
https://www.opressrc.org/content/final-synthesis-report-findings-aspe-leavers-grants

This report synthesizes findings from 15 studies of families who left TANF. The synthesis includes information on leavers’ employment and earnings, public assistance program participation, income and poverty status, material hardships, and child well-being. Across studies, three-quarters of all leavers had worked at some point in the year after exiting TANF. The synthesis notes that no single barrier to work consistently affected a majority of leavers, but a large minority had to overcome child care and health-related problems to work. The synthesis also found that it was not uncommon for leavers to return to TANF—about a third who left returned to TANF at some point in the year after exit. In addition, about half of leaver families received food stamps right after exit, and as many as two-thirds received these benefits at some point in the year after exit.


https://www.opressrc.org/content/trauma-informed-temporary-assistance-needy-families-tanf-randomized-controlled-trial-two

This evaluation tested the effectiveness of financial empowerment services combined with trauma-informed peer supports in a TANF program. The authors found that despite participants’ high exposure to adversity and trauma, families that participated in the intervention (as opposed to those who received traditional TANF programming) reported improved self-efficacy and depressive symptoms, and reduced economic hardship. The authors also found that the control group reported increased developmental risk among their children and showed higher levels of employment, but the intervention group reported greater earnings. The authors concluded that financial empowerment education with trauma-informed peer support is more effective than standard TANF programming at improving behavioral health, reducing hardship, and increasing income.

https://www.opressrc.org/content/implementing-welfare-work-programs-rural-places-lessons-rural-welfare-work-strategies

This report shares the implementation experiences of three rural welfare-to-work programs that offered intensive, employment-focused case management to prepare participants for work and to help them find and keep good jobs. The authors found that although participant employment could not be attributed to their participation in demonstration programs, many did find work. The authors further suggested that welfare-to-work programs may be most valuable for rural clients when they focus on improving employment prospects and providing services on a range of other issues, where there may be fewer service providers in remote areas. Where other service providers do exist, the authors recommended strong collaboration to increase outreach and to offer spaces to provide services over a wide territory.


https://www.opressrc.org/content/what-strategies-work-hard-employ-final-results-hard-employ-demonstration-and-evaluation

The Enhanced Services for the Hard-to-Employ Demonstration and Evaluation Project was a 10-year study that evaluated strategies to improve employment opportunities for groups who face serious barriers to employment, including ex-offenders and long-term welfare participants, among others. Two of the three large-scale programs evaluated that provided temporary, subsidized transitional jobs (one for long-term welfare participants and the other for ex-offenders) produced only short-term gains in employment. The third, a welfare-to-work program, which provided unpaid work experience, job placement, and education services to participants with health conditions, had longer-term gains in job attachment and reduced TANF receipt. Results across programs overall, however, were mixed. The authors recommended that combining work-focused strategies with treatment or services may be more promising than using either strategy alone, especially for individuals with disabilities or health problems.

https://www.opressrc.org/content/turning-welfare-work-support-six-year-impacts-parents-and-children-minnesota-family

This report analyzes the impact of Minnesota’s Family Investment Program (MFIP), which offered financial incentives that allowed families to keep more of their welfare benefits when they worked, and required longer-term welfare participants to work or participate in employment services. The authors found that MFIP increased employment, earnings, welfare receipt, and income for single-parent households up through Year 4 of the follow-up period, after which MFIP’s effects on economic outcomes diminished. They also found that MFIP had no overall effect on elementary school achievement, but had some positive effects for children of long-term participants and of the most disadvantaged families.


https://www.opressrc.org/content/report-meta-analysis-welfare-work-programs

This report synthesizes program effects from random assignment evaluations of welfare-to-work programs. It conducted separate meta-analyses of voluntary and mandatory programs. Generally, voluntary programs provided job search, training, and remedial education to those who applied, and sometimes financial incentives. Mandatory programs provided employment-oriented services and sometimes financial work incentives. Reviewing 27 random assignment evaluations of mandatory welfare-to-work programs, the authors found that job search participation and time limits were effective strategies in connecting participants to employment and reducing welfare receipt. They found mixed results on whether participation in basic or vocational education increased program effectiveness. The authors also noted that mandatory programs appear to do better in strong labor markets rather than weak ones and did not show increases in participant incomes. Reviewing studies of four voluntary programs, the authors found that voluntary services increased incomes and decreased welfare payments, but only modestly. They further noted that the more expensive the voluntary services, the greater the increases in participant income, which was not the case for mandatory programs. The authors concluded that welfare-to-work programs, by themselves, do not significantly reduce welfare rolls or improve participant self-sufficiency and should be paired with other services, such as earning subsidies.
https://www.opressrc.org/content/assisting-two-parent-families-through-tanf

This report documents practices and policies affecting two-parent families’ participation in TANF. It highlights findings about the characteristics of two-parent families participating in, or eligible for TANF, the services they receive on TANF, and how state policies may help or hinder their TANF participation. The authors found that a slight majority of adults in two-parent families receiving TANF were Hispanic and most had a child under the age of 6; in about a third both parents were receiving cash assistance. They also found that almost half of states use state funds to serve two-parent families, but the level and types of services offered across states—no matter the funding resource—was relatively uniform. Through family and staff interviews they found that both suggested more intensive case management supports, life-skills training, education, and transitional assistance. They also found that low-income two-parent families who did not participate in TANF often believed they were not eligible and many believed their financial situation would improve. Some shared fear of government engagement or a perceived social stigma as reasons they didn’t apply for benefits.

https://www.opressrc.org/content/moving-people-welfare-work-lessons-national-evaluation-welfare-work-strategies-0

This research synthesis highlights lessons learned from the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (NEWWS)—at its time—the largest evaluation of welfare-to-work programming. NEWWS examined the long-term effects of 11 mandatory welfare-to-work programs, each of which took different approaches to help participants find jobs and leave welfare. NEWWS studies analyzed two primary pre-employment approaches—one that offered short-term job assistance and rapid job placement and another that offered longer-term skill-building. Some sites offered one or the other approach; some offered a mix of both. All programs studied increased employment and earnings and decreased welfare receipt. But no program made families materially better off—neither increasing income nor reducing poverty. The authors noted that some programs resulted in a portion of the most disadvantaged participants being worse off financially after program involvement.


This study tested 16 different program models using a random assignment design to estimate the effects programs had on improving low-income individuals’ employment and earnings. The focus of this synthesis report was on the 12 programs that targeted more employable groups (as opposed to those with multiple barriers). Three of the 12 programs showed consistent increases in participants’ employment and job advancement. The authors suggest that successful strategies included those that supported stability in the same job, and offered earning supplements tied to job retention (ideally coupled with job coaching). They further noted that counseling and referral services to help people stay employed, by themselves, did not appear to increase job retention. The authors found that the majority of the programs tested did not improve participants’ job retention or advancement and most participants remained poor at the end of the study. They concluded that further research is needed to understand how best to foster upward mobility for low-wage workers.