequent step of the program.

Enrollment and Participation in the Incentives Program

Enrollment in the financial incentives program at Rainier Vista is technically a lease amendment that applies to all household members who are named in the lease. The head of household who signs up for the financial incentives program is expected to work with a job coach or the job developer. An opportunity is created — and staff take full advantage of it — to also find out about other household members who might be interested in HOPE-Plus's employment and training services.

There are no reports of enrollees who have failed to comply with the participation requirements of the financial incentives program. However, since participation in the rent program is implemented administratively through a lease amendment, violating the lease would, in theory, be grounds for eviction. In practice, discretionary judgment is applied in determining whether a compliance failure would ever be problematic enough to warrant eviction.

The largest enrollment in the financial incentives program occurred in March 2000, in conjunction with the housing authority's annual lease review and in response to a major effort by the resident outreach specialists. The financial incentives coordinator estimated that, as of June 2002, about 20 percent of the households were at Step 1 of the financial incentives program; about 60 percent were at Step 2; about 15 percent were at Step 3; and about 5 percent were at Step 4. By March 2003, no residents will be at Step 1, the rent freeze.

At the peak of the Jobs-Plus financial incentives program, 157 households were enrolled. The number has decreased due to a combination of factors. When faced with the HOPE VI relocation alternatives, about 40 households that had been enrolled elected to leave the public housing system altogether. Another 7 households left Rainier Vista to purchase homes, and 10 or so withdrew from the incentives program for other reasons. One reason involved the financial difficulties of paying the next step's rent level. For instance, the housing units on the west side of the development used natural gas for heat and hot water, but these units were vacated in the winter of 2001-2002. The housing units on the east side of the development use electricity for heat, cooking, and hot water, and they are poorly insulated. Over the past year, Seattle's municipal utility has raised electrical rates by more than 40 percent. Furthermore, the wage progression that the incentives program assumed households would be able to achieve either did not occur or has been slower than anticipated. The increased utility costs, combined with the rent increases associated with moving from one program step to the next, have proved unaffordable to some households. In retrospect, the financial incentives coordinator believes that the job coaches — who are the main sources of information about the incentives program — might not have been sufficiently prepared to assess a household's readiness for the challenges of participating in the program and to guide them in deciding whether or not to enroll.

Administering the Financial Incentives

From an on-site office at Rainier Vista, the HOPE-Plus financial incentives coordinator is in charge of administering the Jobs-Plus rent policy and the Individual Development Accounts. The housing authority's central office delegated this authority, and the financial incentives coordinator has access to the agency's central database and to the necessary files from the management office.¹³

Although initial plans called for distributing individual escrow account statements each month along with rent notices, the housing authority felt that this would be too expensive and time-consuming. Instead, these account statements are distributed once a year, which makes them less effective at reinforcing the value of continued participation in the incentives program. Residents who want to learn their current balance can contact the financial incentives coordinator.

Community Support for Work

The scope of this component of Jobs-Plus has expanded under HOPE-Plus to include the entire community, rather than focusing exclusively on work-eligible residents of the housing development. This is because HOPE VI redevelopment directly affects each member of every household at the site. In addition, the focus has expanded to emphasize broader "community-building" activities and social services, rather than the more narrow, work-focused efforts emphasized in the Jobs-Plus model. Thus, services for children, youth, seniors, and the disabled have been specifically included in the Community and Supportive Services planning process. HOPE-Plus's services seek to address the unmet needs of youth, the elderly, and the disabled — in contrast to Jobs-Plus's emphasis on assisting dependents and other household members primarily as a way to support the employment of working-age residents. Community-building efforts have tried to bring seniors together and to explore ways to make Rainier Vista a safer place for youth and children. The community builder attends monthly information-sharing, planning, and training meetings that include youth and other agencies that help Rainier Vista. (The housing authority coordinates the e-mail list of this interagency group, and representatives from participating organizations and agencies take turns facilitating the meetings.)

When the program's community builder began working for Jobs-Plus in September 1999, her goal was to build relationships among people on-site. Currently, a big part of her job

¹³The incentives coordinator enters data into an Excel spreadsheet that organizes a household-by-household accounting of what the rent revenues would have been under the traditional formula for calculating public housing rents, compared with actual rent revenues under HOPE-Plus. The spreadsheet also tracks the amount added to each household's escrow account. This recordkeeping is the basis for the quarterly billings that the Seattle Housing Authority presents to HUD for reimbursement. The HOPE-Plus employment services coordinator also signs the billing statements that the incentive coordinator prepares.

involves helping people with HOPE VI relocation and connecting them to resources outside Rainier Vista. Helping people find a new place to live has taken priority over helping them get to know one another.

Despite the upheaval caused by the relocation, however, efforts continue with the aim of strengthening the social ties among residents. Public events are staged, including the Vietnamese New Year Celebration (February) and the Cambodian New Year Celebration (April) and Crime Night Out (August). In conjunction with Puget Sound Neighborhood Health Clinics and Neighborhood House, the community builder has facilitated monthly meetings for senior residents that serve as information-sharing sessions and also provide recreation. At each meeting, lunch is served, and then someone makes a presentation about a topic relevant to seniors. For example, Puget Sound Neighborhood Health Clinics might present a discussion of how to make a home safe for the elderly. After the presentation, the residents can participate in bingo games and (possibly) win a door prize. Although the majority of seniors at these meetings are from the Southeast Asia community, other ethnic groups are also represented.

In April 2002, the community builder helped to organize an open house. All the HOPE-Plus partners, both on-site and off-site, were invited to set up information booths at Rainier Vista and to talk with residents about their programs. One goal of the open house was to encourage residents of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds to visit the booths of all the providers and hear directly about their services. Although the event got off to a slow start, it ended up being very well attended.

The Community Shares service-exchange program remains in place, but its activity level has been static. Community Shares is coordinated by the Rainier Vista Leadership Team (RVLT), with the help of the HOPE-Plus community builder. It allows participants to receive credit for contributing services to the community, such as child care, home repair, transportation, tutoring, or housecleaning for a disabled neighbor. A central inventory lists the participants and the skills they are offering, and a record is kept of the time they have volunteered. There is no exchange of money, but participants accumulate credits that can be exchanged for modest reductions in rent, for material resources such as computers, or for services from other participants. However, the HOPE VI relocation has greatly reduced the incentive to join Community Shares, since people can no longer use credits toward rent reductions if they no longer live at Rainier Vista. Many participants already have computers, and the computers now available for distribution are outdated. As soon as there is an opportunity to do so, the RVLT will train someone to take over the database for the Community Shares program.

Conclusions

HOPE-Plus in Seattle has succeeded in becoming instituted as the central model at the core of the Community and Supportive Services program that aims to serve residents during Rainier Vista's redevelopment. Among its many implementation-related accomplishments, HOPE-Plus has created mechanisms for providing outreach and for fostering genuine communication both among Rainier Vista's diverse residents and between them and the housing management staff.

The program has overcome initial perceptions as being "for immigrants only" and has extended participation to the point of reaching — in the view of one qualified observer — "anyone who is capable and desirous of working." It has supported the organizational development of a resident leadership team that, in turn, is directly responsible for supporting the Job Resources Center, Rainier Vista's technology center, and one of its main service providers.

Although HOPE-Plus has created an effective tracking system that provides current information for planning and assessment purposes, staff continue to wrestle with formidable challenges relating to infrastructure and resources. Chiefly, they now seek to help residents cope with the stresses and uncertainties of relocation and reconstruction as well as with the deep and persistent regional economic downturn, and they are busy arranging suitable English-language skill development services for residents who need them.

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

Project on Devolution and Urban Change

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

Big Cities and Welfare Reform: Early Implementation and Ethnographic Findings from the Project on Devolution and Urban Change. 1999. Janet Quint, Kathryn Edin, Maria Buck, Barbara Fink, Yolanda Padilla, Ollis Simmons-Hewitt, Mary Valmont.

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

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

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

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

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

Readying Welfare Recipients for Work: Lessons from Four Big Cities as They Implement Welfare Reform. 2002. Thomas Brock, Laura Nelson, Megan Reiter.

Welfare Reform in Cleveland: Implementation, Effects, and Experiences of Poor Families and Neighborhoods. 2002. Thomas Brock, Claudia Coulton, Andrew London, Denise Polit, Lashawn Richburg-Hayes, Ellen Scott, Nandita Verma.

Comparing Outcomes for Los Angeles County's HUD-Assisted and Unassisted CalWORKs Leavers. 2003. Nandita Verma, Richard Hendra.
Monitoring Outcomes for Los Angeles County's Pre- and Post-CalWORKs Leavers: How Are They Faring? 2003. Nandita Verma, Richard Hendra.

Wisconsin Works

This study examines how Wisconsin's welfare-to-work program, one of the first to end welfare as an entitlement, is administered in Milwaukee.

Complaint Resolution in the Context of Welfare Reform: How W-2 Settles Disputes. 2001. Suzanne Lynn.

Exceptions to the Rule: The Implementation of 24-Month Time-Limit Extensions in W-2. 2001. Susan Gooden, Fred Doolittle.

Matching Applicants with Services: Initial Assessments in the Milwaukee County W-2 Program. 2001. Susan Gooden, Fred Doolittle, Ben Glispie.

Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Conceived and funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), this demonstration project is aimed at testing various ways to help low-income people find, keep, and advance in jobs.

New Strategies to Promote Stable Employment and Career Progression: An Introduction to the Employment Retention and Advancement Project (HHS). 2002. Dan Bloom, Jacquelyn Anderson, Melissa Wavelet, Karen Gardiner, Michael Fishman.

Time Limits

Welfare Time Limits: State Policies, Implementation, and Effects on Families. 2002. Dan Bloom, Mary Farrell, Barbara Fink.

Leavers, Stayers, and Cyclers: An Analysis of the Welfare Caseload. 2002. Cynthia Miller.

Florida's Family Transition Program

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

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

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

Cross-State Study of Time-Limited Welfare

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

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

Connecticut's Jobs First Program

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

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

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

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

Final Report on Connecticut's Welfare Reform Initiative. 2002. Dan Bloom, Susan Scrivener, Charles Michalopoulos, Pamela Morris, Richard Hendra, Diana Adams-Ciardullo, Johanna Walter.

Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project

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

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

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

WRP: Final Report on Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project. 2002. Susan Scrivener, Richard Hendra, Cindy Redcross, Dan Bloom, Charles Michalopoulos, Johanna Walter.

Financial Incentives

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

Minnesota Family Investment Program

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

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

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

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

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

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

New Hope Project

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

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

Canada's Self-Sufficiency Project

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

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

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

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

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Making Work Pay: Final Report on the Self-Sufficiency Project for Long-Term Welfare Recipients (SRDC). 2002. Charles Michalopoulos, Doug Tattrie, Cynthia Miller, Philip Robins, Pamela Morris, David Gyarmati, Cindy Redcross, Kelly Foley, Reuben Ford.

Mandatory Welfare Employment Programs

National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies

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

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

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

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

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

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

How Effective Are Different Welfare-to-Work Approaches? Five-Year Adult and Child Impacts for Eleven Programs – Executive Summary (HHS/ED). 2001. Gayle Hamilton, Stephen Freedman, Lisa Gennetian, Charles Michalopoulos, Johanna Walter, Diana Adams-Ciardullo, Anna Gassman-Pines, Sharon McGroder, Martha Zaslow, Surjeet Ahluwalia, Jennifer Brooks.

Moving People from Welfare to Work: Lessons from the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (HHS/ED). 2002. Gayle Hamilton.

Los Angeles's Jobs-First GAIN Program

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

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

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

Teen Parents on Welfare

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

Ohio's LEAP Program

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

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

New Chance Demonstration

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

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

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

Focusing on Fathers

Parents' Fair Share Demonstration

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

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

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

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

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

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

Career Advancement and Wage Progression

Opening Doors to Earning Credentials

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

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

Welfare Reform and Community Colleges: A Policy and Research Context. 2002. Thomas Brock, Lisa Matus-Grossman, Gayle Hamilton.

Opening Doors: Students' Perspectives on Juggling Work, Family, and College. 2002. Lisa Matus-Grossman, Susan Gooden.

Opening Doors: Supporting CalWORKs Students at California Community Colleges: An Exploratory Focus Group Study. 2002. Laura Nelson, Rogéair Purnell.

Education Reform

Career Academies

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

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

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

Career Academies: Impacts on Students' Initial Transitions to Post-Secondary Education and Employment. 2001. James Kemple.

First Things First

This demonstration and research project looks at First Things First, a whole-school reform that combines a variety of best practices aimed at raising achievement and graduation rates in both urban and rural settings.

Scaling Up First Things First: Site Selection and the Planning Year. 2002. Janet Quint.

Closing Achievement Gaps

Conducted for the Council of the Great City Schools, this study identifies districtwide approaches to urban school reform that appear to raise overall student performance while reducing achievement gaps among racial groups.

Foundations for Success: Case Studies of How Urban School Systems Improve Student Achievement. 2002. Jason Snipes, Fred Doolittle, Corinne Herlihy.

Project GRAD

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

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

Accelerated Schools

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

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

Extended-Service Schools Initiative

Conducted in partnership with Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), this evaluation of after-school programs operated as part of the Extended-Service Schools Initiative examines the programs' implementation, quality, cost, and effects on students.

Multiple Choices After School: Findings from the Extended-Service Schools Initiative (P/PV). 2002. Jean Baldwin Grossman, Marilyn Price, Veronica Fellerath, Linda Jucovy, Lauren Kotloff, Rebecca Raley, Karen Walker.

School-to-Work Project

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

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

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

Project Transition

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

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

Equity 2000

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

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

Employment and Community Initiatives

Jobs-Plus Initiative

A multisite effort to greatly increase employment among public housing residents.

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

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

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

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

Making Work Pay for Public Housing Residents: Financial-Incentive Designs at Six Jobs-Plus Demonstration Sites. 2002. Cynthia Miller, James Riccio.

The Special Challenges of Offering Employment Programs in Culturally Diverse Communities: The Jobs-Plus Experience in Public Housing Developments. 2002. Linda Kato.

The Employment Experiences of Public Housing Residents: Findings from the Jobs-Plus Baseline Survey. 2002. John Martinez.

Children in Public Housing Developments: An Examination of the Children at the Beginning of the Jobs-Plus Demonstration. 2002. Pamela Morris, Stephanie Jones.

Neighborhood Jobs Initiative

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

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

Structures of Opportunity: Developing the Neighborhood Jobs Initiative in Fort Worth, Texas. 2002. Tony Proscio.

Connections to Work Project

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

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

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

Canada's Earnings Supplement Project

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

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

MDRC Working Papers on Research Methodology

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Meta-Analysis of Government Sponsored Training Programs. 2001. David Greenberg, Charles Michalopoulos, Philip Robins.

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

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

Explaining Variation in the Effects of Welfare-to-Work Programs. 2001. David Greenberg, Robert Meyer, Charles Michalopoulos, Michael Wiseman.

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

Can Nonexperimental Comparison Group Methods Match the Findings from a Random Assignment Evaluation of Mandatory Welfare-to-Work Programs? 2002. Howard Bloom, Charles Michalopoulos, Carolyn Hill, Ying Lei.

Using Instrumental Variables Analysis to Learn More from Social Policy Experiments. 2002. Lisa Gennetian, Johannes Bos, Pamela Morris.

Using Place-Based Random Assignment and Comparative Interrupted Time-Series Analysis to Evaluate the Jobs-Plus Employment Program for Public Housing Residents. 2002. Howard Bloom, James Riccio.

About MDRC

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

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

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

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