

Recent Trends & Innovative Job Search Strategies for Disadvantaged Populations

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Policy Context

- **Job search assistance (JSA) is a critical component of TANF and other programs aimed to promote family self-sufficiency**
- **Little is known about effective JSA strategies**
- **States and localities are often under scrutiny to demonstrate that JSA and other program investments improve employment outcomes**

Presentation Overview

- **TANF program environment**
- **Background on JSA**
- **Examples of JSA strategies**
- **Efforts to increase JSA outcomes**

Data Sources

- **Data collection for the Work Participation and TANF/WIA Coordination Study**
 - **Site visits to 11 communities in 8 states**
 - Sonoma County, CA; Hartford and Norwich, CT; Pinellas County, FL; Burlington, IA; Hennepin and Stearns counties, MN; New York City, NY; Dallas, TX; Wasatch Front North and South Regions, UT
 - **Telephone interviews with 30 state TANF administrators**
 - **Document review (e.g., policy manuals, management reports, organizational materials, etc.)**

TANF Program Environment

Changing Demands

- **Decrease in federal funding to support TANF programs**
 - Declining value and reallocation of the TANF block grant
 - Discontinuation of federal supplemental grants
- **Increase in the demand for public assistance programs**
- **High unemployment, fewer full-time jobs**

Responses by States and Localities

- **Explicit efforts to reduce program costs**
 - Reductions in state and local administrative and program staffing
 - Reduction in the amount of the cash grant
 - Decreased availability of work and personal supports
- **Limit TANF caseload growth**
- **Modified contracts with local employment service providers**
- **Rethinking TANF practices and performance measures**

Background on JSA

Background on JSA

- **JSA counts toward the federal work participation rate (WPR) for a limited time; although, states often allow clients to participate longer**
- **JSA services are typically locally defined**
- **TANF agencies often rely on contracted service providers for JSA activities**
 - **Each brings agency culture (for example American Job Centers)**
 - **Additional layer of administration and coordination**

Background on JSA (cont.)

- **Monitoring and tracking JSA is typically state defined, locally implemented**
 - Variables and processes differ across states
 - Data quality varies within and across states
 - Cross-state comparisons in JSA is challenging
- **For federal reporting, there is an emphasis on process rather than outcome measures**

Examples of JSA Strategies

Basic Components of JSA

- **Assessment**
- **Self-directed job search**
- **Group job search**
- **Individualized counseling**
- **“Life skills”/resilience training**
- **Job development**

Examples of JSA Strategies

- **TANF applicant job search requirements**
 - New York City's upfront job search (4 weeks)
 - Minnesota's Diversionary Work Program (4 months)
- **Use of assessments to assign TANF clients to service tracks**
 - Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS) – comprehensive, ongoing assessment process
 - District of Columbia and Washington State
- **Use of technology for self-directed job search**
 - Pinellas County, Florida – JobSmart Lab self-directed online workshops and an e-course
 - DSS, North, Connecticut – Career TEAM

Examples of JSA Strategies (cont.)

- **Structured group JSA activities**
 - Iowa’s “Six Steps to a Successful Career Transition”
- **Building “life skills”/executive functioning**
 - Utah DWS - “Work Success” structured job search program

Efforts to Increase JSA Outcomes

Increasing JSA Outcomes

- **Create useful, motivational activities**
- **Use incentives to reward progress and completion of employment activities**
- **Actively monitor program process and outcomes**
- **Use performance-based contracts that reward engagement and/or employment**

For More Information

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