

Welfare-to-Work Grant Programs Tackle Recruitment Challenges

The National Evaluation of the Welfare-to-Work Grants Program
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The Welfare-to-Work (WtW) grants program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) was authorized by Congress in 1997 to provide employment assistance to the most disadvantaged mothers and fathers whose children receive Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) cash welfare. These parents were thought to have such low educational and skills attainment, and such limited work experience, that only intensive assistance and services could help them obtain and permanently retain employment.

Over the two years since they began operating programs, Welfare-to-Work grantees across the country—large and small, urban and rural—have confronted challenges locating, recruiting, and enrolling eligible participants. The original Congressionally-specified eligibility criteria were very restrictive. In addition, TANF policies in some states further restricted enrollment. Ironically, other unexpected challenges arose because of the recent proliferation of programs for welfare recipients.

Since the main objective of WtW is to improve the long-term employment and earnings prospects of these parents—not just move them off welfare and into the labor market—it is important that programs find, engage and retain individuals who would

benefit from the special services. Of course, the first goal is to get them into the job market, but the WtW legislation also has the longer-term objective of sustaining employment and improving the skills of these workers, to improve their earnings and self-sufficiency.

While Congress and DOL have taken steps to ease some of the restrictive eligibility criteria, grantees are also tackling the challenges to recruitment by adopting more assertive methods for recruiting eligible participants. Program administrators and staff are optimistic about the potential success of active outreach strategies.

This brief documents the challenges that staff in those WtW programs have cited as they endeavored to recruit eligible participants for their programs, and highlights strategies they have adopted that facilitate recruitment.

Background

Congress established a very fast time frame for WtW to make the funds available as soon as possible to supplement states' welfare reform efforts under TANF. DOL has distributed nearly \$3 billion to about 700 local grantees, which can use the funds over a three-year period.

Welfare Reform: A Work in Progress.

The reform of our nation's welfare system, particularly the enactment of TANF in 1996, has transformed state and local welfare programs. Formerly, their primary goal was to deliver cash assistance checks in the correct amount to eligible low-income families; now their main goal is to move parents into the regular labor force. Cash assistance has, indeed, become temporary and the welfare caseloads have declined dramatically, nationwide. But there were still about 2.5 million families receiving TANF in 1999. Of those remaining on the rolls, a high proportion are long-term recipients nearing their time limit, residing in inner cities, with very little work experience and with multiple personal and family problems that can interfere with job search and working. Current and former welfare mothers who are able to find jobs in today's very strong labor market tend to have low average wages (between \$6.00 and \$7.00 per hour), family incomes that hover around the poverty level, and opportunities for moving up the occupational ladder that are hindered by minimal education, work experience, and job skills. The noncustodial fathers of their children face similar difficulties, which impede the fathers' ability to pay regular child support to supplement the low earnings of their children's mothers.

Purpose/Congressional Intent of WtW.

The intent of Congress in authorizing the WtW grants was to address these continuing issues by: (1) providing additional resources to help the most disadvantaged welfare recipients move from welfare into jobs, in recognition that this population may need extra services to succeed; (2) supplementing states' TANF block grants with funds specifically for work and work-related activities, not cash assistance; (3) expanding employment services to noncustodial parents of welfare children (mainly poor fathers); and (4) targeting resources to poor communities. WtW grants are intended to supplement, not duplicate or substitute for, TANF-funded services. To reinforce the employment focus of WtW, the programs fall under the authority of DOL and, at the local level, Private

Industry Councils and Workforce Investment Boards that administered the Job Training Partnership Act and now administer the Workforce Investment Act. Initially, the law required that 70 percent of WtW grant funds be spent on persons who meet two criteria. First, they had to have received TANF or AFDC for 30 months or more or be within 12 months of being terminated from TANF due to the five-year time limit¹ on receipt of cash assistance. Second, they had to have faced *two of three* specified barriers: (1) lack of a high school diploma or GED *and* low reading or math skills, (2) substance abuse problems, and (3) a poor work history. Noncustodial parents—a population not served under TANF—who face two of the three barriers also qualified under the 70 percent criterion, if they had a child in a long-term welfare case. The remaining 30 percent of funds could be spent on TANF recipients or noncustodial parents who have characteristics associated with long-term dependency (such as being a teenage parent or a high school dropout).

Congressional amendments to the law in 1999 removed the requirement that long-term TANF recipients meet additional barriers to employment in order to be eligible for WtW. The amendments also made noncustodial parents eligible if they are: 1) unemployed, underemployed, or having difficulty paying child support; 2) their minor children are eligible for, or receiving, TANF benefits, received benefits during the preceding year, or are eligible for or receiving assistance under the Food Stamp, Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid, or Children's Health Insurance program; and 3) they enter into a personal responsibility contract in which they commit to cooperating with the child support agency and to participating in services to increase their employment and earnings.

National Evaluation of WtW. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), in collaboration with the

¹ Some states opted to make the lifetime limit on cash assistance shorter than five years.

WtW Evaluation Study Sites

- *Phoenix, Arizona*, Employment and Respect NOW (EARN) Alliance Program (Phoenix Human Services Department)
- *Chicago, Illinois*, Welfare-to-Work Program (Mayor’s Office of Workforce Development)
- *Southeastern Indiana*, Welfare-to-Work Program (River Valley Resources, Inc., a 19-county rural area in Indiana)
- *Boston, Massachusetts*, Employer Sponsored Programs (Office of Jobs and Community Service, Boston Economic Development and Industrial Corporation)
- *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*, [Phil@Work](#) Program (Transitional Work Corporation and the Greater Philadelphia Works Program, Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation)
- *Nashville, Tennessee*, Nashville Works/Pathways Program (Nashville Career Advancement Center)
- *Fort Worth, Texas*, Welfare-to-Work Program (Tarrant County Workforce Development Board)
- *Milwaukee, Wisconsin*, Nontraditional Opportunities for Work Program (Wisconsin Department of Community Corrections for Region 3)
- *Yakima, Washington*, Welfare-to-Work Program (Tri-Valley Private Industry Council)
- *Rural West Virginia*, Comprehensive Employment Program (Human Resources Development Foundation, a 29-county rural area)
- *Career Transcript System* (Johns Hopkins University, Institute for Policy Studies, SCANS2000 Center—multi-site program, with study sites in Maryland, Florida, and California)

Departments of Labor and Housing and Urban Development, contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., and its subcontractors, the Urban Institute and Support Services International, Inc., to conduct a congressionally mandated evaluation of WtW’s implementation and effectiveness. The evaluation includes in-depth process studies in eleven grantee sites, selected because of their settings, their target groups, or their innovative approaches. This paper draws on the research visits to the study sites.²

Challenges to Locating, Recruiting and Enrolling Eligible Participants

One of the more frustrating challenges that WtW programs have faced is the difficulty identifying and reaching the target population. Most of the study programs have encountered challenges in locating, recruiting, determining eligibility for, and enrolling enough eligible participants to meet their original targets. Even where programs have been able to find substantial numbers of eligible candidates, they often have had difficulty finding individuals who met the specific eligibility criteria and dealing with participant “no-shows” and attrition. Before describing special outreach and enrollment strategies that the study sites are using to meet the challenges, it is useful to summarize the reasons for the enrollment difficulty.

² In addition, a special process and implementation study focuses on documenting tribal welfare and employment systems, the supportive services they provide, and how tribes integrate funds from various sources to move their members from welfare to work. Tribal study findings will be presented in other evaluation reports.

Populations with Severe and Multiple Barriers are Hard to Recruit and Serve.

The disadvantaged mothers and fathers who are the target of the WtW legislation have a range of problems that make them particularly difficult to engage. Many disadvantaged mothers on TANF possess multiple personal problems that include substance abuse, poor health, limited work history, and domestic violence, as well as undiagnosed mental illness, learning disabilities, and low English proficiency. Some have several of these problems simultaneously. These problems can be compounded by unstable or overcrowded housing and sporadic homelessness, inadequate child care, poor public transportation and lack of private vehicles.

Generally, earlier welfare reform and employment programs did not focus many work-related services on the most troubled clients. They were often exempt from work requirements because of the severity of their problems, and agencies were more likely to emphasize family and protective services or counseling for them, rather than employment and training. Welfare recipients with multiple problems may understand the programs with which they have more contact, such as those that provide cash benefits, food stamps, Medicaid, emergency services, or housing assistance. But it is reported that they are less aware of employment, training, and education programs and services because they tend to have had less contact with them.

Many of the fathers of welfare children, who are also a target of the WtW legislation, tend to face similar personal problems and are equally unaccustomed to work programs. Some also have criminal histories and many face equally daunting transportation problems which can pose serious barriers to employment. Many are unable to pay child support, and most resist getting involved with the official child support system, even if it offers access to employment-related services.

Strict Eligibility Criteria and Spending Requirements Limited Enrollment.

Staff and administrators report that the original eligibility criteria, in use until at least January 2000, seriously impeded their ability to locate and enroll eligible individuals. For example, they had difficulty determining and verifying whether an individual had received cash assistance for at least 30 cumulative months; and many felt unnecessarily burdened by having to test an individual's reading and math ability even if she has other serious problems (e.g., no work experience, substance abuse).

In addition to the challenges related to the strict eligibility criteria, many programs also had difficulty identifying people who meet the 70 percent criteria (i.e., long-term recipients with two of the three specific barriers). Ironically, in some sites, programs were turning away some who were eligible, but only under the 30 percent category, in the face of difficulty identifying and recruiting those in the 70 percent category, so as to meet the spending ratio requirement. Staff in many programs are optimistic that the legislative changes in 1999 will ease some of these concerns.

TANF Policies Can Inadvertently Hinder WtW Enrollment. State and local TANF policies and operations, themselves, have in some cases directly or indirectly limited WtW participant enrollment.

- ***In Some Jurisdictions, the WtW Target Population Was Narrowed.*** In some states and localities, agreements were developed between the TANF agency and the WtW grantee regarding TANF policies that formally or informally further restricted eligibility for WtW. For example, eligible TANF recipients in a few of the study sites were referred to WtW programs only after completing a specified sequence of services through a TANF work program. In other places, only those TANF recipients subject to state work requirements were considered

for WtW, thus excluding others who might also have the serious employment barriers on which the federal legislation focused. And in other locales, individuals in any stage of the TANF sanction process (e.g., conciliation, adjudication, or sanction status) were not considered eligible for WtW, even if the family was still receiving cash assistance. In all of these cases, the individual is technically eligible for WtW services under the federal provisions, but more restrictive state or local criteria have kept them out of the program.

- ***Data System Limitations Hamper Eligibility Confirmation.*** Most WtW grantees expected that the TANF agency would be in the best position to quickly and easily verify WtW eligibility. However, the complexity of the WtW criteria required some information items that even TANF agencies do not routinely collect or maintain (e.g., academic skill levels, cumulative months receiving cash assistance). Many WtW programs were actively enrolling only individuals whose eligibility was verified by the TANF agency. This meant that in several sites, the “list” of verified individuals grantees were receiving from the TANF agency included only a portion of the potential eligible pool—that portion eligible based on the data available in the TANF agency (e.g., those clients whose current spell of welfare is 30 months or longer, but not those whose cumulative receipt spanned multiple spells). In addition, since information sharing between two different state or local agencies and databases can be cumbersome and time-consuming, some grantees experienced substantial delays while awaiting verification of eligibility information. Such delays resulted in losing track of recruits before program enrollment could occur, in some locales, or missing an opportunity for a client’s early participation in an important WtW orientation workshop or other session.
- ***Other TANF Certifications Can Cause Delays.*** Even if there is no formal

arrangement for TANF agencies to refer individuals to WtW programs or verify eligibility, TANF policies regarding work requirements and supportive services can affect WtW participation. Grantee staff typically want to assure that their participants are in full compliance with any TANF work requirements and that they receive necessary approvals for child care or transportation subsidies. There may be *de facto* verification procedures, for example, where the WtW program will not engage an individual in activities until the TANF agency has certified that the program’s activities will “count” towards the individual’s work requirement. Similarly, in some places, WtW program staff may have the client wait until the TANF agency has certified her for child care payments and/or transportation vouchers, which are often essential to successful program participation. The wait for such necessary certifications may delay an individual’s entry into an active work component.

Declining Caseloads and an Expanding Pool of Programs Serving a Shrinking Pool of Welfare Clients. In all the communities included in the evaluation, there are multiple programs serving TANF recipients. There are more TANF-funded work program contractors than was the case in the past and in some of the most urban sites, there are multiple WtW-funded programs. It is not uncommon for contractors to have commitments both to the TANF work program and one or more WtW programs to provide employment services. The new WtW funds and the enhanced TANF funds have created a more extensive network of programs than existed in the past. This could theoretically provide a welcome opportunity to merge funding streams and create comprehensive service packages. But in some sites, program staff report that they are competing with other programs for a decreasing number of TANF clients as, nationwide, welfare caseloads have dropped by more than half. At the same time, some

service providers must simultaneously balance their need to reach goals for both WtW and the TANF work program. For example, in at least three of the study sites, the WtW service provider also has performance-based contracts from the TANF agency for delivering particular services to TANF clients.

TANF Line Staff Tend to Refer to Familiar Programs. TANF staff (especially the longer tenured staff), faced with an expansion of their responsibilities and program choices, naturally tend to stick with the familiar. The expanded number of work programs available through the WtW grants program is occurring at the same time that TANF workers are being expected to help ensure that an annually increasing proportion of their caseload is participating in some work-related activity. While the presence of multiple programs ostensibly provides more numerous and varied opportunities than previously existed, in some of the study sites TANF workers were not well informed about all of those program choices. In those instances, they were more likely to refer individuals to familiar programs, especially longer-standing ones funded through TANF.

The Robust Economy Encourages Rapid, but Often Short-Term, Employment. Fortunately, the currently strong economy makes TANF clients and non-custodial parents, even with multiple problems, somewhat more likely to find employment on their own because employers have grown willing to dip deeper into the unemployed pool to fill job openings. One downside to this situation, though, is that, according to research on those leaving TANF nationwide, many enter the low end of the job market, where they have low wages and little job security. The result is that some potential WtW clients who might benefit in the long run from work-related services, at least to improve job retention or find a new job, are not enrolling in those service programs.

Programs Initially Relied on Passive Recruitment. Most study grantees relied

initially on line staff, usually in other agencies, to identify and refer candidates for the WtW program. In most cases, they relied on TANF workers. The expectation in many sites was that child support enforcement agency staff would refer noncustodial parents. In one site, the corrections agency administering a WtW program for noncustodial fathers on probation or parole at first sought simply to encourage field probation and parole officers to refer men from their caseloads. In most places, whatever the specific planned sources, referrals fell short of plans. In some sites, agency staff simply felt too overburdened with their core tasks to focus much on referring clients elsewhere.

Strategies to Expedite Recruitment and Enrollment

Program grantees and their contractors in the study sites have adopted new strategies, or refined existing ones, to market more assertively and accelerate the pace of enrollment. These efforts are being aided by Congressional action in 1999 that loosened eligibility rules. Meanwhile, grantees are adopting or improving strategies and techniques for locating, recruiting, and enrolling clients. While in some instances a new or modified strategy is targeted at one or more of the discrete challenges delineated above, for the most part the strategies were adopted as responses to the overall enrollment problem.

The strategies sites are adopting or refining to address enrollment problems fall into five categories:

- Conducting direct and proactive marketing;
- Assessing and refining marketing approaches through research;
- Tightening the flow of recruits and information;
- Using financial incentives to promote referrals; and

- Accelerating the timing of “enrollment” to expand the pool of eligible individuals.

Examples of strategies in each category are briefly described below. Sites typically rely on various combinations of these strategies. The accompanying text boxes summarize the multiple approaches being implemented in a few illustrative sites.

Conducting Direct and Proactive Marketing. In response to the low number of clients coming from the TANF or child support agency, more WtW grantees are adopting proactive marketing and outreach strategies. Administrators, staff, and service providers believe that more vigorous face-to-face contact with potential participants, out in their communities, will locate more eligibles and quicken the pace of enrollments.

Media Campaigns. Public announcements and advertising have been used in several of the sites, including television and radio public announcements, and they appear to have some positive effect on enrollments. In Phoenix, for example, staff report that a large number of phone inquiries from prospective eligibles are generated by advertising on the *Jerry Springer*, *Judge Judy*, and *Oprah Winfrey* shows.

Formal media campaigns have also been a major part of Philadelphia’s WtW program strategy, in keeping with the “client choice” philosophy of welfare reform in Pennsylvania. In the first year of WtW, a comprehensive promotional campaign ran on radio and television, targeting both prospective employers and TANF recipients about to reach their state time limit. A subsequent campaign, aimed at encouraging welfare recipients to consider employment program options, ran in the second year. Together, the campaigns triggered over 40,000 calls to the permanent hot-line telephone number included with all media spots and advertisements. Program staff indicate there was a noticeable increase in enrollments after each campaign.

Health Professionals as a Recruiting Conduit. Several of the programs now have special outreach staff. In Boston, a full-time outreach coordinator in the grantee agency works with numerous community organizations and agencies, including the Boston Medical Center, providing presentations about the WtW employment opportunities. This strategy grew out of earlier focus groups conducted by the grantee during the WtW planning phase, where welfare mothers were asked to identify groups or agencies with high credibility within the low-income community. One finding was that pediatricians and other health care providers

The recruitment strategy at the **Phoenix EARN program** includes designated outreach staff, special mailings and incentives, mass media advertising, and periodic review of program administrative data files:

- Outreach Specialists canvass the Enterprise Community, where the majority of residents are Hispanic, distributing fliers, as well as pens and magnets with the program logo, and speaking at community organizations and events, and at welfare offices. The Specialists are current or former TANF recipients, hired by EARN at \$6.70 per hour after completing a job readiness course, who are expected to remain on the job for 6 to 9 months. They carry application forms that can be completed on the spot.
- Television advertising is placed on nationally popular daytime shows.
- Movie tickets are given to any participant who successfully refers someone else to WtW.
- Staff identify and encourage TANF recipients under sanction to comply with TANF requirements so they can be eligible for WtW services.
- Program brochures and fliers in English and Spanish are mailed to all households in the EC neighborhoods.

have the most credibility. Therefore, much of the subsequent outreach has focused on the health care system. The Boston Pediatric Association and the Medical Center encourage providers to discuss welfare time limits with mothers and give them brochures, in English and Spanish, with information on available WtW programs.

Neighborhood Canvassing. Neighborhood canvassing is being used in several sites to expand outreach. The Phoenix program has relied on intensive neighborhood canvassing from its inception. Most of the workers in its Outreach Specialist Unit are bi-lingual current and former welfare recipients, who are expected to remain in this job, acquiring worthwhile job and interpersonal skills, for 6 to 9 months. Staff make repeated phone calls to potential clients, speak at TANF agency orientations and community events, and go door-to-door in public housing projects and low-income apartment complexes.

In Boston, most of the 13 WtW-funded Employer Partner Programs now conduct their own outreach. Staff from the Urban League, for example, reach out to homeless shelters, pizza parlors, churches, and community centers. Staff hand out fliers and brochures, orally present information and answer questions about the program. Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries staff in Boston conduct “foot outreach” to TANF offices, WIC centers, check-cashing establishments, apartment buildings, churches, and hospitals to promote the program with customers, residents, parishioners, and staff of health care providers.

Street and Block Data-Mapping. Boston Career Center and WtW provider agencies use a database that classifies each street according to the concentration of TANF residents. Five new outreach coordinators have been hired by the grantee agency to go to these streets and recruit door-to-door. Brochures and flyers, in English and Spanish, are mailed to households in target neighborhoods.

Concentrated Gleaning of Case Records. In Milwaukee, relying on probation and parole officers to generate referrals yielded a low number of individuals, and it seemed difficult for the WtW program managers to stimulate more active referrals from the busy officers. To jumpstart referrals, central administrative staff were sent to comb through officers’ case files and identify candidates who appeared eligible and appropriate for the program.

Capitalizing on the Community Network. The Ft. Worth WtW service contractors recruit through media used to inform the low-income community about other programs and services. For example, at community events held to “celebrate families,” contractor staff distribute brochures and are available to answer questions from potential participants. One of the WtW providers, the Night Shelter, distributed information about the WtW program along with housing assistance and other information to various groups, including parents living in transitional housing and motels near the shelter. Several of the WtW contractors in Ft. Worth provide information about the program to landlords and motel supervisors to pass on to residents who might need employment assistance.

Outstationed Staff at TANF Offices. On a rotating basis, one of the Nashville WtW program case managers will be housed in a permanent booth at the TANF office three days per week, displaying program materials, pictures, and success stories, and offering snacks and information to TANF parents coming to see their case managers.

Assessing and Refining Marketing Approaches through Research. Strategic marketing approaches can best be developed with quality information about what works. Thus, a few grantees are researching which outreach and marketing strategies will appeal to and best “hook” various subgroups of the target population.

Market Research. In Ft. Worth, the grantee was planning a social marketing campaign, coordinated by the Fort Worth Housing

Authority. A contract has been awarded to a marketing firm to research what motivates low-income individuals and families to participate in programs designed to assist them in becoming self-sufficient. The research is expected to help in developing a consistent and effective message about WtW services to the target population (akin to the Army's "Be all that you can be" campaign). As part of the research effort to ground the marketing in messages that disadvantaged poor parents will "hear," the firm will survey 300 long-term welfare recipients.

Participant Feedback Questionnaires. The Boston Career Centers have all their referred clients fill out a "How Did You Get Here?" questionnaire. The questionnaires are returned to the Outreach Coordinator's office. Analysis of the questionnaire results will help to assess

important to the client population and refine outreach strategy. In Philadelphia, large-scale media campaigns were refined based on focus groups, to ensure that the most salient messages were communicated. One campaign featured former welfare mothers as spokespersons with messages such as "Get the welfare agency off your back" and "If I could do it, you can do it, too."

Shortening the Intake and Orientation Process. It is important to minimize the time between referral and actual entry to a work activity. Otherwise, clients tend to lose interest, lose touch with the office, move to another area of the city or state, or encounter new barriers to participation. All of these factors can contribute to attrition.

Philadelphia's outreach strategies for WtW programs feature mailings, media advertising, staff outstationed at TANF offices, financial incentives, and a well-publicized program hotline:

- Promotional materials are mailed to TANF clients nearing their time limit.
- Advertising in print, radio and TV media, and billboards on public transit buses and trains, target potential employers as well as potential WtW participants.
- A special mailing was sent to 9,000 employers identified by the Chamber of Commerce.
- WtW staff are outstationed in County Assistance (TANF) Offices to recruit and pre-screen potentially eligible individuals, and make presentations at client orientation sessions.
- A payment for each client referred to the TWC program was added to Regional Service Centers' contracts.
- The WtW telephone hotline, staffed by former welfare recipients, has generated about 40,000 calls from potential participants.

the effectiveness of various outreach methods, develop informed refinements, and decide which methods to abandon.

Targeted Focus Groups. In planning their WtW programs, some grantees held focus groups with welfare mothers, low-income parents, and employers. In Philadelphia and Boston, focus groups with welfare recipients were used to probe the issues and barriers

A few grantees shorten the time gap between referral and the start of work activity, and reduce the need for TANF sanctions and case closure, and thus avoid further shrinking of the WtW eligible pool.

Early Engagement in Work Activities. The Phoenix program has modified its client flow to avoid early attrition. The Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) is now administered after a participant begins the job readiness

course rather than at the intake appointment. Congressional changes in WtW eligibility criteria have made it easier to qualify clients for the program without TABE scores, thus eliminating one delay in the enrollment process. Another change has been to enroll clients in job search if they will have to wait before a new job readiness class starts. This engages a client immediately and fulfills the client's TANF work participation requirement.

Pre-program Orientation. Staff in HRDF's program in West Virginia found that one-third to one-half of referrals from the TANF office to WtW did not show up for the four-week orientation/job readiness workshop, mainly because workshops were held so infrequently. Some districts scheduled workshops only when an adequate number of participants were enrolled. Substantial time could thus elapse between when an individual was told about the program and when she was called in for a workshop. Many simply did not show up. To reduce attrition, the grantee decided to insert another activity between eligibility determination and the job readiness workshop.

HRDF added an orientation session with prospective enrollees at the TANF agency, in the weeks leading up to the start of four-week WtW orientation workshops. At this new "pre-orientation," problems regarding participation in the WtW workshop are

anticipated and worked out in advance. While child care is an impediment to participation in West Virginia (as well as most other locales across the country), transportation across the rural mountainous terrain is the most difficult issue. The new strategy had already reduced attrition to 10 percent from 33 to 50 percent (depending on the county service area) at the time of our visit.

Using Financial Incentives to Promote Referrals. A few grantees include financial incentives in their contracts with referral sources, to boost referrals. Program administrators felt that they were competing at a disadvantage with TANF employment assistance providers, whose contracts already had financial incentives built in.

Including Payment for Referrals in Service Provider Contracts. The Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation's original contracts with Regional Service Centers (RSCs) operators included per capita payments for job placement, and job retention at 3, 6, and 12 months. Contracts with the RSCs now also include a payment for each referral made to TWC's [Phil@Work](#) program.

In Boston, payments for referrals have been part of the service provider contracts since WtW started. Career Centers receive a *per capita* payment for referring WtW eligible

The **Boston grantee** uses a variety of outreach methods, such as special mailings, neighborhood canvassing, outstationed staff, performance incentives, and community linkages:

- The nonprofit organization partners canvass community centers, fast food restaurants, churches, housing projects, apartment complexes, and service agencies to inform the community about the program and recruit potential participants. They also mail information to TANF recipients, using lists provided by the TANF agency.
- Career Center staff attend neighborhood events, make presentations, and pre-screen for eligibility, using lap top computers to access on-line information systems.
- The grantee's contracts with Career Centers are based partly on the number of eligible individuals successfully referred to one of the WtW employer partner programs.
- The Boston Medical Center family advocacy center and pediatric health providers are key partners, training WtW staff on family services, and providing welfare parents with information about TANF time limits and WtW opportunities.
- Staff from Career Centers and nonprofit organizations, outstationed at TANF offices, make presentations at orientation sessions, pre-screen individuals for WtW eligibility, and distribute information about their respective programs.

participants to Employer Partner Programs after they are formally assessed. With this incentive, all Centers have taken active outreach steps to raise the level of intake whenever enrollments have declined.

Accelerating the Timing of Formal Enrollment to Expand the Pool of Eligibles. Program strategies that identify potential WtW clients in TANF as soon as possible can help increase enrollment. Some study programs try to pre-screen TANF clients who are eligible for WtW even if they cannot immediately participate.

For example, in Ft. Worth, where the WtW grantee also administers the TANF work program, TANF recipients eligible for WtW are identified as soon as they enter the Career Center. Individuals are thus “tagged” for WtW, even though WtW-funded activities are generally deferred until after TANF-funded services have ended. This strategy was adopted partly in response to the tiered TANF time limit policy in Texas. Texas TANF policy applies a 12-, 24-, or 36-month time limit on families’ cash assistance receipt depending on the parent’s work history and educational attainment. By identifying WtW eligibles as soon as possible, services can continue uninterrupted as individuals transition from TANF to WtW status.

The Yakima grantee has also been “tagging” WtW eligibles since the program began. Any TANF participant who is mandatory for Work First must go through 12 weeks of job search. As soon as they show up for their first job search class, they are screened for WtW eligibility. Those found eligible must still continue and complete their 12 weeks of job search. At the end, if they secure a job, they are likely to lose eligibility for TANF, but the WtW contractor is notified of their WtW eligibility so that clients can be enrolled in the program and provided job retention services. If they do not secure a job after job search, the client can be enrolled in WtW and provided additional job search (and retention) services.

Conclusion

Many of the study programs encountered challenges to locating, marketing to, recruiting, and enrolling eligible participants, both mothers and fathers. With time and experience, however, they are refining their initial strategies and adopting new, more assertive techniques that should accelerate the pace of enrollment. Return visits to these sites in 2001 will reveal the extent to which these strategies are paying dividends in the form of increased enrollment.

THE NATIONAL EVALUATION OF THE WELFARE-TO-WORK GRANTS PROGRAM, a Congressionally mandated evaluation of the Welfare-to-Work Grants Program, is being conducted by ***Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.*** and its subcontractors, ***The Urban Institute*** and ***Support Services International, Inc.***, under contract to the ***U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*** with support from ***the U.S. Department of Labor*** and ***the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development***.

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