

The family service programs and their evaluations: Capsule descriptions

1. *Programs Authorized by Congress*

The Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program

Sponsor: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Evaluator: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation

The Family Support Act of 1988 required that its centerpiece, JOBS, be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of different approaches to help welfare applicants and recipients increase self-sufficiency through education, training, and support services. The evaluation plan subsequently developed calls for an impact analysis, an implementation and process study, and a benefit-cost analysis, plus a special study of a subgroup of mothers and their young children. Eight sites—counties, cities, or combinations of both—representing a variety of regional attributes will participate. Their selection is nearing completion and enrollment activities are beginning. The evaluation will cover 48,000 people, randomly assigned—as required by the Act—to control or treatment groups.

The impact analysis will examine effects on employment and earnings and on receipt and amount of AFDC and Food Stamps in all evaluation sites. In three sites where surveys will be administered, effects on income levels, educational levels, literacy, basic math, and child development will be considered. In four of the sites, random assignment to treatment (JOBS) or to control status (the regular AFDC program) will be followed; in the others, assignment will be to a control group and to one of two types of treatment groups: the regular JOBS program or a variant created to test alternative approaches—e.g., education and training, or direct job placement, or use of different case management strategies. The impact analysis will utilize administrative data on earnings, employment, and welfare receipt for five years after program entry, and follow-up surveys will be conducted in three sites where detailed baseline data are collected. Impacts within sites and across sites will be analyzed, the latter to assess the relative effectiveness of the various program approaches.

The implementation and process study will examine the ways in which various programs are put into operation, documenting resource levels and funding sources, organizational structures, links among agencies involved, operating procedures, targeting strategies, staff levels and caseload ratios, case management practices, and messages conveyed to clients. Data sources include field research, staff surveys, automated program tracking systems, and

case file records. The U.S. Department of Education is supporting a special study at three sites of the implementation of adult education, to provide information not previously available on the nature and quality of the education provided to welfare recipients.

The benefit-cost study will estimate the total costs of the various programs at each site as well as the costs of particular activities or components within the programs. These expenditures will be compared with the benefits estimated in the impact study.

The analysis of the subgroup of mothers and children, subcontracted to Child Trends, Inc., will explore maternal and child development. It involves 2,500 pairs of mothers with children aged 3–5 in three sites, randomly assigned to control and treatment groups. Basic demographic and work-welfare history data will be taken from the intake information; the mothers will take a literacy test and be assessed for attitudes toward work, welfare, training, and child care, as well as feelings of depression and mastery. For a subset of 600 of these families at baseline, personal interviews will be conducted in the home and the quality of the mother-child relationship will be observed. These families will be included in the follow-up survey samples to learn what changes occur in their lives, how the interaction between mother and child affects the mother's participation in JOBS, the nature of the child's development, and, with anticipated funding from the U.S. Department of Education to support collection of school data, the child's school attendance and behavior.

The Comprehensive Child Development Program

Sponsor: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Evaluators: CSR, Inc., and Abt Associates, Inc.

Authorized by the 1988 amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, CCDDP is a demonstration program conducted under very general federal guidelines to explore the effectiveness of intensive health, social, and educational services to young families in poverty. Eligible families are those that include a pregnant woman or child under one, have incomes under the poverty line, and agree to participate in program activities for five years. A competitive proposal process was used to fund a variety of agencies—universities, hospitals, public and nonprofit organizations, and school districts—at 24 sites around the country, 18 in urban areas and 6 in rural locations, involv-

ing 2,500 families. Although the form of service can vary, all projects are required to intervene as early as possible in children's lives, to involve the entire family, to serve the special needs of infants and young children, to promote parents' ability to contribute to their children's development and their own self-sufficiency, and to offer continuous services until the child that determined the family's eligibility (the "focus" child) enters elementary school. Project activities began in 1990. Case managers play an important role in assessment and coordination of needed services.

Like JOBS, this program carries a legislative mandate for evaluation, which DHHS divided into two parts: study of the feasibility and implementation of the projects, and a national impact evaluation. CSR is conducting the first; Abt Associates, the second.

The purpose of the implementation evaluation is to determine whether and how these complex projects can be successfully launched. It is examining program start-up, organization of service delivery through interagency agreements, costs of delivery, utilization of services, and program changes over the course of the demonstration. Its five sources of data include the project proposals, quarterly progress reports and other project documents, reports by special observers, reports from site visits, and quantitative data from the automated management information system installed at each site.

For the impact evaluation, a randomized design was achieved in each site through the program requirement that

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projects deliberately recruit more families than could be served, and then assign eligible families to program and comparison groups, the latter to receive whatever social services would normally be offered in the absence of CCDP. Objectives are to assess the impact of the program on the development of children, parents, and families; to determine whether the CCDP concept that an agency can coordinate a comprehensive set of services is feasible and effective; and to search for practices that can be used to improve comprehensive, early-intervention projects for low-income families. This evaluation is longitudinal: it will measure attributes of the families over time, focusing on the child of interest and the mother. The feasibility of administering measures to the fathers as well is being studied. Baseline demographic information concerning the families is being collected, and the families will be contacted every six months for assessment by means of a parent interview and tests administered to the child. The evaluation data are collected at each site by a two-person team, consisting of a permanent Abt staff member and a person hired for the child testing. The tester will not know whether the family is in the treatment group or the control group.

Even Start Family Literacy Program

Sponsor: U.S. Department of Education

Evaluator: Abt Associates, Inc., with a subcontract to RMC Research Corporation

This demonstration program offers educational services to both child and parent through an integrated program of early child education, adult basic skills training, and parent training. A family is eligible if it contains an adult who needs basic skills training, a child between the ages of 1 and 8, and lives in a Chapter 1 (low-income) elementary school attendance area. Four-year grants are offered to school districts, which provide the services directly or arrange for them through existing community programs. Even Start began with 73 grants in 1989; their total is expected to reach almost 250 this year.

The 1988 legislation that authorized the demonstration (amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) requires annual independent evaluation of its programs. The evaluation contract, awarded in 1990, has four parts: (1) construction of a large-scale data base, the National Evaluation Information System, which contains a common set of data from each project and most participants—descriptive statistics on, for example, the nature of the project, services provided, progress in adult basic skills and children's school readiness; (2) an in-depth study of ten projects, half with randomized experimental designs, to complement the broad-based data with small-scale, detailed analysis of the relationship between services received and short-term outcomes; (3) other local evaluation studies as desired by individual grantees, provided that they first receive approval from the Department of Education; and (4) submission by individual grantees of evidence of

their program's effectiveness to the Department of Education's Program Effectiveness Panel.

The national evaluation contractor worked with projects to define the national information system and provide technical assistance to project managers, who are responsible for data collection. The national evaluation contractor then analyzes this information, sends it back to the projects, and incorporates it in annual reports. The in-depth study was designed by the evaluator, with input from the local managers. The five randomized projects are small, each involving about forty families, half assigned to Even Start and half to a control group. An intensive measurement battery will examine a number of hypothesized outcomes to gain a closer look at the program's effectiveness.

2. Programs Initiated by Federal Executive Agencies

Teenage Parent Demonstration

Sponsor: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Evaluator: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Formally known as the Demonstration of Innovative Approaches to Reduce Long-Term AFDC Dependency among Teenage Parents, this project originated in DHHS and lasted from 1986 through mid-1991. At three sites, Camden and Newark, New Jersey, and the south side of Chicago, Illinois, all teenage parents who began receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) for themselves and their child were required to attend an intake session and were then randomly assigned to treatment or control status. The treatment consisted of participation in appropriate education, training, or employment programs as long as AFDC was received. Failure to participate could result, after warnings, in sanctions—reduction of the AFDC grant until the parent complied. Services to program participants included case management, child care assistance, allowances for transportation and other expenses, and workshops to promote motivation, life skills, and the ability to pursue continued education, training, or employment. Those assigned to control status could not receive the program services but were free to pursue training and education on their own. About 3,000 teenagers took part in the demonstration programs, and another 3,000 teenagers received regular services.

The evaluation has four components. The *implementation analysis* has assessed program delivery by observing operations, interviewing staff members, and studying program records and documents. The *impact evaluation*, nearing completion, compares the experiences of treatment and control group members over a two- to four-year post-program period. It uses information obtained at intake concerning personal characteristics and basic skills test scores; administrative data obtained through March 1992 concerning welfare payments, earnings, and child support; and information obtained two years after program completion through a follow-up interview and basic skills retest. Out-

comes of interest are school completion and performance, basic skills growth, employment and earnings, welfare dependence, fertility, child-rearing practices, and child support received. The *cost-effective analysis* assessed direct and indirect administrative and service costs and compared them to benefits from the point of view of governments, society, and participants. Finally, an *in-depth analysis* used qualitative data from focused group discussions, personal interviews, conferences with project staff, and case-tracking data on program participation and outcomes. This component extended our understanding of the backgrounds and circumstances of participants and their responses to the opportunities and requirements of the program.

Three ancillary studies were also conducted: a survey of the child care available and patterns of use by parents in the demonstration sites, a survey of the child care needs and actual use among the welfare-dependent teenagers in the evaluation sample, and a special study funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Foundation for Child Development to examine interactions and developmental processes between the mothers and their children and the relationships between those interactions and processes and developmental outcomes for the children.

Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU) Initiative

Sponsor: U.S. Department of Labor
Evaluator: Academy for Educational Development

This demonstration program was created by the Department of Labor to test ways of improving the long-term employability of youth in neighborhoods of about 25,000 people where the poverty rate is 30 percent or more. Its guidelines are general, allowing local flexibility. It is being conducted at seven urban and rural sites by the local governing boards for the Job Training and Partnership Act program in the communities. They can use any of four core models of service: learning centers (residential or nonresidential, community centers or schools, where basic skills and vocational training are offered); alternative high schools operated by local school districts, offering intensive remedial reading; construction projects in which skilled craftsmen train youth while rehabilitating dilapidated housing; and, in rural areas, initiatives to increase enrollment in postsecondary schooling by establishing two-year work-study colleges or setting up satellites of community colleges. In addition, one or more complementary programs are to be offered, including apprenticeship programs with unions or firms, employability programs for teen parents, summer training and education programs, alternative schools run by community colleges, and community youth centers offering counseling, recreational and cultural opportunities, and job market information.

Each of the seven initiatives began with a planning grant, out of which the successfully funded proposal was developed. The programs began operating in mid-1990 and will continue with federal support for three years. The federal

funding represents half of the support for each YOU program, the rest to be matched by local funds and resources. The goal is for each program to be self-supporting by the end of the demonstration period.

The evaluation lasts from 1990 to 1995 and has three parts. A two-person team conducts periodic, intensive site visits to monitor the development, implementation, organization, and management of each program. Trained observers also visit the sites periodically to document the nature of community life, problems of and services offered youth, and the ongoing experiences of program participants. Finally, an information system consisting of public documents and administrative records is used to track five outcome measures: school attendance, dropout, teen parenthood, welfare dependency, and juvenile delinquency.

3. Program Initiated by a State

Washington State Family Independence Program

Sponsor: State of Washington

Evaluator: The Urban Institute

The Family Independence Program (FIP) supplements AFDC by offering special incentives for recipients to gain employment and training. At five welfare sites within the state all eligible applicants for AFDC enter FIP instead, which provides them the option of receiving supplemental services that include financial bonuses; an assessment of needs made jointly by client and staff; case management; aid in budgeting, family planning, and parenting; assistance in obtaining resources from other agencies; education, occupational training, and employment services; child care; and medical care. The last two services are continued during the first year of employment.

After an extensive planning period, FIP was put into operation in 1988 and will continue until 1993. Implementation of the JOBS program in 1990 brought many of FIP's features to the AFDC program throughout the state. The main differences between JOBS and FIP are that the latter offers financial incentives, that it cashes out food stamps, and that it provides more extensive child care.

The evaluation of FIP involves the five treatment sites and five matched comparison sites that maintain the usual AFDC program. Both treatment and comparison groups comprise about 15,000 recipients each. The first of four parts of the evaluation is a *net impact analysis*, which focuses on estimation of the effect of FIP (as compared to AFDC) on employment, earnings, duration of welfare receipt, and return to the rolls. The effect of the food stamps cashout is also being assessed. The impact analysis uses administrative data as well as interviews with participants. The second part of the evaluation examines *program implementation and operations*. Its data are taken from interviews with administrators and staff, questionnaires completed by the staff, observations of group activities, and

program documents and records. A *cost-benefit analysis* will compare the cost of administering FIP with that of AFDC, will contrast benefits paid under FIP with those under AFDC, will estimate the likely long-term savings from FIP for both state and federal governments, and will assess the costs and benefits to participants. It will utilize the results of the impact analysis and administrative cost records. Finally, the evaluation will *synthesize and interpret* all of these results to identify successful program features and operational practices and to describe ways in which unsuccessful parts of FIP might be improved.

4. Program Privately Initiated

The New Chance Demonstration

Sponsor: A consortium of private foundations and the U.S. Department of Labor

Evaluator: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation

Designed and managed by MDRC, New Chance is directed toward young AFDC mothers who have dropped out of school. It offers comprehensive services to promote the economic self-sufficiency and parenting skills of these mothers and the social and emotional development of their children. Services are delivered through either schools or community organizations, are intensive (30 hours a week of classroom and other activities) and last for 18 months, after which follow-up services are offered for a year. Services include basic education and GED preparation, employment readiness, health care, counseling in life management and decision making, pediatric health services, child care designed to foster child development, and case management. Most of the services, including child care, are offered at a single project site. The demonstration began in 1989, lasts until 1995, and covers sixteen sites in ten states that together represent a mix of economic conditions, welfare grant levels, and ethnic groups. The program is deliberately small in scale, owing to the intensity of services: each site is expected to serve about one hundred women.

Selection of a research sample of 2,300 mothers, two-thirds in a treatment group and one-third in a control group, was completed in July 1991. Process, impact, and benefit-cost analyses will be conducted. The process study examines various implementation strategies to determine which seem to be most conducive to program success. Modes of service delivery, patterns of participation, and choices made by program operators are observed. This study uses both quantitative data, obtained through a special automated management information system installed at each site, and qualitative information drawn from site visits, field reports, and memoranda by the evaluator's staff. The impact study will gauge program effectiveness in terms of the mother's education and employment; parenting practices and health; welfare dependency; and improvement in the cognitive, behavioral, and health status of the children. Data for this analysis will be collected by in-person interviews at 18 and 36 months after entry into the sample. The cost-benefit

analysis, still in the process of formulation, faces the technical difficulty of valuing a broad array of possible program effects.

5. Other Programs in Early Stages

The last session of the conference briefly reviewed four evaluation projects that are in developmental phases. The first three originated in federal departments; the last is a private initiative that has some federal support.

Feasibility of Evaluation of Family Preservation Programs

Sponsor: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Evaluator: James Bell Associates

The intent of family preservation programs is to avoid the need for foster care by delivering intensive, short-term welfare services to troubled families. Concern over recent increases in the number of children in foster care has prompted the introduction of several bills in Congress that would fund such programs and require their evaluation. Because of controversy and disagreement concerning the effectiveness of these programs and methods for assessing them, DHHS awarded a contract for an "evaluability assessment," an exercise designed to produce a reasoned basis for proceeding with an evaluation that will benefit both practitioners and policymakers. The assessment will attempt to identify the critical design and policy issues surrounding family preservation services and will gauge the feasibility of conducting valid and useful evaluations of these programs. The methodological issues it will try to resolve include appropriate measures of program success, appropriate control or comparison groups, the effect of voluntary participation on differences in outcomes, and barriers to data gathering and analysis posed by the need to obtain adequate sample sizes and to observe laws protecting the privacy of participants.

WIC Child Impact Study: Field Test

Sponsor: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Evaluators: Abt Associates, Inc.; Johns Hopkins University; Westat, Inc.

Although the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) has grown rapidly and gained a strong base of support since it began in 1972, little is known about the impact of the program on children. The USDA has sought to address this issue, using a successive-stage approach. First, the Department reached a cooperative agreement for a design feasibility study with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Research Triangle Institute. The cooperators determined that a study was feasible and recommended a quasi-experimental design using WIC and non-WIC infants identified through state birth records. Second, the Department awarded a contract for a field test of the recommended quasi-experimental design and an alternative design developed by the evalu-

ators listed above. The alternative was an experimental design that calls for the recruitment of WIC-eligible but unserved pregnant women, with random assignment to a treatment or a control group. The field test was completed in November 1991. The results will be used by the USDA to decide how to proceed with a WIC child impact study.

The Head Start Family Service Center Demonstrations

Sponsor: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Evaluator: A consortium of local evaluators

Competitive grants have been awarded to 33 local Head Start agencies to provide extended services to families of children participating in the Head Start program. The intent is to demonstrate how the agency can work with other community agencies and organizations, public and private, to deal with problems of substance abuse, illiteracy, and unemployment among the parents. It is hoped that the demonstrations will help construct and test innovative ways in which to identify family problems, motivate family members to move toward self-help, link families with appropriate community services, and support them as they work out solutions to their problems. The Head Start Bureau in DHHS will provide coordination, technical assistance, and analysis of common data elements to produce an integrated summary of the process and impact evaluations that are being conducted by local evaluators.

The Young Unwed Fathers Demonstration

Sponsors: A consortium of private foundations, with additional support from agencies within the U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Agriculture
Evaluator: Public/Private Ventures

Low-income men aged 16–25 who have fathered children out of wedlock and are unemployed form the clientele of this pilot program, which is being tested in six sites around the country. Conducted by a variety of community agencies ranging from Goodwill Industries (Racine, Wisconsin) to the Pinellas Private Industry Council (Clearwater, Florida), the program provides access to employment and training opportunities; counseling referrals to other forms of support; education and training services; and classes in parenting values and skills. Fieldwork began in 1991 and will last 18 months. The research component of the project includes studies of project implementation at each site, the effects on participants across sites, a cost analysis, and a qualitative study at four sites, designed to provide information on the lives and experiences of the young men. ■