



Increasing TANF Program Engagement Through Behavioral Interventions in Monroe County, NY

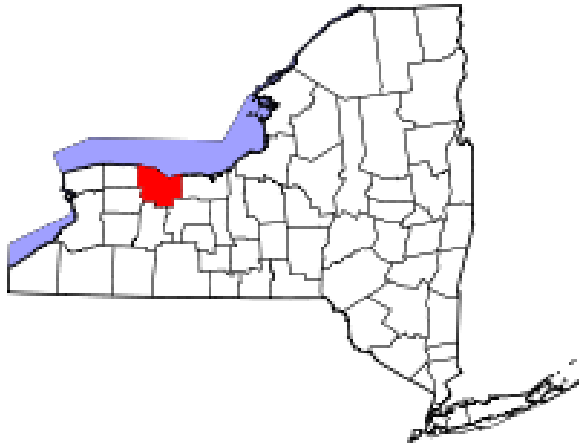
Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency – Next Generation

NAWRS | July 29, 2019 | New Orleans, LA

Bret Barden
MDRC



Monroe County, NY TANF Activities



Employment Assessment

- Who? TANF participants who complete a self-directed job search and are required to engage in work activities receive an Employment Assessment

Work Experience Program

- Who? After the Employment Assessment, roughly half of these participants are assigned an internship

Defining the Problem

50%

Employment
Assessment
attendance rate

51%

Work Experience
Program Orientation
attendance rate

32%

Average monthly
non-participation
rate in Work
Experience Program

- Show up rates for both the Employment Assessment and Work Experience Program Orientation are around **50 percent**, well below county goals.
- The county wanted to engage in behavioral research to increase show up rates, and subsequently increase engagement in the Work Experience Program internship.

Diagnose

Participant does not find employment at job search

Participant Attends Employment Assessment Meeting

Participant Attends Work Experience Program Orientation

Participant Attends Work Experience Program Assignment

Reasons for not attending Employment Assessment or Work Experience Program Orientation:

- Participants do not **understand** program requirements, benefits of attending, or consequences of not attending
- Participants experience **prospective memory failure** and forget to attend
- Participants **fail to plan** for transportation
- Participants feel **negative affect** and lose motivation after not finding a job in job search

Reasons for not attending WEP Assignment:

- Participants do not remember key points of lengthy orientation due to **cognitive load**
- Participants feel a **lack of engagement and agency** from one-way orientation
- Participants **fail to plan** for challenges of attending such as childcare, transportation, and illness
- Participants lose **motivation** after experiencing setbacks and stop attending

Design: Two Tests

1) Outreach Test

Redesigned outreach materials and outreach process to increase attendance at Employment Assessment and Work Experience Program Orientation. Two components:

- Employment Assessment Outreach
- Work Experience Program Outreach

2) Orientation Test

Redesigned Work Experience Orientation to increase participant engagement and address reasons for not attending and not completing Work Experience Program

-
- Both tests employ randomized controlled trial design
 - A factorial design is an exploratory measure

BIAS Employment Assessment Outreach

Schedule Employment Assessment Appointment

Standard Outreach:



Standard
Employment
Assessment letter

BIAS Outreach:



BIAS Employment
Assessment letter



Magnet



Text Messages: One
Week Before



Text Messages: Two
Days Before

Employment Assessment Meeting Attendance

Standard Referral Letter

Monroe County Department of Social Services
111 Westfall Rd
Rochester, NY 14620
Employment Coordinator Elizabeth O'Brien
(585) 753-2750

**WEP
ORIENTATION**

[REDACTED]

Notice Date: 4/5/2017
CIN: [REDACTED]
Case Number: [REDACTED]
Case Type: SNNC-FAM
Telephone: [REDACTED]

Number of Weekly Hours Required for this activity: 30

Provider/Site: Rochester Works!
691 St Paul St
Rochester, NY 14605

Referring Worker: [REDACTED]
Telephone: [REDACTED]
Fax: [REDACTED]

You are required to report:

For: Enroll in an Activity, Work Experience
On: 6/1/2015 8:50 PM
At: Rochester Works!
691 St Paul St
Rochester, NY 14605

Offering Name: Rochester Works - WEP Placement **Offering Contact:** Kathy Ziegler
Telephone: (585) 753-6855 **Fax:** (585) 753-5606

Directions: Please arrive 30 minutes early for this appointment. This appointment will take approximately 3 hours. You must make arrangements for childcare as you cannot bring children to this appointment.

Worker Remarks to Client: Test for BIAS Project-we can add worker remarks to client here

You are expected to appear as scheduled. You are expected to immediately contact the referring worker if unable to appear as scheduled. Your failure to comply with the above requirement willfully and without good cause may result in loss or reduction of Public Assistance and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - SNAP (new name for the Food Stamp Program) benefits and possible sanction per Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Regulations 385.9 and 385.12.

Additional Client Expectations: Test for BIAS project we can add additional client expectations here

Worker Remarks to Provider: Test for BIAS project we can add worker remarks to provider here

Provider Expectations: Please contact the referring worker immediately if client does not appear as scheduled. Please contact the referring worker if a new appearance date or time must be arranged. Please respond by 4/5/2017 with referral results and feedback as indicated on the feedback form, which has been provided for your use. This section is additional provider expectations with a date to respond and this section to describe

Behaviorally Informed Reminder Letters



Department of Human Services

Monroe County, New York

Cheryl Dinolfo
County Executive

Corinda Crossdale
Commissioner

Notice Date:
Case Number:
Case Type:
Telephone:

Personalization



Client Name
Client Address Line 1
Client Address Line 2

Dear Mary Kite,

Hello. My name is Elizabeth O'Brien, I am your Employment Coordinator for Public Assistance. My role is to help you find a job or job training opportunities. We have an upcoming meeting that is really important to get started!

Salience,
Simplification



When?

Your employment assessment is scheduled for:



Date: Wednesday April 11, 2018

Time: 1:00 pm

Meeting length: Approximately two hours

Location: 111 Westfall Road

Rochester, NY 14620

Why?

- Individuals like you have benefited from attending this meeting
- Discuss your career interests plus options for job training and further education
- Explore additional assistance, like transportation or child care

Your attendance is important!

Loss Aversion



If you do not attend this meeting you may:

- Miss out on jobs available now or training and education to further your career
- Lose some or all of your cash benefits



Behaviorally Informed Reminder Letters

Endowed Progress Effect



It only takes four steps to keep your benefits and get help finding employment. You are already on Step 3!



Saliency



How?

1. Mark the date on your calendar.



Date: Wednesday July 11, 2018

Time: 1:00

Location: 111 Westfall Road Rochester, NY 14620

I will attend the meeting.

2. Plan for this appointment!

How will I get to this meeting?

- Drive
- Get a ride from _____
- Take a bus

3. Come to our office.

- You can bring your child to this appointment. Childcare is not needed for this appointment but will be needed for later employment activities. Do you have ongoing child care?

- YES. Please complete the included form and bring to your appointment.
- NO. Please contact the Western New York Child Care Council at 1-800-743-5437 for assistance.

Implementation Prompt



Loss Aversion



- You are expected to appear as scheduled. **You may lose benefits if you do not attend.** These actions are in accordance with Office of

Behaviorally Informed Magnet Reminders

**We're
expecting
you!**



Date:

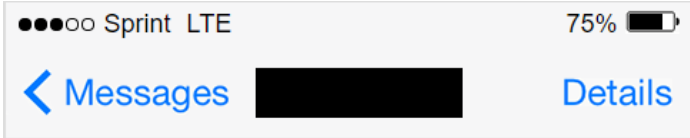
Time:

← Reciprocity

← Tangible magnet with clear reminder of date and time addresses inattention and prospective memory

Behaviorally Informed Texts

One Week
Before Meeting

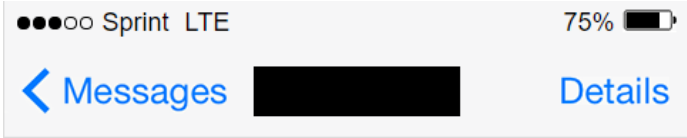


Hello Mary. This is a message from DSS. Don't forget your Employment Assessment appointment on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION] Rochester, NY.

We'll review your job plans and training options. Remember, if you don't attend you may lose some of your benefits. Make a plan now to get here.

Questions? Call 585-753-2750. We cannot read any responses to this text

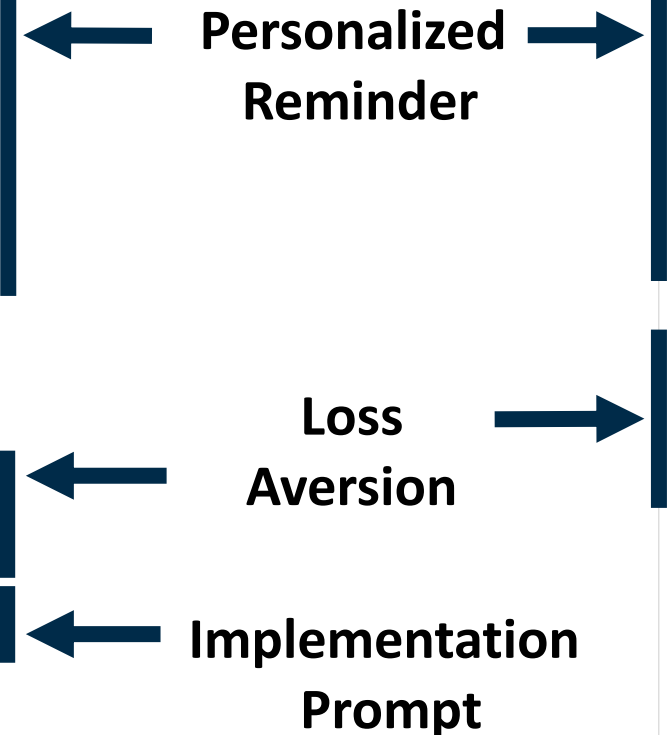
Two Days
Before Meeting



Hi Mary. This is a message from DSS. See you at your Employment Assessment appointment on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION] Rochester, NY.

Remember that missing this meeting may risk your public assistance benefits. See you then.

Questions? Call 585-753-2750. We cannot read any responses to this text.



BIAS Work Experience Program Outreach

Clients Attend Employment Assessment Meeting

Standard Outreach



Work Experience
Program letter in person

BIAS Outreach



Work Experience
Program letter in person



Mail BIAS Work
Experience Program letter



Text Messages: One
Week Before



Text Messages: Two
Days Before

Work Experience Program Meeting Attendance

BIAS Work Experience Program Orientation

Clients Show Up for Work Experience Program Meeting

On Standard Days

Attend Standard orientation

On BIAS Days

Attend BIAS orientation with behaviorally informed components to increase engagement

Clients Attend Work Experience Program Assignment

BIAS Work Experience Program Orientation



Work Experience Program Successes

Jeewan

Assessment Advisor



Charlie

Career Services Advisor



Remember: Your Work Experience Program internship is a requirement to receive ongoing TANF benefits

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1,564 people just like you found employment after attending their internship



In Monroe, TANF sanctions lead to an average loss of over \$3,000 in annual benefits per family

Weigh your options

- ✓ Never just stop going to your assignment
- ✓ Additional questions? Contact DSS at (585) 753-2750

Rochester Works!

Looking Back

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What did you like about your internship or your past employment?

Rochester Works!

Social influence,
Positive peer examples

Loss aversion,
Social influence

Personalization,
Increased engagement

Early Implementation Lessons & Challenges

- Intervention components overall well implemented
 - The randomized orientation has been more difficult to implement than outreach
- Fewer new TANF clients than expected
 - Initial plan to target repeating clients expanded to all clients
 - Expanded target population to include Safety Net clients
 - Offers chance to compare between two different populations facing work requirements
- Staff response overwhelmingly positive about behavioral changes
- Ongoing challenges
 - Quality of contact information and limited info on successful text receipt
 - Multiple (sometimes conflicting) data systems