

Community College as a Work Activity for Cash Assistance Clients: *Short- and long-term outcomes in NYC*

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NYC's Cash Assistance Program

- NYC HRA is one of the country's largest social service agencies; cash assistance program alone serves more than 160,000 adults.
- In contrast with most states, New York:
 - Serves singles as well as families.
 - Does not apply a lifetime limit on benefits.
- Primary service track for “employable” clients is job search through vendor-operated Back 2 Work program (formerly Back to Work) with concurrent work experience assignment; average weekly caseload = ~10K.

Education as Work Activity

- Clients/applicants who are in school or request education are referred to HRA's Training Assessment Group (TAG).
- TAG staff ensure that program is approved (wide range of programs allowed, from short-term vocational education through degree programs) and that clients meet 35 hour/week work requirement.
 - *Degree students typically meet requirement by combining class hours with a Federal Work Study/school internship.*
- Federal 12-month lifetime limit on education as a core activity is applied, but no time limit on education as a secondary activity (e.g., with Federal Work Study as core activity).
- At peak times in year, ~3K cash assistance clients in this track.

Clients in CUNY AA Programs

- Cash assistance clients enrolled in AA degree programs at the City University of New York (CUNY) receive support services through the College Opportunity to Prepare for Employment (COPE) Program, funded by HRA and operated by CUNY.
- COPE assists students in meeting both college and HRA requirements (e.g., assistance with school registration, tutoring, child care referrals, preparation for social service appointments). Also provides job placement and retention services to current/former students.
- ~1,000 cash assistance clients in this track at peak times during the year.

Research Questions

- What are the characteristics of cash assistance clients enrolled in CUNY AA degree programs (as a work activity)?
- What are these clients' outcomes in terms of degree completion, benefit receipt, and employment/earnings?
(Note: Employment data not yet available.)
- How do their outcomes compare to those of (initially) similarly-educated clients in HRA's main employment program (Back to Work, BTW)?

Hypothesis: *In the period immediately following engagement, students will be more likely to remain on cash assistance as compared to BTW clients. But in the long run, increased education will lead to reduced likelihood of public benefit receipt and increased employment and earnings.*

Methods

- Identified cash assistance clients approved to participate in a CUNY AA degree program as a work activity between 2006 and 2009: **CUNY group**.
 - For comparison analysis, identified clients with a high school degree served by HRA's Back to Work program, which assists clients with job search preparation, placement, and retention: **BTW group**.
 - Analyzed HRA administrative data to identify client groups, examine key client and case characteristics, and track benefit receipt over time.
 - Data match in process with NYS Department of Labor will provide quarterly earnings for CUNY and comparison groups.
- ***Presented early findings at the 2010 NAWRS Workshop. Now able to examine longer term outcomes and better test our hypothesis.***

* In BTW group, excluded clients who were approved for education as a work activity (AA degree program or other) between 2006 and 2009; also excluded clients who were assigned to BTW but failed to engage with the BTW vendor (e.g., did not complete an employment plan).

Key Findings

- As compared to BTW clients, cash assistance clients in CUNY AA degree programs were younger, more likely to be women with children, and more likely to be Hispanic – less likely to be black. *(Also better educated as HS diploma/equivalent required by CUNY.)*
- Graduation rates for cash assistance clients at CUNY appear somewhat better than overall rates in CUNY AA degree programs.
- Support found for hypothesis re: benefit receipt.
 - In initial period after engagement, CUNY students were more likely to receive cash assistance and other benefits as compared to BTW clients who also had a HS diploma/equivalent.
 - By 3-4 years after engagement, data indicate significantly **lower CA and SNAP receipt rates** among CUNY group. (Medicaid enrollment rates also appeared somewhat lower by 6-7 years after engagement.)
 - Pattern holds after controlling for age, sex, citizenship, marital status, presence of children on case, and race/ethnicity.

CUNY AA students vs. BTW

Select Client & Case Characteristics, 2006 –2009

	CUNY (n=7,917)	BTW (n=62,920)
HS diploma or equivalent	100%	52%
Female	80%	62%
Age (median)	23 years	35 years
Single (never married)	88%	84%
U.S. citizen	88%	91%
Child < 18 years on case	70%	50%
Hispanic	41%	32%
Black (non-Hispanic)	46%	63%
White (non-Hispanic)	9%	6%
Other	4%	2%

Source: NYCWAY and Welfare Management System (WMS); clients engaged between 2006 and 2009, starting Jan 2006 for CUNY and Aug 2006 for BTW (i.e., first month of BTW program).

Area of Study & Education Outcomes

Areas of Study

Top Five Skill Categories		
Medical - Direct Patient Care	1,595	22%
Business/Accounting	1,486	21%
Education/Teaching/Child Care	1,122	16%
Social Services/Mental Health	967	14%
Medical - Technology	628	9%
<i>At least 1 of above</i>	5,320	67%
Source: NYCWAY. Note that individuals may enroll in multiple educational programs over time.		

Graduation Rates

Engagement Date	Graduated by Summer 2013		<i>Among graduates, highest level:</i>			
			Cert.	AA	BA	MA
Jul-Dec 2009	205	27%	2%	70%	27%	1%
Jan-Jun 2009	235	33%	2%	73%	24%	0%
Jul-Dec 2008	199	31%	1%	68%	30%	2%
Jan-Jun 2008	200	31%	2%	61%	32%	6%
Jul-Dec 2007	224	33%	1%	57%	38%	4%
Jan-Jun 2007	279	36%	3%	52%	44%	0%
Jul-Dec 2006	336	37%	1%	53%	42%	3%
Jan-Jun 2006*	1054	46%	1%	52%	43%	4%
Total	2732	37%	2%	58%	38%	3%

* Cohorts are mutually exclusive with clients counted in the first period in which they appear in the dataset. Thus the first cohort (Jan-June 2006) is largest, as it includes clients who were already enrolled in TAG-approved education/training in the prior semester.

Source: NYCWAY data matched with CUNY graduation files; degrees may have been awarded during or after cash assistance receipt. Note that 6 percent of the sample was excluded because the clients failed to match to CUNY degree program enrollment records or declined to consent to data sharing.

Benefit Receipt

CUNY AA Students vs. BTW

CUNY and BTW Comparison Groups

Select Client & Case Characteristics, mid-2006 –2009

	CUNY (n=5,483)	BTW (n=46,333)
<i>HS diploma or equivalent</i>	100%	100%
Female	80%	62%
Age (median)	22 years	35 years
Single (never married)	90%	84%
U.S. citizen	88%	91%
Child < 18 years on case	67%	49%
Hispanic	41%	29%
Black (non-Hispanic)	46%	63%
White (non-Hispanic)	9%	6%
Other	4%	2%

Sources: NYCWAY and WMS. CUNY group includes clients engaged between July 2006 and Dec 2009; excludes clients with education assignment in first half of 2006. BTW group includes clients engaged between Aug 2006 (first month of BTW program) and December 2009.

Trends in Cash Assistance Receipt

Engagement Date	Months after semester start:							
	6-12		12-18		18-24		24-30	
	CUNY	BTW	CUNY	BTW	CUNY	BTW	CUNY	BTW
Jul-Dec 2009	90%	78%	66%	55%	53%	46%	44%	40%
Jan-Jun 2009	83%	75%	61%	53%	51%	45%	42%	41%
Jul-Dec 2008	87%	79%	67%	58%	54%	50%	44%	45%
Jan-Jun 2008	85%	76%	59%	54%	51%	46%	47%	42%
Jul-Dec 2007	91%	78%	71%	57%	55%	49%	48%	45%
Jan-Jun 2007	88%	81%	64%	61%	50%	52%	40%	46%
Jul/Aug-Dec 2006	94%	87%	70%	65%	52%	55%	43%	48%

Source: WMS; **YELLOW SHADING** indicates a significant difference at $p < .05$

Trends in Cash Assistance Receipt

Engagement Date	Months after semester start:							
	30-36		36-42		42-48		48-54	
	CUNY	BTW	CUNY	BTW	CUNY	BTW	CUNY	BTW
Jul-Dec 2009	36%	36%	30%	34%	25%	32%		
Jan-Jun 2009	34%	36%	30%	34%	26%	33%	25%	31%
Jul-Dec 2008	38%	41%	35%	39%	31%	37%	26%	35%
Jan-Jun 2008	41%	40%	35%	39%	31%	37%	30%	36%
Jul-Dec 2007	41%	41%	36%	40%	32%	38%	29%	37%
Jan-Jun 2007	36%	43%	32%	41%	30%	39%	28%	38%
Jul/Aug-Dec 2006	37%	45%	33%	42%	31%	39%	28%	37%

Source: WMS; **YELLOW SHADING** indicates a significant difference at $p < .05$

Trends in Cash Assistance Receipt

Engagement Date	Months after semester start:									
	54-60		60-66		66-72		72-78		78-84	
	CUNY	BTW	CUNY	BTW	CUNY	BTW	CUNY	BTW	CUNY	BTW
Jul-Dec 2009										
Jan-Jun 2009										
Jul-Dec 2008	24%	34%								
Jan-Jun 2008	28%	34%	27%	33%						
Jul-Dec 2007	25%	35%	24%	34%	22%	34%				
Jan-Jun 2007	26%	37%	23%	35%	22%	34%	21%	34%		
Jul*-Dec 2006	27%	37%	26%	36%	24%	35%	23%	33%	22%	33%

Source: WMS; **YELLOW SHADING** indicates significantly lower benefit receipt rate at $p < .05$

Benefit Receipt as of July 1, 2010

Engagement Date	Cash Assistance		SNAP		Medicaid	
	CUNY	BTW	CUNY	BTW	CUNY	BTW
Jul-Dec 2009	56%	43%	72%	67%	79%	70%
Jan-Jun 2009	42%	34%	68%	64%	73%	62%
Jul-Dec 2008	37%	35%	64%	64%	72%	62%
Jan-Jun 2008	34%	30%	61%	62%	67%	58%
Jul-Dec 2007	32%	30%	60%	62%	68%	60%
Jan-Jun 2007	25%	30%	54%	61%	60%	58%
Jul/Aug-Dec 2006	23%	29%	52%	62%	62%	59%
<i>All</i>	35%	33%	61%	63%	68%	62%

Source: WMS; **YELLOW SHADING** indicates significantly lower benefit receipt rate at $p < .05$

Benefit Receipt as of July 1, 2013

Engagement Date	Cash Assistance		SNAP		Medicaid	
	CUNY	BTW	CUNY	BTW	CUNY	BTW
Jul-Dec 2009	18%	24%	45%	48%	54%	53%
Jan-Jun 2009	18%	23%	46%	48%	59%	52%
Jul-Dec 2008	19%	25%	49%	53%	57%	55%
Jan-Jun 2008	21%	25%	47%	52%	57%	55%
Jul-Dec 2007	18%	25%	46%	53%	54%	56%
Jan-Jun 2007	17%	26%	41%	55%	48%	56%
Jul/Aug-Dec 2006	19%	25%	41%	56%	50%	56%
<i>All</i>	19%	25%	45%	52%	54%	55%

Source: WMS; **YELLOW SHADING** indicates significantly lower benefit receipt rate at $p < .05$

Patterns of Benefit Receipt: Further Analysis

- *Are differences in benefit receipt explained by the substantial observed differences in client characteristics?*
 - Logistic regression shows that July 1, 2013 differences in cash assistance and SNAP receipt by group are *not* driven by differences in age, sex, citizenship, marital status, presence of children on case, or race/ethnicity.
 - Differences may be driven by other (unobserved) differences such as motivation level, particularly given that individuals actively select into the “education as a work activity” track.

Odds of Benefit Receipt as of July 1, 2013

	Cash Assistance		SNAP		Medicaid	
	Odds ratio	p-value	Odds ratio	p-value	Odds ratio	p-value
CUNY (vs. BTW)	.697	.000	.811	.000	.974	.393
Female	1.439	.000	1.637	.000	1.619	.000
U.S. citizen	.978	.540	1.128	.000	.975	.418
Child on case	1.798	.000	1.569	.000	1.478	.000
Never married	1.393	.000	1.325	.000	1.199	.000
Age	1.015	.000	1.023	.000	1.016	.000
White (non-Hispanic)*	.740	.000	.761	.000	.842	.000
Black (non-Hispanic)*	1.245	.000	1.131	.000	1.029	.165
Asian*	.527	.000	.681	.000	1.025	.728
Mixed race/Other*	.865	.163	.886	.144	.898	.190

*Compared to Hispanic.

Patterns of Benefit Receipt: Further Analysis

- *Are differences in benefit receipt driven by those CUNY students who graduated?*
 - Among CUNY students, graduates were somewhat less likely to receive cash assistance and SNAP as compared to non-graduates; no significant difference in Medicaid coverage.
 - However, both graduates and non-graduates were less likely to receive cash assistance and SNAP as compared to BTW clients.

Benefit Receipt Rate as of July 1, 2013

	CUNY			BTW
	Graduate	Non-graduate	p-value	
Cash assistance	15.20%	19.40%	0.000	24.90%
SNAP	41.20%	45.30%	0.004	51.90%
Medicaid	53.10%	53.50%	0.792	54.50%

Employment Outcomes *coming soon*

** NYS Wage Reporting System data match in process; will provide data on employment outcomes (earnings, occupations).*