

Measuring Caseload Dynamics and Earnings Outcomes for TANF Participants

State Experiences from a Family Self-
Sufficiency Data Center Initiative

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Session Agenda

- The Family Self-Sufficiency Data Center
- Multistate analysis project overview
- Panelist introductions
 - Minnesota
 - Maryland
 - California
 - Virginia
- Moderated panel (and audience) discussion

Who We Are:
The Family Self-Sufficiency Data
Center



FSSDC

Family Self-Sufficiency Data Center



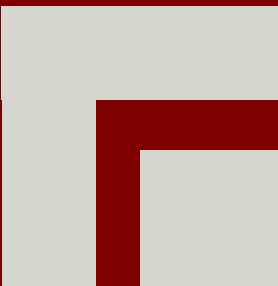
Family Self-Sufficiency Data Center



The purpose of the Data Center

- Provide TA to states around the analysis of their data from programs that support the self-sufficiency of families
- We have worked intensively with a few states, and provided more general resources to a broader group of states
- One way to do that is to build on what states have in common and have us address those commonalities

Multistate Analysis Project



Cross-state Collaborations

- Get states working on similar questions in different environments:
 - Are there common roadblocks?
 - If so, can we source (or develop) common solutions?
- Rather than ask what states need, allow them to show us (and themselves and each other).
- Collaboration creates opportunities for peer benchmarking.
- Examples are motivating and interesting!



Moving from Work Participation to Self-Sufficiency
A Research Proposal from the Family Self-Sufficiency Data Center

The Family Self-Sufficiency Data Center (FSSDC) is funded by the US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation to facilitate use of administrative data by researchers and administrators to improve understanding of and identify methods for increasing family well-being. The FSSDC is seeking state or local research partners for a study piloting the use of administrative data to explore self-sufficiency outcomes of TANF and/or SNAP recipients. This project's goals are:

- 1) To demonstrate a use case for family self-sufficiency data to inform and improve program administration;*
- 2) To define a set of metrics for benchmarking exercises;*
- 3) To clearly and transparently document how these analyses are performed (including providing code and detailed definitions) so that other agencies can duplicate these metrics on their own data.*

Participating agencies will receive:

- Extensive technical assistance from the FSSDC, including assistance with data preparation, data sharing, and/or data analysis, as appropriate;*
- The opportunity to collaborate and develop a common understanding of best practices together with other partner agencies;*
- State-specific results addressing the research questions outlined in this proposal. Results will not be published or disseminated in any way, except at the discretion of the partnering agency.*

Potential partners should have access to the administrative data sources outlined in the "Required Data" section of this document, and either 1) the ability to share that data with the FSSDC or 2) capacity to conduct the analysis in-house, in close communication with the FSSDC team and using consistent logic and definitions.

Anyone wishing to learn more about this opportunity should contact the FSSDC research team at fssdc@chapinhall.org by August 31, 2017.

Cases Active as of 7/1/2015

Cases Active as of 7/1/2015 closed before 6/30/2016

Cases Closed Due to Earnings

Cases Closed Due to Reasons Other Than Earnings

Reopens in less than 3
months

Reopens in less than 3
months

Reopens after 3-6 months

Reopens after 3-6 months

Reopens after 6-12
months

Reopens after 6-12
months

Remains closed

Remains closed

Wage Data

Enhanced analysis of
outcomes for closed cases

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about Data

Moving from Employment to Self-Sufficiency Multi-State Research Project

This document presents common questions that have arisen as states prepare data for this project. We provide responses to these questions based on conversations between individual states and the FSSDC project team. We share these answers in the interest of enabling consistency; if you disagree with one of these answers or have made a different decision in your state please let us know and we can discuss.

We plan to continue populating the FAQ as additional questions arise and will share updates with the group periodically.

Defining Population:

Question: Should state diversion programs and other cash assistance programs be included in the analysis?

Answer: Each state can define “TANF recipients” as narrowly or as broadly as appropriate for program management purposes. However, we recommend including a flag to indicate cases that are not federally reported to allow for maximum flexibility in the analysis. In the summary statistics they can be added and subtracted from the overall analysis for comparison.

Retroactive Payments and Recoupments:

Question: Should the time periods of retroactive payments be counted as active time periods for the case? (i.e. if a retroactive payment for May is made in June, should May be coded as active or inactive?)

Answer: Do not include months when a case received payments retroactively as active time periods of the case.

Question: If a payment for a month was later recouped, should the time period be changed as inactive?

Answer: Ignore recoupments, count these period as active time periods for the case.

Work Eligibility:

Question: What fields should we use to classify a case as work eligible?

Answer: We propose using your state’s version of the federal work eligibility definition. However, we

Spells Creation Demonstration Guide

This document is a reference guide for the spells creation code provided by the FSSDC team for the research project on self-sufficiency outcomes. We will introduce this material on the phone to each state, and you are not expected to read this document prior to that demonstration. However, please refer to the “Installation Guide” document and install the necessary software prior to the demonstration.

Description of Files

The R File

The “calculate_spells.R” file is the code file written in R to transform monthly extracts of case information into a spells format more suited for longitudinal analysis. A spell represents a period of time when the characteristics of a case remain the same. At a minimum, a spell can be defined as the period for when a case is active, but other case characteristics may be optionally considered, such as if a case changes case type or the size of the household changes.

The Input File

For the demonstration, we provide an input file of mock monthly extracts called “input.csv”. It has the following basic format which should match the format of the file you are preparing for analysis:

caseid	year	month	tanf
1	2016	01	1
1	2016	02	1

Family Self-Sufficiency Data Center

Moving from Employment to Self-Sufficiency Multi-State Research Project

Specific Research Questions – 2/21/2018

Note that some of these will require modifications or additions to the current data structure to comprehensively answer.

What working recipients earn sufficient income to close cases?

- What percentage of cases close within a certain period of time after opening?
- Of cases that close, how long were they open before closing? (**raises questions about first closing v. repeat closings)
- What are the characteristics of TANF households (all households or certain subpopulations of households) at case closing?
- What are the reasons for case closing, and how do they compare to household or case characteristics, or the duration for which the case has been open?
- What is the distribution and what are the characteristics of TANF households that have earnings? That don't have earnings?
- What does the earnings history/trajectory of households look like?
- How do closed cases with earnings differ from closed cases without earnings?
- How do any of the above questions vary by household size or other case or individual characteristics?

Do households that earn their way off benefits main self-sufficiency, or do the cases reopen?

- What proportion of cases (all cases or certain subpopulations of cases) that close reopen within __ period of time?
- What are the characteristics of cases that do or do not reopen within __ period of time?
- What is the rate of churn in case closings? Are there certain patterns of cases that close for short windows only to subsequently reopen?
- Do time limits affect any of these patterns?

Do the workers in households closed due to earnings maintain a stable income after case closings?

- What are the earnings of closed cases (all case closings or certain subpopulations of case

Transformation Steps:

1. Transform the Primary Dataset into spells with wage information appended. The FSSDC team has provided code that creates a spells view of the monthly case information in the Primary Dataset appended with the wages of the household at the start and end of the spell from the Wages Record Dataset. This spells transformation allows for a flexible approach to all of our case closings analyses.
2. Identify an exit cohort population. We will focus on cases that closed between July 2015 and December 2015 limiting our analysis to the first time a case closed in the cohort timeframe. The spells created in step 1 are sorted by the startMonth and startYear fields for each caseid. Select the **first row** for each caseid where the spells is **active**¹ with an **end date between July 2015 and December 2015**². Add an indicator field called “wageThreshold” where the field is true for rows where the **end wage is above the analysis threshold (TBD)** and false otherwise³.

¹ tanf = 0

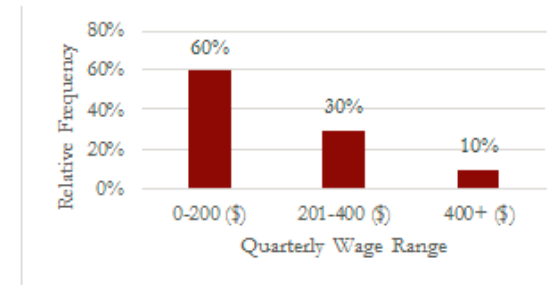
² startMonth > 7 AND startYear = 2015

³ endWage > TBD

Sample Outputs:

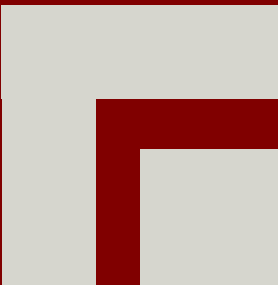
1. Examine the variation within the exit cohort’s closing wages (**active end wage**). Below are sample outputs for this analysis:

Quartile	Wage at Closing
1st	0
2nd	0
3rd	200
4th	400



2. Examine the length of time a case remains closed by whether it was above or below the wages threshold at the time the case closed.

Moderated Discussion with State Representatives



Panelist Introductions



Minnesota Department of Human Services

- **Benjamin Jaques-Leslie**, Agency Policy Specialist, Economic Assistance and Employment Supports Division
- **Dorina Nikolla**, Data Analyst, Economic Assistance and Employment Supports Division



University of Maryland School of Social Work

- **Letitia Logan Passarella**, Research Director for the Family Welfare Research and Training Group



California Department of Social Services

- **Akhtar Khan**, Branch Chief, Research Services
- **Natasha Nicolai**, Branch Chief, CalWORKS and Child Care



Virginia Department of Social Services

- **Eleanor Locklin Brown**, Senior Research Associate and IRB Chair, VDSS Office of Research and Planning

Engagement

Why was your agency interested in this analysis project in partnership with other states?

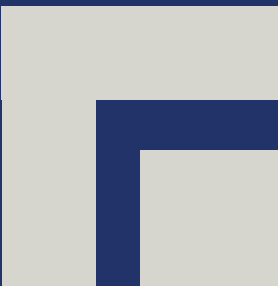
What are the policy questions or circumstances that aligned with analyses of employment and earnings outcomes?



Data Sources

What data sources has your agency used to assess earnings and employment outcomes for program participants?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of these data sources?



Analysis

What are policy, programmatic, or other considerations in your state that affect how you structure analyses?

Are there important subgroups within your TANF population for thinking about outcomes like employment and earnings?



Using Findings

How do you connect findings from research and analysis to policy and program administration?

In what other ways have research, analysis, or other uses of data impacted your TANF agency (such as informing future analyses or data system changes)?



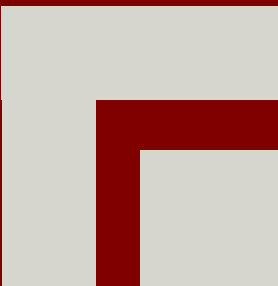
Collaboration

What are the potential benefits of cross-state work? What about this type of collaboration is easy or difficult for your state?

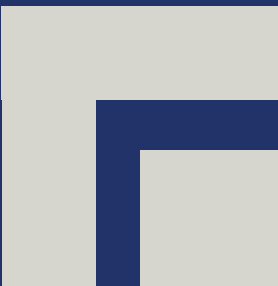
What other types of data collaborations are going on in your state? What are strengths and challenges?



Audience Questions & Comments



Resources



Summary of FSSDC Resources

TANF Data
Model

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/family-self-sufficiency-data-center-creating-data-model-analyze-tanf-caseloads>

R Spells Code

https://chapinhall.github.io/FSSDC/create_spells

Other FSSDC
Programming
Resources

<https://chapinhall.github.io/FSSDC>

TANF Data Collaborative (TDC)



Get involved with TDC



HOME

WHAT TO EXPECT

ENGAGE

HIGHLIGHTS

PARTNERS

JOIN THE COLLABORATIVE

TANF DATA COLLABORATIVE

USING DATA TO IMPROVE FAMILY OUTCOMES

JOIN THE COLLABORATIVE

<https://www.tanfdata.org/>