

**POST-EMPLOYMENT
EDUCATION AND TRAINING
MODELS IN THE WELFARE-TO-WORK
GRANT PROGRAM**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper, which is intended for state and local officials responsible for programs funded under federal Welfare-to-Work (WtW) grants, synthesizes what is currently known about providing education and training after an individual is employed and provides suggestions on models and strategies that can be effective in promoting occupational mobility and career advancement for welfare recipients.

There are four rationales for considering education and training services after an individual has begun work, rather than always assuming that such activities should occur before entering a job:

- ! **The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program provides strong incentives, as well as challenges, for local programs to implement post-employment services.** In response to the TANF individual work requirements, mandated state work participation rates, and the five-year lifetime limit on individual benefits, most state welfare agencies have adopted **Work First** policies that encourage or require TANF recipients to enter a job immediately.
- ! **The characteristics of the welfare population suggest that many are unlikely to qualify immediately for stable, well-paying jobs with advancement potential.** Many welfare recipients have fairly low reading and mathematics ability and lack strong education and occupational credentials. Many also have personal and family problems that can interfere with work. Nonetheless, most welfare recipients can and do work. But they tend to obtain low-wage jobs, can experience difficulty retaining jobs, and generally remain at the low end of the labor market in low-paying/low-skill jobs with little chance for career advancement.
- ! **Labor market trends suggest that without further education and training, many welfare recipients may be trapped in low-skill/low-wage jobs.** Well-paying jobs for workers with low or moderate skills that were once available in manufacturing have been replaced by lower-paying jobs in the service sector. Higher-paying jobs go to those with the most technical skills.
- ! **Traditional pre-employment strategies used in welfare-employment programs in the past have had only limited impacts on employability, welfare receipt, and poverty status.** While a number of programs have made modest progress toward increasing earnings and employment, they generally have not resulted in sustained long-term employment, occupational advancement, or incomes above poverty.

In this report, a broad definition of **employment** is used, encompassing more than just unsubsidized jobs in the regular labor market, and including a range of work-based situations, such as

work experience, apprenticeships, and subsidized work. Thus, employment means being either in a regular traditional unsubsidized job or in any of a number of more non-traditional job scenarios that have a specific employer and/or worksite.

Post-employment education and training is characterized on five dimensions that could encompass a range of different models, many examples of which are described in Sections C and D of this report:

Exhibit I	
Selected Characteristics of Post-Employment Education or Training Approaches	
Selected Features of the Education or Training	Possible Variations
<i>Source of funding:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public funding/subsidy to employer or worker 2. Private business/employer funding 3. Public/employer funding 4. Worker/employer share costs 5. Worker responsible for costs
<i>Site/location:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At the workplace/worksite 2. At a training institution 3. Split schedule and/or classes
<i>Relationship to current job:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrated and integral to job with employer concurrence or involvement 2. In addition to regular job, employer concurrence 3. In addition to regular job, employer not directly involved/aware
<i>Employment objective:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To strengthen or update skills for current job 2. To qualify for current job 3. To qualify for future related job or upgrade 4. To qualify for future different job
<i>Occupational focus:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Occupation or industry specific skills 2. General skills or education 3. Integrated basic/general education and occupation/industry skills

State and local agencies must develop new models that creatively combine work with development of basic and job-related skills. In doing so, it is important to consider both the needs of the individual workers, mainly former welfare mothers, and the expectations of the employers. That is, post-employment models must anticipate the many stresses and difficulties that WtW participants are likely to encounter in balancing skill development with the demands of the workplace and family obligations. The education and training must be complemented with supportive social services, including case management.

Similarly, post-employment education and training is likely to be most effective if it is developed in conjunction with employers and sensitive to the realities of the workplace. Wherever possible, workplace-based training programs should be developed to simultaneously address the time constraints working parents have and ensure that the content of the instruction is appropriate to the employer and work expectations. Working closely with employers will not only improve possibilities for enhanced skill development among WtW participants but also help pave the way to identifying an expanded range of job openings, increased chances of job retention, and leveraging of private sector training dollars.

Some example of ways in which work and education/training can be combined include: (1) on-the-job training, where the wage of new workers is partially offset by the public sector in exchange for training provided by the employer; (2) formal apprenticeship programs, in which employers (often in collaboration with unions) provide a combination of structured classroom and on-the-job training over generally a two- to four-year period; and (3) flexible scheduling of work hours, such as employers allowing individuals to work four days and have one day off per week for training, which may or may not be paid for by the employer.

The WtW legislation provides workforce development agencies and other grantees with resources and substantial flexibility in providing education, training, and supportive services to promote career advancement and long-term self-sufficiency. Because of the short-term nature of the WtW funding, the Work First policies in TANF, and the current restrictions of using WtW funds for stand-alone education and training, WtW programs should move thoughtfully and expeditiously in implementing post-employment education and training. Even without these policy constraints, however, there are strong reasons to believe that combining work with education and/or training may hold real promise for upgrading the occupational and income positions of welfare recipients and other low-skilled workers.

A. INTRODUCTION

The Welfare-to-Work (WtW) Grant Program, authorized under the Budget Reconciliation Act of 1997, is the latest component of federal welfare reform and provides an important opportunity to create program models that encourage welfare recipients to combine work with training or education. This is a new dimension of welfare policy, but is consistent with recent trends in the employment and training field to increase incumbent workers' participation in retraining, life-long learning, and career development. This paper, which is intended for state and local program officials responsible for the design and implementation of WtW programs, synthesizes what is currently known about providing education and training after an individual is employed and provides suggestions on models and strategies that can be effective in promoting occupational mobility and career advancement for welfare recipients. The paper begins with a brief overview of the WtW grants program and the rationale for providing post-employment education and training services. Drawing upon existing research on welfare-to-work and employment and training programs, the paper then focuses on what states and localities can do under the WtW grants program to expand and enhance post-employment education and training.

B. OVERVIEW OF THE WtW GRANT PROGRAM

WtW was authorized by Congress to complement the major welfare reform provisions established in 1996 under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), particularly the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant, which replaces the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. States have considerable flexibility to use the TANF block grant funds for cash welfare payments to families with children, work activities for welfare parents, and related services which those parents may need to move from welfare to work. The WtW grants complement TANF in that the WtW funds are specifically designated for work-related activities and not for cash welfare payments. WtW funds are also targeted to specific groups within the welfare population—not on all welfare recipients—particularly those who are least employable or face serious barriers to employment. Unlike most previous welfare initiatives, services under the WtW initiative can also be routinely used to serve noncustodial fathers of children on TANF (e.g., without requesting special federal approval to do so and without linking the work activity to child support enforcement procedures).

Under WtW, the federal government is distributing \$3 billion—\$1.5 billion in FY 1998 and \$1.5 billion in FY 1999—to help move welfare recipients into jobs.¹ Unlike TANF, which is administered at

¹Some funds are set aside at the national level for Indian and Native American programs (\$30 million), for evaluation activities (\$24 million), and for performance bonuses for successful states (\$100 million). Three-quarters of the WtW funds remaining after these set-asides are allocated to states according to a formula (based on each state's share of the poverty population and number of adults on welfare) and one-quarter is distributed competitively, based on applications submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor.

the national level by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHSS), the WtW program is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). WtW is intended to help states and localities meet their welfare reform objectives by providing resources to move the least employable welfare recipients and non-custodial parents into long-term unsubsidized employment. Under a combination of formula and competitive grants, WtW provides states and localities with funds that can be used for a broad range of employment-related activities, including:

- ! wage subsidies;
- ! on-the-job training;
- ! job readiness;
- ! job placement services;
- ! post-employment education and training services;
- ! job vouchers for job readiness, placement or post-employment services, community service, or work experience;
- ! job retention services; and
- ! supportive services (if not otherwise available).

Under WtW, grantees are permitted substantial flexibility in designing welfare-to-work strategies geared to the needs of the local labor market and economy. The overall goal of the authorized activities under the program is to transition TANF recipients (and non-custodial parents of TANF recipients) from welfare to unsubsidized employment and help these individuals remain permanently employed. A complementary goal of the WtW program is to provide education, training, and support services to facilitate career development and wage enhancement of welfare recipients once

they become employed. The WtW formula and competitive grants are to fund services for the hardest-to-employ welfare recipients. At least 70 percent of funds must be used for:

- (1) long-term TANF recipients or recipients who are within one year of reaching the TANF time limit and who also have two of three Congressionally-specified barriers: (a) less than a high school education and low reading or math skills, (b) substance abuse problems, or (c) A poor work history;² or
- (2) non-custodial parents who have two of the same three legislatively-specified problems and have a child who is a long-term welfare recipient or is in a family that is within one year of reaching the TANF time limit.³

Up to 30 percent of WtW funds can be used for TANF recipients or non-custodial parents who have A characteristics associated with long-term welfare dependency,[@] such as being teenage parents, persons with poor work histories, or high school dropouts.

²Poor work history has been defined by DOL as having worked less than three months in full-time, unsubsidized employment in the past 12 months.

³For more information on effective practices for serving non-custodial parents through WtW grants, see Karin Martinson, *Serving Non-Custodial Parents Through Welfare-to-Work Grants: Labor Market Characteristics, Employment Barriers, and Service Strategies*, The Urban Institute, 1998.

Despite a focus on enhancing the employability of welfare recipients, WtW grantees face an important service restriction in structuring their programs: WtW funds cannot be used for stand-alone (pre-employment) job training or education.⁴ However, the funds can be used for training or education once a person has begun work, either as a post-employment service in conjunction with work or as a work-based activity. WtW funds can also be used for paid and unpaid community service or work experience jobs, including subsidized employment in the public and non-profit sectors and traditional on-the-job training. Hence, as discussed in greater detail later in this paper, WtW grantees can creatively use WtW funds to support skills training and work combinations designed to enhance long-term employability and self-sufficiency of the individuals served.

⁴State TANF funds can be used for stand-alone pre-employment education or training (although that is rarely happening at this time). The restriction noted here applies only to the WtW grant funds.

C. RATIONALE FOR POST-EMPLOYMENT EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN WtW

With the passage of TANF along with the supplementary funds available through the WtW grants program, states and localities face both opportunities and challenges for incorporating new program models and strategies for enhancing basic skills and work-related skills of welfare recipients and non-custodial parents. WtW grants funds can only be used for education and training if it occurs in conjunction with employment, consistent with the immediate employment objective of many state welfare reform policies, often referred to as **Work First**.² This restriction on use of WtW funds limits local programs' flexibility to decide whether an individual needs education and training *before* entering employment. Given the constraints imposed by WtW requirements, as well as the results from recent research on the effectiveness of Work First and other employment initiatives aimed at welfare recipients, there are several important reasons for local WtW programs to consider incorporating comprehensive post-employment education, training, and support services in their WtW initiatives. Below, we discuss four key reasons for providing such services for an extended period after WtW participants become employed.

1. TANF Provides Strong Incentives, As Well As Challenges, for Local Programs to Implement Post-Employment Services

TANF imposes several types of work requirements on states and participants, providing strong incentives for welfare recipients to find immediate work, but also offering the opportunity for further education and skills development once welfare recipients have entered the workforce. States are

required to outline in their state TANF plans how they will require a parent or caretaker receiving TANF to engage in work once the state determines the individual to be job-ready or once the individual has received assistance for 24 months. Under TANF, states must meet certain standards for the proportion of TANF recipients participating in allowable work activities.⁵ To count toward the work participation rate, an individual must be engaged in work activities for at least the minimum average number of hours per week during the month as required for the particular year (e.g., a minimum of 20 hours per week under the all-families rate -- increasing to 30 hours per week beginning in 2000 and 35 hours per week under the two-parent families rate).

To be considered engaged in work, a TANF recipient must be involved in one or more of the following activities during a month:

- ! unsubsidized employment;
- ! subsidized private-sector employment;
- ! subsidized public-sector employment;
- ! work experience (including work associated with the refurbishing of publicly assisted housing) if sufficient private sector employment is not available;
- ! on-the-job training;
- ! community service programs;

⁵For example, the required percentage of TANF participants who must be involved in work activities was 25 percent in fiscal year (FY) 1997 and increases to 50 percent by 2002, with higher rates required for two-parent families.

- ! provision of child care services to an individual who is participating in a community service program;
- ! vocational education trainingCnot to exceed 12 months for any individual, and provided that not more than a total of 30 percent of persons counting toward the participation rate for a month can satisfy the requirements either by participating in vocational education training or by being a teen parent head of household attending school;⁶ or
- ! job search and job readiness assistanceClimited to 6 weeks, though it can be extended to up to 12 weeks if the state's unemployment rate is at least 50 percent greater than the unemployment rate of the United States.

Job skills training, education related to employment, and secondary school or GED completion for

TANF adults do not count toward the first 20 hours of participation per week in a work activity.

Hence, only those who are active more than 20 hours (and, for the two-parent cases, 30 hours) may be counted towards the state's participation rate and only if the individual participates in:

- ! job search and job readiness assistance in excess of the above-specified limits;
- ! job skills training directly related to employment;
- ! education directly related to employment, in the case of a recipient who has not received a high school diploma or a certificate of high school equivalency; or satisfactory attendance at secondary school or in a course of study leading to a certificate of general equivalence, in the case of a recipient who has not completed secondary school or received such a certificate.

⁶With regard to the work participation rates, the following special rule applies to teen parent household heads: For purposes of meeting the one-parent rate, a single head of household under age 20 will be deemed to count toward the work participation rate if the recipient maintains satisfactory attendance at secondary school or the equivalent during the month or participates in deduction directly related to employment for at least the number of hours required for the applicable year (e.g., an average of 20 hours a week in years before FY 1999, 25 hours a week in FY 1999, and 30 hours a week in FY 2000 and thereafter).

States are required to reduce or end TANF assistance to individuals who refuse to engage in such work activities without good cause.⁷

Hence, with the passage of the TANF block grant in 1996, states now face complex and even conflicting objectives as they redesign and implement welfare-to-work programs. While states can still support long-term training and education, there are strong disincentives to doing so. First, there are federal incentives in the TANF legislation for states to continue to emphasize rapid employment strategies; states must meet federally-mandated work participation rates and enforce work requirements for nearly all recipients within two years of the time they first receive welfare. At the same time, a five-year lifetime limit on cash assistance for families makes promoting sustainable self-sufficiency essential which creates an incentive for building the basic education and occupation skills of welfare recipients so that they can transition to higher-skilled and high-paying jobs along a career path.

This self-sufficiency goal conflicts with that of moving participants rapidly into the low-wage workforce, where jobs tend to provide limited opportunities for advancement and few benefits. Post-employment education and training offers the possibility for local WtW programs to meet two key objectives of TANF to place individuals in jobs quickly and at the same time to provide an opportunity

⁷There are some limitations and special rules governing the participation requirements as well. For example, job search is limited to 6 weeks, or 12 weeks in a state with high unemployment. The proportion of TANF recipients counted as working who can be in vocational educational training is limited to 30 percent, excluding teenagers required to attend school in FY 1998 and 1999 and including them thereafter.

for those employed to build their skills to advance to higher-paying, more secure jobs in the future.

2. Characteristics of the Welfare Recipients Suggest That Many Are Unlikely to Qualify Immediately for Stable, Well-Paying Jobs with Advancement Potential

Welfare recipients have fairly low levels of basic reading and mathematics ability and generally lack academic and occupational credentials. About three-quarters of AFDC 25-year-old mothers in the mid-1980s, for example, scored in the bottom quarter of aptitude test takers their age (Burtless, 1995). Many welfare mothers also have personal and family characteristics and problems that can interfere with work; 25 to 30 percent of AFDC mothers in 1992 had a functional limitation ranging from medical problems to difficulties performing daily functions (Loprest and Acs, 1995). Nonetheless, most welfare recipients can enter the job market. But they tend to obtain low-wage jobs, can experience difficulty in retaining jobs, and generally remain at the low end of the labor market in low-paying, low-skill jobs, with little chance for career advancement.

Preliminary data from DHHS indicate that the characteristics of the welfare caseload have changed somewhat since the enactment of the PRWORA (and the introduction of TANF). Most importantly, the nation's caseload continues to decline dramatically—there were 39 percent fewer TANF cases in June 1998 than there were AFDC cases in January 1995, with some states (e.g., Wisconsin, West Virginia, Wyoming, Idaho) reporting caseload reductions of 70 percent or more.⁸ Recognizing that there is considerable state and regional variation in the characteristics of the TANF

⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families, *Change in Welfare Caseloads as of June 1998*, Washington, D.C., August 1998.

population that is left on the rolls, exhibit 1 provides a national overview of the demographic characteristics and composition of TANF families for the first nine months of fiscal year fiscal year (FY) 1997.

Exhibit 1 Selected Characteristics of AFDC Caseload 1995 and TANF Caseload 1997		
	1994B1995 ^a	1996B1997 ^b
Number of cases	4.9 million	3.0 million
Number of recipients	14.0 million	8.4 million
Avg. number of persons per case	2.8 persons	2.8 persons
Number of child-only cases	923,000	697,000
% of cases with child(ren) only	19%	23%
Number of mothers under 20	267,200	201,000
% of cases with an adult/parent	6.7%	8.6%
Number of mothers under 18	66,300	38,190
% of cases with an adult/parent	1.7%	1.6%
Distribution of cases by race/ethnicity of head:		
% African-American	37%	37%
% White, non-Hispanic	36%	36%
% Hispanic	20%	23%
% Other	7%	4%
Avg. monthly number of cases with earnings	8.9%	12.3%
Avg. monthly earnings	\$446	\$500
% of adult recipients who are legal immigrants	12%	11%
Median length of current case spell ^c	2 years	2 years
% of cases with an adult/parent with current spell <1 yr.	36%	33%
% of cases with an adult/parent with current spell 5 yrs or more	19%	24%

^a Unless otherwise noted, 1994B1995 dat are from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families, ACharacteristics and Financial Circumstances of AFDC Recipients: Fiscal Year 1995,@Washington , D.C.,

1997.

b 1996B1997 data are from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families, *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program: First Annual Report to Congress*, August 1998. Data are for the first nine months of FY 1997 (October 1996BJune 1997). Most states were under TANF for this period, but these report include some months that were AAFDC.@

c Both 1994B1995 and 1996B1997 data are from *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program: First Annual Report to Congress*, August 1998.

Exhibit 1 shows that, on some characteristics, the current TANF caseload is actually quite similar to the AFDC caseload of 1995. For example, the average case still has 2.8 persons, and the median current spell continues to be about two years.⁹ The data do suggest, though, that a few shifts may be occurring as the size of caseloads rapidly decline across the country. Of those left on the caseload, a higher percentage are Hispanic, long-term recipients, and teen mothers (with the increasing share concentrated among 18- and 19-year olds). Anecdotal information emerging from local TANF programs suggests that those left on the rolls also tend to have more personal problems, less education, and less work experience, though there are no systematic data yet available to validate these program observations. There is, though, a growing sense that the caseload is relatively less-employable than in the pastCsuggesting that many of those still receiving TANF assistance are in need of basic and job-

⁹ For many AFDC recipients, welfare was short-term. Of all families that went on AFDC, about 42 percent received benefits for less than two years. However, at any given time, about half of the AFDC caseload consisted of long-term welfare recipients who had been receiving assistance for over five years. LaDonna Pavetti, AWho is Affected by Time Limits?@ in Isabel Sawhill, editor, *Welfare Reform: An Analysis of the Issues*, The Urban Institute, Washington, D.C.: June 1995.

related skills upgrading to enhance chances of job placement, job retention, and long-term career advancement.

DHHS also notes in its *First Annual Report* that a higher percentage of the welfare cases than in the past include a worker with earnings, consistent with the overall trend of increasing labor force activity among disadvantaged single mothers. Using Current Population Survey (CPS) data, DHHS reports that the share of all single mothers with incomes under 200 percent of poverty who are employed rose from 48.2 percent in 1995 to 54.4 percent in 1997. A similar increase occurred for welfare mothers: Of those women who reported receiving some welfare in 1995, 22.6 percent also reported working; in 1997, this increased to 31.5 percent.

Research on the dynamics of the AFDC caseload from the pre-TANF period also indicates that there was a high rate of cycling on and off welfare.¹⁰ In an average year, about half the AFDC recipients left the rolls, and between one-half and two-thirds of those who left did so because they obtained a job. But about half of those returned to welfare within a year. Much past research attributed the cycling on and off AFDC to basic education deficiencies. In 1995, before the enactment of TANF, 42 percent of welfare parents (AFDC recipients at that time) had a high school diploma or equivalent, and another 16 percent reported having some college.¹¹ But that means, of course, that over

¹⁰Mary Jo Bane and David T. Ellwood, *Welfare Realities: From Rhetoric to Reform*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.: 1994; and LaDonna Pavetti, *A Time on Welfare and Welfare Dependency*, @Testimony at Hearings Before the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means, May 3, 1996.

¹¹Characteristics of AFDC adults are based on tabulations of the 1995 AFDC Quality Control Survey Data prepared at the Urban Institute or reported in the U.S. House of Representatives, *The Green Book: 1998*, pp. 435B451.

half of all AFDC adults in 1995 lacked a high school diploma. Similarly, over 70 percent of AFDC mothers had some recent work experience and 43 percent had combined work and welfare for some time during a 24-month period, but on average their earnings were below the official poverty level.¹²

¹²Based on the Survey of Income and Program Participation as reported in Roberta Spalter-Roth, Beverly Burr, Heidi Hartmann, and Lois Shaw, *Welfare the Works: The Working Lives of AFDC Recipients*, Institute for Women's Policy Research, Washington, D.C.: 1995.

Thus, dramatic welfare caseload reductions since 1994 and the increase in reported employment among those still receiving welfare suggest that welfare recipients can obtain jobs.¹³ Work First programs and similar rapid employment strategies attest to this fact as well. Despite the low education levels and personal problems, and despite the fact that those left on welfare are probably less employable than those who have left the rolls, there is fairly strong evidence from research and from the field that welfare mothers can and do work. Nonetheless, there is also growing concern that those left on the rolls also have more limited education levels, less job experience, and more personal problems complicating the task of job placement and achieving self-sufficiency. Post-employment education and training services represent an important option available to workforce development agencies under the WtW program for enhancing basic and job-specific skills once WtW participants become employed. Well-targeted services could hold the key to recipients building skills relevant to the workplace and advancing to higher paying jobs and, ultimately, to breaking the cycle of poverty and dependency. The variety and seriousness of employment barriers faced by welfare recipients, however, especially the low education levels, must be addressed.

¹³The caseload reduction consists of those who left welfare (either voluntarily or were terminated by the agency) and those who never went on in the first place. Data are not yet available to conclusively determine how many of these two groups are employed. However, the very large caseload reduction at least suggests that some substantial number are working.

3. Labor Market Trends Suggest That Without Further Education and Training, Many Welfare Recipients May Be Trapped in Low-Skill/Low-Wage Jobs

Fundamental changes in the U.S. economy over the last 20 years have resulted in a premium being placed on the educational achievement and technical skills of workers. Increasingly, jobs tend to be clustered at opposite ends of the labor market high skill/high-wage jobs and low-skill/minimum-wage jobs. Well-paying jobs for individuals with low or moderate skills that were once available within the manufacturing sector have generally been replaced by lower-paying jobs in the service sector. Some analysts estimate that in today's labor market most welfare recipients will earn between \$5.00 and \$8.00 an hour (Burtless, 1998).¹⁴ While such entry-level jobs may provide a starting point and much-needed job experience for welfare recipients, earnings are not high enough to promote long-term self-sufficiency for welfare recipients with dependent children. In addition, many of these low-skill, low-paying jobs are temporary often with high turnover rates and offer minimal, if any, fringe benefits. Within the constraints of Work First approaches that are at the heart of welfare-to-work programs, post-employment education and training services represent one potential avenue for individuals placed in low-paying jobs to transition gradually over time to higher-paying, career-type jobs.

4. Research Suggests That Traditional Pre-Employment Strategies Used in Welfare-Employment Programs Have Had Only Limited Impacts on Employability, Welfare Receipt, and Poverty Status¹⁵

¹⁴In addition, Burtless and other labor economists caution that if welfare reform adds millions of additional unskilled workers to the economy, the job entry wage could actually be driven lower in the next couple of years.

¹⁵Portions of this section are based on a recent paper by Lisa Plimpton and Demetra Smith Nightingale, *Welfare Employment Programs: Impacts and Cost-Effectiveness of Employment and*

Over the past thirty years, many policies, programs, and demonstrations have attempted to improve the skills, employment, and income of welfare recipients and other economically disadvantaged persons. The research and evaluation evidence indicates that while a number of programs have made some modest progress toward achieving the goal of increasing earnings and employment among adult welfare recipients, they generally have not resulted in sustained long-term employment or occupational advancement. Overall levels of poverty, welfare receipt, and unemployment remain high even after participation in these programs. A recent literature review (Plimpton and Nightingale, 1998) synthesized results of evaluations of fourteen separate welfare/employment programs:

- ! **Employment Effects:** Across the 14 studies, at best programs increased employment rates, on average, by about 2 to 10 percent over a two- to five-year period (compared to what the rate would have been without the program). About half of the program evaluations found no statistically significant impact on employment, although the programs may have had other positive impacts.

- ! **Earnings Effects:** The impacts on earnings were more consistent than those for employment, but were still modest, ranging from about \$25 to \$85 per month for low-intensity services to \$100 to \$200 per month for the most comprehensive services, such as occupational training and supported, paid work experience. Earnings impacts appeared to last for five years or longer for the more comprehensive programs, but to wear off by the third or fourth year for most of the less-comprehensive programs. A substantial portion of the earnings increases produced by less comprehensive programs reflected an increase in employment rates rather than higher wages. None of the programs evaluated reduced the incidence of poverty.

Training Activities,@ in Christopher King and Burt S. Barnow, *Improving the Odds: Increasing the Effectiveness of Publicly Funded Training*, Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press (forthcoming, 1999).

- ! **Effects on Welfare Receipt:** Welfare employment programs did not substantially improve participants' incomes, because earnings gains were offset by reduced income from welfare. For the most part, participation in employment programs did not reduce the likelihood that a family would return to the welfare rolls.

Sustained economic growth in recent years (accompanied by strong demand for workers) and the employment focus of welfare reform policies have resulted in dramatic decreases in welfare caseloads across the United States over the past five years. The rates at which welfare recipients are becoming employed is reportedly increasing substantially. A review of over a dozen studies of people who have left welfare (the state welfare leavers studies) indicates that half to two-thirds were employed shortly after leaving welfare, and that in the 6-to 12 month period after leaving welfare, between 70 and 80 percent were employed at some point (Brauner and Loprest, 1999). However, there is little evidence yet to indicate that these former welfare recipients are doing any better than in the past in terms of their poverty status or moving up in the job market.

One common explanation for the limited effectiveness of traditional employment and education programs is that they tend not to be intensive enough to significantly improve employment outcomes. The most typical service delivery model used in welfare-employment programs and demonstrations until very recently were either low-intensity strategies, such as job search assistance, designed to move people quickly into a job; or sequential short-term services (e.g., three to six months), such as basic education, work experience, or job training that would eventually be expected to result in employment.

Some other higher-intensity, more expensive, and comprehensive training activities have demonstrated some greater effects on employment and earnings of welfare recipients. Although these programs have still fallen short of moving families out of poverty. Among the most promising findings for

classroom training have been those for the Center for Employment Training (CET) model. CET operates training programs at 30 sites on the West Coast, and the model is currently being replicated in several other sites nationwide with funding from the DOL and the Rockefeller Foundation. Some key elements of the CET model include the following:

- ! An individualized training plan is developed for each participant following intensive assessment.
- ! Clients begin occupational classroom training immediately and, if they have educational deficiencies, simultaneously pursue basic or remedial education.
- ! CET has developed strong ties with local employers, offering training in specific job skills that are in demand in the local labor market and aggressively marketing its trainees to employers.
- ! The program also offers extensive supportive services, including on-site child care.

The San Jose CET program was one of four sites in the Minority Female Single Parent (MFSP) demonstration, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, to test employability development for low-income minority single mothers, both AFDC recipients and those at risk of becoming AFDC recipients. Participants in the MFSP at CET received an average of six months of classroom occupational training, which was integrated with basic skills remediation for those found to need it. The program's impact on employment was significant after 12 months and after 30 months (0.3 and 8.6 percentage points, respectively) but disappeared by the fifth year. After 30 months, the evaluation found that CET had a large, statistically significant impact of \$124 on monthly earnings. By the fifth year, the earnings impact was still significant, but had decreased slightly to \$103 per month. The impact on earnings persisted during a period of high unemployment and despite the availability of education and training services to members of the control group. The evaluators found that the earnings impact after five years was

concentrated among participants who had a high school degree or the equivalent (Zambrowski and Gordon, 1993).

The potential of more intensive interventions and work-based training is confirmed by earlier evaluations of both the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) and its successor programs under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). Employer-based on-the-job training (OJT) was the most effective training activity for welfare mothers (Barnow, 1987; Bloom et al., 1994). An early evaluation of WIN employment programs also found that the largest impacts on earnings came from OJT (Burtless, 1989). There are several features of OJT that likely contributed to its effectiveness. Many OJT programs include a commitment on the part of the employer to hire participants that contribute to an increase in employment rates after the subsidy period ends. It may also be that actual work experience is as important as the training provided.

Preliminary research on state Work First initiatives suggests that substantial numbers of welfare recipients will obtain jobs, but many recipients will not stay employed in what are likely to be low-paying, low-skill jobs, and few will earn enough to rise out of poverty. As discussed above, past research on the effectiveness of employment and training initiatives suggests possibilities for enhancing employability under more intensive and work-based initiatives, but overall suggests (at best) modest effects of such initiatives on employment and earnings of welfare recipients. With the 60-month lifetime limit on receipt of welfare looming on the horizon, states and localities are faced with the formidable tasks of both rapidly transitioning welfare recipients into jobs, and also keeping welfare recipients in jobs so that they do not cycle on and off welfare in the future. One way to improve the likelihood that individuals do not cycle back onto welfare is to enhance basic and job-specific skills, so that individuals

placed in jobs are more valuable to their employers and have the skill levels to move to more secure and higher-paying jobs in the future. This need to enhance skills levels and employability to avoid recycling onto welfare is one additional reason local programs should consider implementing and/or intensifying post-employment education, training, and other job retention services (Holcomb et al., 1998)

D. POST-EMPLOYMENT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The discussion in the previous section suggests that stand-alone pre-employment education and training has had limited effects on subsequent employment and earnings of welfare recipients and other low-skilled workers. While supportive services might help extend the duration of employment for some workers, such services alone are generally not sufficient to improve an individual's employment and skills.

The evidence on the positive returns to post-secondary education, even for those adults who obtain a GED rather than a regular high school diploma, is promising, especially given that simply obtaining a GED without subsequent training or education has little effect on lifetime earnings or employment. Similarly, the recent positive results for programs that combine work with education and training and with supportive services, such as CET, suggest that integrated employment-based approaches might be more effective than traditional stand-alone education or training and more effective in the long run than immediate job placement into low-wage jobs with limited potential for future mobility.

The sections that follow provide suggestions of possible post-employment education and training strategies that local WtW program operators should consider in designing their formula and competitive grant program. We begin with a brief discussion of what is meant by *employment under* WtW programs and the basic structural dimensions of post-employment activities. This is followed by a discussion of specific post-employment education and training strategies.

1. Defining Employment Broadly

For purposes of discussion related to the WtW grants program, in this section a broad conception of employment is used, encompassing more than just unsubsidized jobs in the regular labor market, and including (but not limited to) work-based situations listed in exhibit 2. Thus, employment means being either in a regular traditional unsubsidized job or in any of a number of more nontraditional job scenarios that have a specific employer and/or worksite.

Each of the various types of employment can also have a number of different characteristics that describe, for instance, how education and training interact with the actual work activities or how much of the worker's time is devoted to work versus education/training. The various types of employment listed on the exhibit include standard unsubsidized employment in the regular job market, as well as several forms of subsidized employment and workplace-based arrangements that involve both work and education or training.

2. Defining Post-Employment Activities

Two basic structural dimensions that provide a useful general way to characterize the types of post-employment education and training are (1) the physical location of the training vis-a-vis the worksite and (2) how the costs of training are covered. The chart displayed in exhibit 3 graphically depicts these two dimensions. At one extreme, the training or education for the worker (i.e., incumbent worker) could take place totally separate from the workplace (e.g., at a training institution or community college); at the other extreme, the training or education could be scheduled on-site at the workplace during work hours. In between these extremes are a

Exhibit 2

Categories of Employment, Broadly Defined

C **Unsubsidized regular employment** (in the private, public, or nonprofit sector)

C **Subsidized regular employment**

Subsidized hire. Employers receive financial incentives to hire persons in certain target groups who meet minimum requirements (e.g., hiring tax credits).

On-the-job training. Employers receive a subsidy to cover a portion (e.g., 25 to 75 percent), but not all, of the wages paid during the training period (e.g., 3 to 12 months). The subsidy to the employer sometimes results from diverting all, or a portion, of welfare or food stamps payments that would be paid to the person.

C **Subsidized temporary employment**

Try-out or temporary regular jobs. Employers receive a wage subsidy for hiring persons with marginal qualifications for a trial, try-out, or temporary period of time (through direct subsidy or welfare grant diversion); offsets some or all of the employer's wage costs

C **Subsidized public employment**

Work experience. Usually unpaid workfare assignments, where recipients work in exchange for welfare benefits, or short-term unpaid work experience designed as basic exposure to the work environment. Some work-welfare programs provide stipends to persons in work-experience assignments, usually using TANF/JOBS or JTPA funds.

Community or public service jobs. Individuals assigned to a subsidized jobCgenerally in the public or nonprofit sectorS receive wages, typically minimum wage or slightly below, for the hours they work.

C **Structured combination of employment and education/training**

Apprenticeships. Education and/or occupational or paraprofessional training (in a classroom or in the workplace) combined with supervised on-the-job assignment; worker may be paid or unpaid; employer may receive subsidy or tax credit.

Customized training. Specific occupational training (in a classroom or in the workplace) in conjunction with a specific employer, business, or industry organization, sometimes with pre-employment preparation; may be publicly funded or costs split between public sector program and

private employer.

Supported work experience. With pre-employment preparation, assignment to public job assignments and gradually increasing hours and work responsibility, combined with ongoing counseling, education, and peer support; usually publicly funded.

Exhibit 3

Basic Structural Dimensions of Post-Employment Education and Training

		Public Sector Resources		Private Sector Resources	
		Public subsidy	Employer-government cost sharing	Personal and family resources	Employer pays
Separate from the workplace	Not in the workplace				
	Mixed strategies				
Work place based	In the workplace				

range of possibilities, including, for example, a few hours onsite at the workplace plus other hours at a community college. Similarly, the ways the costs of the education or training are handled could range from the private employer covering all costs (using regular business tax provisions) to the other extreme where a direct public subsidy to the employer or to the worker covers the entire costs. Again, there are many funding and locational possibilities in between.

There are also many different types of training/education in terms of content and purpose. One

way to think about post-employment education and training strategies is to consider content in terms of three dimensions: relationship to current job, employment objective, and occupational focus.

- ! ***Relationship to current job.*** Whether the education and training is an integral part of the regular job (i.e., education and training formally integrated with work; education and training in addition to work).
- ! ***Employment objective.*** Whether the education and training is intended to qualify one for the current job or a future job.
- ! ***Occupational focus.*** Whether the education and training is related to a specific or generic occupation.

Exhibit 4 summarizes these various features of post-employment education and training and notes a few of the possible program variations.

WtW and TANF open the possibility for workforce development organizations to move away from more traditional, sequential program models, which typically first provide education, then training, then employment, to more innovative ways of combining learning and work. For example, Strawn (1998) has identified four emerging models for linking basic education with training and/or work: (1) work-related basic education, as a short-term bridge to work or job training; (2) work-related basic education and training combined; (3) work-related basic education, training, and unpaid work combined; and (4) work-related basic education, training, and paid work. Each of these models emphasizes the importance of integrating basic education instruction into a work context; the final two models suggest the possibility of acquiring academic and job-specific skills once welfare recipients are employed.

Thus, there are many different arrangements that can be adopted to provide education and skills training to workers. And there are many work-based ways to schedule both education and skills

training, including providing them concurrently. Focus groups with workers found that *time@is* perhaps the most important reason they do not pursue further education and training (Aron and Nightingale, 1996). Given the many demands on time that parents—particularly single parents—face integrating work and training or learning during the workday (i.e., concurrently) is particularly appealing, rather than assuming an individual would attend training or school after working a full-time job. The following sections address education approaches first, then look at skills training options, with many examples of both education and skills training occurring concurrently.

Exhibit 4	
Selected Characteristics of Post-Employment Education or Training Approaches	
Selected Features of the Education or Training	Possible Variations
<i>Source of funding:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public funding/subsidy to employer or worker 2. Private business/employer funding 3. Public/employer funding 4. Worker/employer share costs 5. Worker responsible for costs
<i>Site/location:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At the workplace/worksite 2. At a training institution 3. Split schedule and/or classes
<i>Relationship to current job:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrated and integral to job with employer concurrence or involvement 2. In addition to regular job, employer concurrence 3. In addition to regular job, employer not directly involved/aware
<i>Employment objective:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To strengthen or update skills for current job 2. To qualify for current job 3. To qualify for future related job or upgrade 4. To qualify for future different job

Exhibit 4	
Selected Characteristics of Post-Employment Education or Training Approaches	
<i>Occupational focus:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Occupation-or industry-specific skills 2. General skills or education 3. Integrated basic/general education and occupation/industry skills

3. Post-Employment Education Options

The economic returns to education have been extensively analyzed for both welfare and non-welfare recipients. As one might expect, educational attainment is positively correlated with lifetime earnings, and there is a clear correlation between low literacy levels and poverty. A national survey found that adults in the lowest literacy level are ten times more likely to be poor than those in the highest level (Kirsch et al., 1993). Research also has found substantial returns to post-secondary education for the general population. Among the effects of post-secondary education cited in a 1995 DOL review were the following (U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Chief Economist, 1995, vi):

- ! A year of post-secondary education is generally estimated to generate increased earnings in the range of 6 percent to 12 percent, and these earnings increases appear to last throughout one's career. These estimates adjust for differences in preexisting ability levels between college students and others.
- ! The income returns per year of credits completed are roughly similar for two-year community colleges and four-year colleges.
- ! Substantial earnings increases appear to result from completed post-secondary credits whether or not students finish formal degree programs.

The DOL report also indicates that the returns to post-secondary education occur not just for young persons who enter college immediately after high school but also for older adults who return to

school.¹⁶ However, welfare programs have often restricted the extent to which welfare recipients can pursue post-secondary degrees. The restrictions and limitations generally result from what states allow in terms of meeting one's work requirement. A recent DHHS survey found that 15 states restricted post-secondary education for welfare recipients to associate degree programs, only allowing participation in these programs to count toward meeting the individual's work requirement, and only 9 states explicitly allowed participants to enroll in a four-year college. A California study found that in many welfare offices, caseworkers counted student financial aid as income, causing recipients in college to lose welfare benefits (Spatz, 1997).

Despite the important role that education plays as a determinant of lifetime employment and earnings, recent research also suggests that *basic* education and GED programs for educationally-deficient *adults* have little or no direct effect on employment or earnings (at least in the absence of further post-secondary education and/or job training) (Cameron, 1992; Cameron and Heckman, 1993; Murnane et al., 1995). However, there is a modest positive impact of obtaining a GED on receipt of further post-secondary education and training, and this additional training does produce some earnings gains (Murnane et al., 1995). In general, though, GED recipients appear to fare only slightly better in the labor market than seemingly comparable high school dropouts.

In response to these research findings, Strawn and other researchers suggest that in designing welfare-employment programs, local program operators should view basic education and achieving a

¹⁶In 1991, 33 percent of all undergraduates enrolled in post-secondary education were over the age of 25. Many of them were workers returning to school to improve their earnings. For community colleges, the proportion was even greater -- almost half (44 percent) of undergraduates were over 25.

GED for welfare recipients as a step in the direction of obtaining additional education qualifications and not an end in itself:

...Activities to improve basic education skills are...important but should be provided as part of a broader range of employment and training activities. Given the limited economic benefits of basic education alone, new ways of combining basic skills instruction with work and training need to be developed. At a minimum, the GED should not be promoted as an end goal but rather as a step toward obtaining job training or other postsecondary education. For those unlikely to get a GED or otherwise gain access to job training, alternative credentials should be developed that certify an individual's mastery of basic and soft skills needed for entry-level jobs in specific business sectors (Strawn, 1998, p.7).

Strawn also suggests a number of program factors that might explain why traditional basic education welfare-to-work strategies have not been more effective: uneven program quality, widespread undiagnosed learning disabilities, poor motivation by recipients with employment goals to return to school, and the lack of close links between most basic education programs and local employers or training programs.

A recent National Institute for Literacy report (Murphy and Johnson, 1998) offers some general guidance on steps for integration of basic education and literacy instruction into welfare-to-work programs:

- ! **Focus on Employment-Related Goals.** In most successful work/literacy programs, the goal of employment is manifest from the outset and permeates the instructional program. Many of the exemplary programs seek input from private sector employers about both the local job market and skills needed for specific jobs.
- ! **Hands-On Work Experience.** One of the best ways to familiarize a person without work experience with the world of work and to demonstrate the utility and relevance of skills taught in the classroom is to provide hands-on work experience. The practical experience may take the form of internships, shadowing, or actual employment. Many workplace literacy programs have found that it is important for students to have the opportunity to apply material learned in the classroom in a hands-on working environment on a continual basis.

!

Collaboration with Welfare Agencies and Other Community Organizations. One of the most important components of a successful workplace literacy/education program for welfare recipients is a close working relationship with the appropriate welfare agencies. Much of the confusion over what services are to be performed, how long participants are to remain enrolled, and what outcomes are to be expected can be avoided by mutual pre-planning and agreement. The needs of welfare-to-work participants often extend well beyond the services normally available in an educational institution or volunteer agency. Participants may need assistance in such areas as child care, education counseling, health, housing, domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, transportation, income maintenance, job placement, and clothing. Exemplary programs look beyond the basic instructional needs of their participants and find a way to connect with other organizations and agencies that can provide the wide array of services that are needed.

In general, then, WtW programs and basic education/literacy providers need to work closely with one another. In particular, rather than simply referring participants to the education programs for services, WtW program administrators and staff need to pay particular attention to the quality and appropriateness of educational services received in relation to employment goals and closely monitor progress of participants through such programs.

The new Workforce Investment Act (WIA) also endorses the importance of linking education to work by requiring that state and local adult education programs be held accountable for achieving work-based outcomes in the future. This means that at a time when WtW programs are seeking opportunities to integrate learning and work, the adult education system is also planning to shift its focus to include employment as well as education objectives. The timing provides an opportunity to seriously

enhance work-based education. As adult education programs are considering how to make their instruction more work-oriented, it will be important to not limit their thinking just to persons who are currently not employed. That is, the needs of those welfare recipients or former recipients who are already working must also be considered. A few strategies, for example, that would improve access and use regular adult-education programs by welfare recipients and others once employed, include the following:

- ! Ensure that appropriate classes are offered at times and locations that will be convenient for workers; for example, hold GED and ESL classes in neighborhood sites at night and on weekends rather than just at community colleges.
- ! Consider offering subsidized care or activities for children of workers while they are in classes held at nontraditional hours, going beyond traditional preschool child care, to also, for example, provide on-site babysitters for infants, homework clubs or sports teams for school-age children, or play groups for toddlers.
- ! Establish mechanisms for monitoring attendance and progress through education programs, follow up to identify issues or problems that might be interfering with attendance, and help the individual overcome those problems. This is particularly important given that a high proportion of all ABE students do not complete the program.

Workplace-based education has become somewhat more common over the past decade, and WtW programs could collaborate by funding education programs, totally or in shared arrangements with employers, unions, or other programs such as those sponsored by JTPA/WIA. Some of the growing acceptance of such programs may reflect the tightness of the labor market, as employers are hiring more persons with limited skills and then assuming responsibility for basic remedial instruction. Some employers are willing to allow paid time off to employees who enroll in education classes, say one or two hours a week for 10 weeks. Other employers provide space and supplies for an education agency, union, or community-based organization (CBO) to send an instructor in twice a week to hold on-site

classes for selected employees. Employers might pay all associated costs (i.e., for the instructor, space and supplies, and wages for workers while they attend classes), or there could be shared cost arrangements (e.g., class is scheduled at the end of the day for two hours twice a week and the worker stays one hour later each of those days, meaning the employer and employee split the costs of the time spent in class).

4. Post-Employment Occupational Training

Occupational training consists of instruction in specific job skills, either in the classroom, in the workplace, or in both of these settings. WtW's emphasis on long-term self-sufficiency within TANF's Work First environment creates strong motivation for states and localities to consider occupational training for welfare recipients once they are employed, rather than before becoming employed. Such training can be sponsored and paid for by the public sector, by private companies, or in combination by public and private sectors. A less traditional approach for providing individuals with skills-upgrading, though, occurs through careful career planning, where individuals are guided to particular jobs because they offer career advancement potential.

Lifetime limits on welfare receipt under TANF and constraints on providing training as a pre-employment service under WtW make it important for local WtW programs to think beyond job placement to job retention, earnings enhancement, and career advancement in structuring training programs. The extent to which welfare recipients are able to remain self-sufficient over the long term will depend largely on whether the jobs they hold pay wages that support their families and provide health insurance and other work-related benefits. Because the jobs that many welfare recipients first

secure will not meet these criteria, WtW programs need to help former recipients take the next step.

Brown et al. (1998) identified several relevant strategies for promoting job advancement among former welfare recipients:

- ! **Target jobs, sectors, and employers with opportunities for advancement.** When conducting labor market analyses or targeting employers for job development, look for not just job openings, but also advancement opportunities. For example, according to another study focusing on three low-wage service occupations (Pindus et al., 1997), key factors that improve mobility and advancement opportunity in an industry include expansion/job growth, 24-hour operation, high turnover, and a wide variety and many levels of jobs within an organization. Industry and market factors play a substantial role in advancement opportunities. In some cases, the current industry structure (e.g., reimbursement limits, licensure requirements, etc.) limits advancement even when employers provide training and support upward mobility.

- ! **Ask about opportunities for advancement when developing jobs.** When gathering information from employers about available jobs, also ask about opportunities for advancement and find out what additional education or skills a worker might need to advance. Use the information to match recipients with jobs, design job-advancement activities, and help recipients plan their career paths.

- ! **Continue to work with former recipients to promote job advancement.** Facilitate career advancement by providing former participants with job search assistance geared specifically to next-step jobs. For example, job developers can recruit employers who are interested in hiring individuals who have proven themselves in their first job.

- ! **Offer education and training for career advancement.** Think about education and training not only as a pre-employment activity but also a career advancement strategy. Consider giving priority for participation in these activities to former welfare recipients who have been employed for six months or a year.

- ! **Partner with employers to provide training geared to job advancement.** Where possible, partner with employers to expand training they already provide or add training in skills needed for job advancement. The Washington State Incumbent Worker Training Demonstration plans to use existing customized training resources to assist firms

that hire welfare recipients in upgrading employee skills. The training will be provided through the local community and technical college system, and costs will be shared with employers.

! Make it easy for working parents to participate in education and training.

Recognize how difficult it is for single parents to combine work and school. Providing financial support for tuition and other costs and expanding access to support services including child care assistance to former welfare recipients can make it possible for them to continue their education and training. Paying tuition costs up front, even when employers offer partial or full tuition reimbursement after classes are completed, can be a deterrent to welfare recipients participating in such programs. In addition, make sure that programs are accessible by working individuals, with evening and/or weekend hours and convenient locations.

! Market career-ladder opportunities as a benefit to both employers and job seekers.

The prospect of job-advancement services can encourage welfare recipients participating in your program to take entry-level positions. The same services will also help businesses by providing a better-trained, more productive, loyal workforce. For example, Project Match in Chicago has developed a model called the Incremental Ladder to Economic Independence. The ladder establishes clear benchmarks to measure progress and arranges activities so they are progressively more demanding. The top rung of the ladder is employment in an unsubsidized, well-paying job with benefits. The bottom rungs of the ladder include educational/training and self-improvement activities; internships; voluntary work; and child-focused activities, such as getting children to school on time or regularly taking them to extracurricular activities.

While many of these recommendations refer to pre-employment career guidance, a number of them obviously also involve various types of post-employment services, ranging from case management to help retaining jobs, job counseling to help obtain a new (and better) job, and subsidies to invest in skills-upgrading.

A recent National Governors' Association report (NGA, 1998) also suggests that education and skill development programs should be modified to complement the "Work First" orientation of welfare reform. For example, training and education programs could be condensed so that participants could complete them in shorter timeframes. Programs could also be structured into modules so

individuals could complete them a little at a time, with some of the training taking place after workers begin a job.

In tight labor markets, which currently exist in many areas of the nation, employers may prefer this change to shorter training, even coupled with post-employment training, because they can get new employees into the workplace faster. For individuals, this strategy may also increase the likelihood that what they learn in training is reinforced on the job.

This may best be accomplished by customizing training programs to industry needs and designing these programs in conjunction with employers. To the extent that employers are willing to cooperate in scheduling training or education at the workplace, that would make it easier for working parents to participate. Or training could be held in the last hour or two of the work day, with some of the costs shared among the worker, the employer, and the WtW program. WtW programs do not have to bear the entire burden of funding and operating job training programs to upgrade the job-related skills of workers. Rather, they can look to local employers for help in setting up, funding, and operating training programs for new and existing workers. And, in fact, involving employers in training can help stretch training dollars, target training to meet specific needs of employers, and retain workers in jobs and advance them to higher-paying, career-type jobs. One major approach to upgrading the skills of welfare recipients once they are employed is through employer-based training (EBT). Such training can range from relatively short-term (two- to four-week orientation and training in specific skills that will be required for a particular position) to apprenticeship programs that involve formal classroom and on-the-job instruction spread over a four-year period.

A recent report published by the DOL (Isbell et al., 1996) highlights a variety of employer-

based training models that are applicable to WtW initiatives at the state and local levels. The report notes that one of the hallmarks of EBT programs and what sets them apart from more traditional JTPA training is the active involvement of employers in customizing training so that trainees emerge from the training program with the skills/ competencies needed for a specific job. An important feature of employer-based training is that the employer has substantive input into the content of training curriculum and the instructional methods used. EBT programs can be developed both as a strategy for preparing welfare recipients to enter new jobs or as an approach to building skills and increasing the chances of career advancement once a welfare recipient is employed.

The EBT programs profiled in this report typically provide a combination of classroom and laboratory (hands-on) training. A strong emphasis is placed on both (1) providing trainees with the job-specific knowledge they need for the job through classroom instruction and (2) simulating specific job functions/tasks through laboratory workshops or OJT experiences. Companies and training providers find that in addition to job-specific skills training, trainees often need training in basic skills, literacy, and/or workplace skills. For example, some of the EBT programs surveyed include workshops on how to dress for work, show up on time to work, develop a positive work attitude, use business English, work effectively with others, answer the telephone, and manage time and stress. The report characterizes EBT programs as a win-win-win situation for employers, workers, and workforce development agencies. For example, the company sponsoring the training wins because:

- ! training costs are subsidized by the government;
- ! training is customized to company's needs, so workers emerge from the program with the skills they need to be productive on the job;

- ! the local workforce development agency and/or the training vendor can help with recruiting, assessing, and screening applicants; and
- ! in addition to providing customized job-specific training, the workforce development agency and/or the training vendor can provide basic skills remediation, workplace skills training, and case management to ensure that trainees perform well on the job.

Companies also indicated that EBT programs have a positive and direct effect on the firm's bottom line by contributing to a high performance workforce, a customer-service focus, lower turnover, and improved morale.

The report concludes that successful employer-based training programs can be implemented by a wide range of companies and can differ in a number of ways: size of company, amount expended on training, types of training offered, and whether training is offered before or after employment. While the report finds that there is no single method for structuring successful training programs, it does provide a series of suggestions that are relevant for workforce development agencies interested in establishing EBT programs jointly with local employers:

- ! **Be visible.** Workforce development agencies should be visible in the business community by attending meetings of local industry groups, business roundtables, or chambers of commerce to make presentations about their programs and the opportunities for training.
- ! **Target employers already involved.** Companies already involved in the community are more likely to be familiar with government training programs and interested in helping the community by hiring welfare and other disadvantaged individuals.
- ! **Market customized training by emphasizing its bottom-line benefits.** Some companies will have to be sold on the idea of establishing a customized training program. Offer to put companies in touch with others that have had successful EBT experiences. Stress the following bottom-line benefits of training: increased productivity, increased profits, improved employee morale, higher retention for entry-level employees, fewer accidents, and fewer mistakes/scrap parts. Also, stress these following additional benefits of joint sponsorship of customized training programs

between the employer and the workforce development agency:

- Costs of training are offset by the local workforce development agency (e.g., through WtW or JTPA).
- Customization of the training program ensures that companies have input into the curriculum and get workers who will be productive from the first day on the job.
- Customized training provides a flexible arrangement; companies can help choose the training provider, suggest selection criteria for training applicants, and provide their own instructors for the training.
- The local workforce development agency provides screening and assessment of trainees, resulting in excellent recruits for the firm.
- Supportive services such as day-care and transportation may be available for trainees to help them be reliable workers and retain their jobs.
- The workforce development agency has the ability to work with trainees even after employment and provide case management to reduce absenteeism and turnover.
- The workforce development agency has relationships with training organizations and can put companies in touch with excellent training institutions. In addition to job specific skills, WtW/JTPA can provide job readiness training and basic skills remediation.

! **Establish customized training for consortia of businesses.** Small and mid-size firms often do not have sufficient numbers of job openings in specific occupations to justify the establishment of a customized program. In addition, small and mid-size firms may lack the working capital and management time often needed to customize the training program (e.g., design of curriculum). Workforce development organizations should consider establishing programs for consortia of similar businesses in their locality.

! **Carefully negotiate agreements.** The agreements between companies, the workforce development agency, and training providers take time to negotiate sometimes a year or more. Workforce development organizations should not try to rush the negotiation process, but should use it to ensure that companies have the opportunity to provide input into the training program.

- ! **Look to the companies to provide resources.** Companies should provide start-up and ongoing development assistance. Workforce development organizations should ask companies to provide equipment for training laboratories. Often, up-to-date equipment (especially in manufacturing processes) is expensive and can quickly become obsolete. Companies can donate equipment they have upgraded, and trainees will have the opportunity for hands-on experience.

- ! **Build in feedback, and expect to refine the program over time.** Once a training program is established, it should not be static or it will fail to respond to the companies' needs and they will withdraw support. Workforce development organizations should ask for feedback from companies regarding the trainees and the curriculum.

- ! **Keep paperwork to a minimum.** Many companies may be wary of working with workforce development agencies because they believe government programs require burdensome paperwork. By keeping paperwork requirements to a minimum, workforce development agencies can collect needed program data while encouraging companies to participate.

In its study of employment retention and career advancement, the National Governors' Association (NGA, 1998) suggested in response to *Work First*, strategies under welfare-to-work, that education (and training) programs need to change their length and structure to make them more compatible with employment. The NGA report provides several useful suggestions for making education and skill development programs compatible with work:

- ! **Clients need good information on what types of education and training opportunities will help them get better jobs.** It is especially important to provide this information on industries that are likely to employ welfare recipients and that have jobs available in the local economy. Welfare administrators should report on the success of institutions that provide education and training for workers.

- ! **Provide financial resources to individuals to help them pursue education and training.** New types of scholarship programs may be needed. States should examine their current financial aid packages to ensure that they provide support for part-time enrollees and do not penalize people who work by requiring full-time enrollment to receive aid or penalize people who need basic education courses to succeed in the programs.

- ! **Consider how individual development accounts (IDAs) or individual training accounts (ITAs) can be used to promote continued education and training.** These accounts help individuals set aside funds, contributed by employers and welfare recipients, to finance education and training. States should explore other sources that can contribute matching funds for IDAs, such as foundations.
- ! **Workers should have easy access to education and training.** The public sector should work with employers to ensure that training for their workers can be accessed at the worksite or another conveniently located facility. Giving workers release time from the job for brief periods may encourage them to take advantage of training opportunities.
- ! **The public sector can provide support services, such as child care and transportation, to help workers take advantage of training.** In many areas, child care and transportation are not available during nontraditional hours, inhibiting workers' ability to participate in education or training.

A study of opportunities for low-wage workers in three service industries—the health care, hospitality, and child care sectors—supports these suggestions (Pindus et al., 1997). The study reported that workers participate in employer-provided training but do not find that completion of this training is helping them to advance, since it is required merely to keep their current job. Workers do not fully understand how to market their skills or identify those skills that are transferable. Employers point to tuition reimbursement plans as a benefit that can help workers advance, but workers often lack the time, resources, and confidence to pursue additional academic credentials. Most tuition reimbursement plans do not cover the costs of books, transportation, or child care, and require the employee to pay first and obtain reimbursement later. Sometimes reimbursement is conditional, requiring a passing grade or a grade of C or above. Recommendations drawn from this study include the following:

- ! **Employees should get credit for successful completion of training even if it is required training, structuring such training as a first step on a path to**

advancement. For example, a module could be added to such training that incorporates labor market and job advancement information, since workers have limited time to take additional training or extensively explore outside sources for this information.

- ! **Employers need to offer training and education opportunities that are sufficiently flexible and accessible and that meet the short-term time horizons of lower-paid workers.** Workers need to see how they can make incremental improvements in their skills and qualifications which will contribute to job advancement and increased pay over a relatively short period of time.

- ! **Tuition reimbursement programs need to be made more easily accessible to lower-paid workers.** Two changes that would be most helpful are to reduce the amount of out-of-pocket costs on the front end that are borne by low-paid workers, and allow workers to attend training during work hours or provide flexibility so that workers can arrange to make up lost work hours at a convenient time. In order to reduce the risk to employers, tuition reimbursement plans could include provisions for recoupment of tuition costs if workers leave the job before a specified period of time.

E. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS FOR POLICY AND PROGRAM FEATURES THAT SUPPORT POST-EMPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES

Given the *work-first* orientation and lifetime limits on welfare receipt imposed under TANF, the provision of education, job training, job retention, and other support services *after* TANF recipients obtain jobs is now an essential program component for any state or local WtW initiative. Restrictions on the use of WtW funds for pre-employment stand-alone job training mean that traditional service delivery models (featuring a sequencing of basic education, followed by job training, then job search/placement and job retention) are unlikely to be viable in formulating service delivery strategies for WtW programs.

State and local agencies must, therefore, develop new models that creatively combine work with development of basic and job-related skills. These service delivery models must also anticipate the

many stresses and difficulties that WtW participants are likely to encounter in balancing skill development with the demands of the workplace and family obligations. For example, in formulating strategies for strengthening basic education and job-specific skills, careful consideration must be given to the limited time that WtW participants are likely to have available to attend classes. Once working, WtW participants may have only several hours per week that can be effectively allocated to education or training unless work time is allocated by employers to skill upgrading. In addition to time constraints, WtW participants may face financial constraints to covering costs of education/training, possible transportation barriers in getting to and from training sites, possible child care problems (particularly if training is in the evening or outside of work hours), and a host of other barriers to successfully attending and completing education or training.

State and local WtW agencies will need to consider various ways to combine work, education, training, and a range of support services. Wherever possible, a key to such combinations of work and skill development will be close linkages with employers in the development of workplace-based training programs. Working closely with employers will not only improve possibilities for enhanced skill development among WtW participants but also help pave the way to identifying an expanded range of job openings, increased chances of job retention, and leveraging of private sector training dollars.

Some examples of ways in which work and education/training can be combined include (1) on-the-job training, where the wage of new workers is partially offset by the public sector in exchange for training provided by the employer; (2) formal apprenticeship programs, in which employers (often in collaboration with unions) provide a combination of structured classroom and on-the-job training over generally a two- to four-year period; and (3) flexible scheduling of work hours, such as having

employers allow individuals to work four days and have one day off per week for training, which may or may not be paid by the employer.

In particular, WtW agencies can facilitate skills development and career advancement by:

- ! encouraging employers to provide employer-based training, including recruiting employers to provide such programs, providing funds to off-set costs of training, linking employers with training providers to assist with curriculum development and instruction;
- ! developing case management plans that identify each participant's skills deficits and the series of steps participants (and employers) should undertake to build basic and job-specific skills;
- ! providing resources to help offset the cost of training for participants and employers, such as training vouchers, wage subsidies (such as OJT), and financial assistance with curriculum development;
- ! providing a range of support services tailored to help WtW participants overcome barriers to starting or completing training, such as help with transportation and child care; and
- ! monitoring participant progress toward completion of training and providing ongoing services to troubleshoot problems as they occur.

Investing in basic education and training is one approach to helping welfare recipients build the skills needed to retain employment and advance along career paths to higher-paying jobs. Under both TANF and WtW, providing such training before starting a job is restricted, either legally (as with WtW) or practically (as in some TANF programs). But once recipients are employed, there are many options for investing in skills development.

Within the context of TANF's immediate job focus, and using the flexibility and funding now available through the WtW grant program, providing education and job training after welfare recipients are employed is a principal path open to states and localities for strengthening basic and job-related

skills and enhancing the long-term employability of welfare recipients. For example, the returns to basic education and GED preparation for adults have not been very promising in isolation from additional education or training. But if such activities upgrade basic skills and educational credentials sufficiently to enable welfare recipients to obtain further post-secondary education and training, then employability and possibilities for career advancement could potentially be improved substantially. Within the context of TANF's and WtW's emphases on "work first" and time-limited welfare receipt, states and localities could provide educational services once welfare recipients are employed.

In conclusion, this report only begins to identify some of the many models and strategies available to WtW agencies in designing effective post-employment education, training, and support services. Because of the short-term nature of funding under the WtW program (three years) and restrictions imposed on stand-alone education and job training before a WtW participant becomes employed, it is essential for WtW agencies to move thoughtfully and expeditiously in implementing post-employment education and training. The WtW legislation provides workforce development agencies and other grantees with resources and substantial flexibility in providing education, training, and support services to promote career advancement and long-term self-sufficiency. So long as those services are provided *after* employment occurs. In formulating effective strategies, it is strongly recommended that workforce development agencies work closely with local employers to implement workplace-based training models that meet the long-term needs of employers (e.g., improved worker productivity) and WtW participants, but also factor in the time, resource, and family constraints faced by WtW

participants once they become employed.

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