Strategies to Help Low-Wage Workers Advance

IMPLEMENTATION AND EARLY IMPACTS OF THE WORK ADVANCEMENT AND SUPPORT CENTER (WASC) DEMONSTRATION

Cynthia Miller
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THE WORK ADVANCEMENT AND SUPPORT CENTER DEMONSTRATION

mdrc
BUILDING KNOWLEDGE TO IMPROVE SOCIAL POLICY

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Overview

The Work Advancement and Support Center (WASC) demonstration is testing an innovative strategy to help low-wage workers, who make up a large segment of the U.S. workforce, increase their incomes. WASC offers services to help workers stabilize their employment, improve their skills, and increase their earnings by working more hours or finding higher-paying jobs. The program also provides easier access to a range of financial work supports for which workers may be eligible, such as child care subsidies, food stamps, and the Earned Income Tax Credit. A unique feature of WASC is that all these services are offered in a single location — the One-Stop Career Centers created by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to provide job search assistance services — and are provided by workforce development and welfare staff in one unit. In addition, the program targets a group — the working poor — that has not typically been served by the federal workforce development system. WASC's designers expected that the program would have an immediate effect on workers' incomes, largely through increased use of existing work supports. In contrast, increases in earnings would come over the longer term, as the advancement services began to pay off.

MDRC developed and manages the WASC demonstration and is evaluating it using a random assignment research design. Low-wage workers in three sites — Bridgeport, Connecticut; Dayton, Ohio; and San Diego, California — were assigned at random to the WASC program or a control group. This report presents findings on program implementation from all three sites and first-year effects on employment, earnings, and work supports receipt in Dayton and San Diego.

Key Findings

- **Implementation.** Each site succeeded in bringing together workforce development and welfare staff into integrated teams focused on advancement and eased access to work supports, representing a significant culture change for the workforce development system. Staff were able to provide the key services to participants, although some services were delivered less intensively than envisioned. All sites faced some difficulty in delivering the services, largely because of funding shortages and staff turnover. Recruitment of low-wage workers also posed a major challenge, requiring significant staff time and effort.

- **Work supports.** More workers in the WASC group than the control group received food stamps, with increases of 10 percent in Dayton and 23 percent in San Diego. In both sites, children in WASC families were more likely than children in control group families to be covered by publicly funded health care. The WASC program in San Diego also increased Medicaid coverage for adults. Finally, the San Diego program substantially increased parents' use of child care.

- **Advancement.** WASC did not increase employment or earnings in either site during year 1 — and in San Diego, it led to a small reduction in employment, an effect that will be important to track over time. Instead, WASC's key effect on advancement during year 1 was to increase skill acquisition in Dayton. The program in that site substantially increased participation in education and training activities and increased the receipt of certificates and licenses. These effects are encouraging and may lead to advancement over time.

The next report, scheduled for 2010, will present two-year findings for Dayton and San Diego and one-year findings for Bridgeport.

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Preface

A large segment of the workforce in the United States today earns wages that are not enough to move their families out of poverty. Some of these workers will move up over time on their own, but many of them will continue to struggle to make ends meet, while often going without health insurance and other benefits. Although policymakers are focusing more and more on helping low-wage workers increase their incomes by getting better jobs and receiving available benefits, no public system targets this group. The One-Stop Career Centers around the country, funded by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 to provide employment services to job seekers, have to date focused primarily on helping the unemployed find work.

MDRC's Work Advancement and Support Center (WASC) demonstration tests a strategy that expands the mission of the One-Stop Career Centers to serve people who are already working, but at low wages. The WASC model offers services to help working individuals stabilize their employment, find better-paying jobs, improve their skills through education and training, and increase their access to key work supports, such as food stamps and health insurance for adults and children. A key feature of the model is that both types of services are offered in one location, in existing One-Stop Career Centers, and by teams of workforce development and welfare staff working together in the same unit. This report presents early findings about the program's effect on the use of work supports, employment, and earnings in two of the three WASC demonstration sites. After one year, the program is connecting more workers to key financial work supports, particularly food stamps and publicly funded health care coverage. Although WASC did not increase employment rates or earnings after one year, it did substantially increase enrollment in education and training in one site. Longer-term follow-up will show whether this increased training, as well as the other advancement services provided, will eventually pay off.

Bringing low-wage workers into the system and helping them to acquire the skills needed to advance is a broader approach to workforce development than has been tried before — one that stands to benefit employers as well as workers — and one that many have called for as Congress considers reauthorization of the original WIA legislation. Although some localities have moved in the direction of providing comprehensive services to low-wage workers, findings from the WASC demonstration will speak to the challenges and feasibility of serving this group and what works to help them advance. In addition, the recently passed economic stimulus bill — the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 — provides workforce development centers around the country with additional resources to meet increased demand, to innovate, and to develop effective strategies to serve workers. While much of their focus in the short term will be on moving the unemployed back to work, the system should not lose sight of the fact that in today's labor market, finding a job is only the first step.

Gordon Berlin
President

Acknowledgments

The Work Advancement and Support Center (WASC) demonstration would not have been possible without the hard work and commitment of the administrators and staff in all the sites. Special thanks go to Angela Porter, Nestor Leon, and Joe Carbone in Bridgeport; to Erthale Barnes, Vickie Mosier, and Heath MacAlpine in Dayton; and to Linda Weber, Jessica Mosier, and Diana Francis in San Diego — their leadership has made WASC a reality. Many of these individuals also reviewed earlier drafts of this report. We would also like to thank all of the career coaches and other staff from the sites, past and present, who skillfully implemented the WASC program, allowed us to observe them at work, answered our questions, and provided a wealth of information about how the program played out at the front lines. Thanks also go to Jodie Sue Kelly, a consultant to MDRC, who developed the training materials for the demonstration and conducted trainings with frontline staff in all three sites.

MDRC's capacity to carry out a demonstration with an ambitious learning agenda depends heavily on the ongoing commitment of key funding partners. They are acknowledged at the front of the report.

WASC's Work Advancement Calculator was based in part upon an earlier benefits estimator entitled "Oregon Helps," developed for Multnomah County, Oregon.

Several people provided help with securing the necessary data: Fran Hersh, Vickie Maddux, Mary Lou Owens, and Staci Wise at the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services; Aileen Douglas from the Employment Development Department in California; Patrick Valdivia, Roxanne Brown, Diane Francis, and Donna Rodriguez at the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency; and Heath MacAlpine, Erthale Barnes, and Vickie Mosier from the Montgomery County Department of Job and Family Services in Ohio.

At MDRC, Frieda Molina, James Riccio, and John Wallace provided important input and guidance on the analysis and early drafts. The report also benefited from reviews by Donna Wharton-Fields, Caroline Schultz, Barbara Goldman, Gayle Hamilton, Richard Hendra, and John Hutchins. David Navarro helped oversee the data collection and Alla Chaplygnia helped with the exchange, logging, and archiving of data files for the project. Albert Fang, Anne Warren, and Alexandra Pennington programmed the data and assisted in the analysis. Daniel Schlaff assisted with report production. Alice Tufel edited the report, and David Sobel and Stephanie Cowell prepared it for publication.

We would like to pay special tribute to Kenneth Samu, a dedicated career coach from Bridgeport, who passed away in December 2008. Ken had a cheerful, engaging personality that put both his customers and his coworkers at ease. We are grateful for the contributions he made to the WASC program and the difference he made for his customers.

Finally, we extend our deep appreciation to the people who participated in the study and gave generously of their time to respond to a survey and participate in focus groups.

The Authors

Executive Summary

This report presents first-year impact results from two sites in the Work Advancement and Support Center (WASC) demonstration — San Diego, California; and Dayton, Ohio — and implementation findings for those two sites as well as for a third site, Bridgeport, Connecticut. (Only San Diego and Dayton are covered in this Executive Summary.) WASC is an innovative program designed to help low-wage workers advance in the labor market and increase their incomes. It offers services to help workers stay employed, improve their skills, and find higher-paying jobs. It also provides easier access to a range of financial work supports, such as child care subsidies and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), for which workers may be eligible. Finally, a key feature of WASC is that all these services are offered in a single location — the local One-Stop Career Centers created by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. The program was explicitly designed to build the capacity of the workforce development system to serve low-wage workers, and its findings will be of direct relevance to the debate on WIA reauthorization.

MDRC developed and manages the WASC demonstration and is responsible for its evaluation. The demonstration is currently being funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, the Ford Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The project has also been supported by earlier grants from The Annie E. Casey Foundation, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

WASC is being evaluated using a random assignment research design, in which individuals eligible for the demonstration are assigned at random to the WASC group or to a control group. The WASC group is eligible to receive WASC benefits and services, while the control group is not eligible for WASC services but is eligible to seek out existing services in the community. The impact of WASC is assessed by comparing outcomes for the WASC and control groups.

Key findings from the first year of follow-up show that:

- The program is meeting one of its two primary objectives — increasing the receipt of several key work supports. In both sites, more individuals and families in WASC than in the control groups received food stamps and publicly funded health coverage. In the San Diego site, families in WASC were much more likely than families in the control group to use child care, although they were not more likely to report receiving assistance paying for this care.

- The program substantially increased participation in education and training activities in Dayton, leading in turn to an increase in the number of participants who obtained certificates and licenses. However, WASC had no effect in that site on employment or earnings through the first year. In San Diego, the program led to a small reduction in employment covered by the unemployment insurance (UI) system.

The results presented here should be considered an early and preliminary assessment of the program, given that they rely on a partial sample in San Diego. In addition, effects on advancement may take more than one year to emerge, particularly if participants pursue training as a route to higher earnings.

The WASC Model

In today's labor market, a large segment of the workforce in the United States earns wages that are not enough to lift their families out of poverty. One out of four workers, for example, earns less than $10 per hour.[1] While some of these workers will move up over time on their own, recent research indicates that such advancement is the exception rather than the norm.[2] As a result, many of these workers will continue to earn low wages, while often going without health insurance and other benefits.

Although policymakers are increasingly focused on helping low-wage workers boost their incomes by advancing in the labor market and obtaining available benefits, no public system targets this group. The workforce development system of One-Stop Career Centers largely serves unemployed individuals and dislocated workers (those who have lost a job and have been reemployed at a lower wage). Similarly, while not explicitly targeting the unemployed, the welfare system has not typically focused on low-wage workers. In fact, working individuals are often unaware of the financial benefits for which they are eligible or have little time to complete the often burdensome application process.

WASC was designed to fill this gap. The model calls for the provision of retention and advancement services — that is, services designed to help workers remain employed, receive promotions, or move into better-paying jobs — and simplified access to financial work supports, all offered in one location by integrated teams of workforce development and welfare staff.[3] Key work supports include food stamps, medical insurance for adults (Medicaid) and

[1]Bureau of Labor Statistics, "May 2007 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, United States" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). Web site: www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm.

[2]Fredrik Andersson, Harry Holzer, and Julia Lane, *Moving Up or Moving On: Workers, Firms, and Advancement in the Low-Wage Labor Market* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2005).

[3]"Employment stability" and "retention" are used interchangeably in this report.

children (Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program, known as SCHIP), subsidized child care, and federal and state Earned Income Tax Credits and the federal Child Tax Credit. Services were offered to participants for up to two years. Major elements of the WASC program include career coaching, skills development, education about available work supports, and simplified work support application procedures.[4] Although the same basic program was set up across the participating WASC locations, each site had some leeway to offer services that fit its population's needs or to take advantage of local opportunities. The specific elements of each site's program are presented in the report.

The goal of the program is to help low-wage workers increase their incomes, but program designers envisioned that this would occur through different mechanisms over the shorter versus the longer term. The short-term goal was to increase family's incomes and well-being through the use of existing work supports. Some work-based supports can increase employment rates, employment stability, and earnings, all key inputs to advancement, but both economic theory and findings from studies of the effects of cash welfare payments suggest that the additional income from some work supports could reduce employment and possibly discourage advancement. For this reason, the provision of advancement services was viewed as key to helping workers increase their incomes through higher earnings alone over the long term.

The WASC Evaluation and Target Population

WASC was implemented in four sites around the country — Dayton, Ohio; San Diego, California; Bridgeport, Connecticut; and Fort Worth, Texas.[5] MDRC is tracking outcomes for the study participants using a variety of data sources. For this report, the data cover one year after study entry.

WASC recruited two broad and sometimes overlapping target groups: (1) low-wage workers, and (2) reemployed dislocated workers. The majority of individuals who were eventually enrolled into the study earned less than $10 per hour and had a family income below 130

[4]WASC planners had hoped that a key feature of the model would be to offer services to groups of participants at their workplaces, which would make participation more convenient and strengthen ties with employers. For reasons discussed in the report, however, providing services at the workplace did not turn out to be a key feature of the WASC model as it was actually implemented.

[5]The Fort Worth site was unique in the demonstration, in that services were to be offered entirely at the workplace. Employers were to be recruited into the study and services offered to a randomly chosen subset of their employees. For various reasons, the site experienced difficulty recruiting employers into the demonstration and was subsequently converted to a site for which only the implementation of the program will be studied.

percent of the poverty line.[6] Thus, although the WASC sample represents a particular segment of the low-wage worker population, it is one that nonetheless stands to benefit from the program. They earn fairly low wages, they are likely to live below the poverty line, and many of them do not receive benefits for which they are likely eligible.

Key Findings on Program Implementation

- **WASC was implemented largely as designed in Dayton and San Diego, although the sites did face difficulties along the way.**

The new model — of bringing together workforce development and welfare staff in one unit to collaborate and deliver integrated services to low-wage workers — required a culture change among staff: After having previously focused on eligibility rules, compliance, or job placement only, they now had to adopt a new focus on job advancement. Both sites were successful in integrating staff and achieving this focus on advancement, although staff from each system did retain some degree of specialization. In addition, both sites were able to recruit low-wage workers into the study and deliver advancement and work support services.

- **Recruiting low-wage workers to a voluntary program was a major challenge; recruitment was very labor-intensive for staff, at times distracting them from service delivery.**

Recruiting sufficient numbers of workers into the study was more complicated and time-consuming than originally envisioned, and the sites spent considerable effort devising strategies to find these workers and contact them. In addition, the sites did not have sufficient numbers of staff to take on this labor-intensive effort while also providing services to individuals who were already enrolled. As a result, when the sites made strong recruitment efforts, the delivery of services often lapsed and staff were not able to meet with enrolled WASC participants (also referred to as "customers") as often as planned.

- **WASC staff provided easier access to work supports for their customers. In addition, individuals in the WASC group were more likely than those in the control group to report receiving encouragement in and help with applying for the full range of available work supports.**

[6]During the pilot phase of the demonstration, eligibility was restricted to those earning no more than $9 per hour and with household income of no more than 130 percent of the federal poverty line. As it became evident that recruitment would be a major challenge, the eligibility guidelines were modified as part of a larger strategy to help the sites' efforts.

The WASC sites created an application environment for work supports that differed significantly from business as usual. WASC customers came to one location and met with just one or two staff members, who handled eligibility screening, application, and recertification for each of the various work supports being offered. WASC coaches could usually complete several applications by referring to the first application for information. As a result, the customer was asked to provide information only once. In one site, the applications for several programs were also combined and simplified. Additionally, WASC made it even easier for customers to apply for work supports by offering, in most sites, flexible hours or locations to meet with staff. Finally, in sites with a waiting list for child care assistance, WASC moved its eligible customers to near the top of the list.[7]

- **WASC staff succeeded in providing a range of advancement services to participants. Low-wage workers in the WASC group were much more likely than those in the control group to have met with a career coach and to have received help with retention and advancement.**

The WASC model called for provision of a wide range of advancement services. Staff were expected to develop advancement plans with their customers, identify specific steps to achieve those goals, stay in contact with customers, and meet with customers on a flexible schedule. Overall, all sites adhered fairly closely to the model, with some exceptions.

The survey data also confirm that staff did provide more advancement services than participants would have otherwise received. Individuals in the WASC group were much more likely than those in the control group to have met with a career coach in the four weeks prior to the 12-month survey that was administered to a subset of the full sample. The WASC group was also more likely to report receiving help with career assessments and job preparation over the prior year. Finally, the WASC group reported receiving more encouragement from staff to pursue long-term career goals and to pursue better jobs or promotions.

Key Findings on Program Impacts

- **WASC increased the receipt of food stamps by about 10 percent in Dayton and 23 percent in San Diego.**

The effects are remarkably similar across sites (see the top panel of Table ES.1). In both Dayton and San Diego, WASC increased the proportion of individuals who received food stamps during the first year of the program by 5.5 percentage points (from a control group level

[7]In practice, a waiting list existed in San Diego only, and that site ultimately used separate funds to subsidize child care for its clients. Therefore, individuals in the control groups were not pushed further back on the waiting list because of WASC.

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Table ES.1

Year 1, Impacts on Receipt of Work Supports

Dayton and San Diego

Outcome	Dayton				San Diego			
	WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Percentage Difference	WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Percentage Difference
Food stamps								
Ever received food stamps (%)	59.4	53.9	5.5 **	10.1	29.6	24.1	5.5 **	22.9
Months receiving food stamps	4.8	4.1	0.7 ***	16.1	2.0	1.6	0.4 **	24.4
Amount of food stamps received ($)	1,410	1,284	126 *	9.8	628	494	135 *	27.3
Sample size (total = 1,977)	595	589			397	396		
Child care arrangements[a] (%)								
Used child care since random assignment	67.1	61.8	5.3	8.5	51.3	37.4	14.0 *	37.3
Received any help with child care costs[b]	38.7	34.4	5.3	15.4	21.8	14.6	7.3	50.0
Health care coverage (%)								
Respondent has health care coverage	67.2	64.8	2.4	3.6	69.1	61.9	7.2	11.6
Publicly funded	32.4	31.0	1.5	4.7	39.0	31.4	7.6 *	24.1
Privately funded	35.0	33.8	1.1	3.4	30.0	30.5	-0.5	-1.6
All dependent children have health care coverage[c]	92.5	89.1	3.4	3.8	86.0	78.6	7.4	9.4
Publicly funded	77.5	67.6	9.9 *	14.6	71.9	57.2	14.7 **	25.7
Privately funded	14.4	21.4	-7.0	-32.7	14.0	21.3	-7.2	-33.8
Sample size (total = 929)	254	248			219	208		

(continued)

Table ES.1 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations using administrative records for food stamp impacts, and survey data for child care and health care impacts for both Dayton and San Diego.

NOTES: Sample sizes vary because of missing values.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]Child care measures are among sample members with at least one child age 11 years or younger at time of random assignment.

[b]Respondent is coded as receiving help with child care costs if someone else paid for child care since random assignment, if the respondent received refund for child care since random assignment, or if the respondent received subsidized child care since random assignment.

[c]The percentage of sample members who have medical insurance may not necessarily equal the sum of those with public coverage and private coverage because of missing values.

of 53.9 percent in Dayton and 24.1 percent in San Diego). This impact represents a 10 percent increase in Dayton, given its relatively high receipt rates, and a 23 percent increase in San Diego. The increase in use translated into more months of food stamp receipt on average for the WASC group and about $130 more in food stamps over the entire year. Separate analyses (not shown) indicate that both sites increased food stamp use largely by increasing the receipt of benefits, rather than by helping individuals stay on food stamps for longer periods, although the program in Dayton did have some effects on benefit duration. While it is difficult to pinpoint the particular feature of the program that led to increased benefits receipt, the implementation findings suggest that a key factor was easier access. Individuals in the WASC group received help in filling out applications, did not have to make multiple visits or wait in long lines, and were able to come in during nonstandard hours.

While the gain of $130 may seem modest, it represents an average gain across all sample members, many of whom did not receive food stamps. When one looks only at individuals who took up food stamps because of WASC, the average participant gained more than $2,000 in food stamp benefits over the year. This finding is consistent with other analyses (not shown) showing that WASC generally increased food stamp amounts by about $150 to $300 per month.[8]

- **WASC substantially increased the use of child care in San Diego but not the reported receipt of child care subsidies. No such effects were found in Dayton.**

Among the control group members in San Diego, 37 percent reported using child care (informal or formal arrangements) in the year after study entry, compared with 51 percent of the WASC group, for a sizable impact of 14 percentage points (see the second panel of Table ES.1). However, the program did not increase the reported use of subsidized child care, defined broadly here as receiving any assistance with child care costs. It is possible that recipients are not always aware that their child care is subsidized. A future report will use state records data on child care subsidies to confirm this finding.

The findings on child care are consistent with variation in the program models and environments across sites. Although all WASC sites were required to guarantee subsidized child care to eligible families by placing them near the top of subsidized care waiting lists, a waiting list existed in San Diego only. In addition, San Diego staff used discretionary funds to directly subsidize care for many of their customers. In Dayton, in contrast, the treatment difference consisted primarily of help with the application.

[8]WASC had no effect on sample members' use of the Earned Income Tax Credit, although these results are uncertain given the limitations of the survey data in measuring the receipt of this benefit.

- **WASC increased the rate of Medicaid coverage for adults in San Diego. The program also increased the rate of publicly funded health coverage for children in both sites, although these effects may have been partially offset by reductions in private coverage.**

WASC increased respondents' use of publicly funded coverage (Medicaid) in San Diego, from 31.4 percent for the control group to 39 percent for the WASC group, for an increase of 7.6 percentage points (see bottom panel of Table ES.1). The effect on having any type of coverage is similar in size, although it just misses being statistically significant (not shown). (Effects that are statistically significant are unlikely to be due to chance). In contrast, WASC had no effect on adult health care coverage in Dayton.

Effects on children's coverage were more similar across sites. In Dayton and San Diego, WASC led to an increase in the rate of publicly funded coverage (Medicaid or SCHIP). The program did not increase overall coverage because of partially offsetting reductions in private coverage, although these differences are also not statistically significant. It is not unusual for this type of substitution to occur with increased access to public or other low-cost health care coverage.[9] The net effect for participants is not clear, but substitution of public for private coverage is an issue to consider in the effort to connect low-wage workers to work supports.

- **In Dayton, WASC increased the number of individuals who reported being enrolled in college courses or vocational training programs during the first year and increased the number who reported receiving a vocational license or certificate.**

A large number of participants reported being interested in WASC as a route to pursue education or training. WASC staff were proficient in connecting participants to training and drawing down training funds, with some differences. Dayton had access to state discretionary funds that helped to provide extra and quite generous financial incentives to individuals for participating in and completing training. In addition, WIA funding for training was generous and accessible for working people. In San Diego, in contrast, funding for training through WIA was difficult to access for those who were already employed. This site primarily referred customers to existing, low-cost training opportunities within the community.

The survey data suggest that additional funding for training, as available in Dayton, was important to increasing its use. The WASC groups in both San Diego and Dayton were more likely than their control group counterparts to report that staff encouraged them to pursue

[9]See, for example, Cynthia Miller et al., *New Hope for the Working Poor: Effects After Eight Years for Families and Children* (New York: MDRC, 2008), for evidence from the New Hope project.

education and training, but only in Dayton did the program lead to increased enrollment. In this site, WASC increased the proportion of individuals enrolled in any type of education or training by 23 percentage points, from 54 percent for the control group to 77 percent for the WASC group (Table ES.2). This entire effect was a result of increased enrollment in either college courses or vocational training programs. Most of the effect also appears to be driven by individuals who participated while working.

- **WASC had no effect on employment or earnings through the first year in Dayton, and reduced UI-covered employment somewhat in San Diego.**

The bottom panel of Table ES.2 shows that employment rates were not quite 100 percent during the year for all groups, reflecting the fact that some individuals at study entry worked in jobs that are not covered by the UI system.[10] Although over 90 percent of the sample worked at some point during the year in a UI-covered job, a much lower percentage worked for all four quarters of the year, suggesting a fair amount of job loss.

The WASC program had no effects on employment or earnings in Dayton. In San Diego, however, WASC reduced the number of individuals who worked all four quarters of the year by 6.5 percentage points. Although it is not clear what caused the reduction in employment, survey data (not shown) suggest that the increased receipt of work supports allowed some individuals to work in part-time, informal jobs. It will be important to track these effects over the longer term.

Conclusion

The WASC program represents an ambitious attempt to build the capacity of the workforce development system's One-Stop Career Centers to recruit a new population of low-wage workers into their offices, help them obtain access to work supports, and provide them with advancement services to increase their earnings. By expanding the mission of the workforce development system to include low-wage workers and requiring the creation of new practices to serve them, WASC represents a major culture change for the system and one that many have proposed in the ongoing debate over WIA reauthorization.

The findings to date, although preliminary, suggest that the One-Stop sites in the WASC demonstration have achieved some but not all of the program's goals. The sites brought together workforce development and welfare staff into integrated teams and developed a focus on advancement and eased access to work supports. This type of institutional change did not

[10]Examples of employment that is not covered by UI records are self-employment, informal jobs, agriculture jobs, and federal government jobs.

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Table ES.2

Year 1, Impacts on Education/Training and UI-Covered Employment and Earnings

Dayton and San Diego

Outcome	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Education and training (%)								
Participated in any education/training activity	76.6	53.7	22.9 ***	0.000	44.6	44.3	0.3	0.953
College courses	56.2	39.2	17.0 ***	0.000	18.9	20.3	-1.4	0.670
Vocational training	32.8	19.8	13.1 ***	0.001	18.8	14.8	4.0	0.282
Ever participated in an employment or education activity while working	71.4	51.9	19.5 ***	0.000	48.7	42.4	6.3	0.181
Obtained a license, certificate, or degree	23.4	15.2	8.2 **	0.022	12.3	8.5	3.8	0.208
License or certificate[a]	18.1	11.3	6.8 **	0.034	10.5	5.4	5.1 *	0.054
Any degree or diploma[b]	7.3	5.1	2.2	0.307	2.5	4.6	-2.1	0.258
Employment and earnings								
Ever employed (%)	95.9	95.0	0.8	0.470	90.7	90.9	-0.2	0.935
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	74.8	73.7	1.1	0.653	63.2	69.7	-6.5 **	0.036
Total earnings ($)	12,669	12,913	-244	0.547	13,447	14,408	-961	0.146
Sample size (total = 1,977)	595	589			397	396		

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) administrative records from the states of Ohio and California.

NOTES: A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]Includes trade license or training certificate.

[b]Includes a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, high school diploma, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, and graduate degree.

come without significant challenges along the way, which are documented in this report. The sites also increased low-wage workers' receipt of several key work supports, including food stamps and publicly funded health care coverage, but did not increase their earnings.

The effects on food stamp receipt rates, although moderate in size, are encouraging. First, they occurred on top of recent increases in food stamp receipt among working families, in part a result of state and local efforts to increase access and outreach. The WASC findings suggest that there is even more room for improvement and illustrate some of the ways in which this improvement might be achieved. For the families affected, the gains were large. Similarly, the demonstration has shown that it is possible to increase the receipt of publicly funded health care coverage for children, although this increase was partially offset by a reduction in private coverage. The ability to connect families to this benefit may become more and more important, if unemployment increases or if the costs of employer-provided coverage continue to rise. Finally, the effects on child care use are quite large and may have longer-term implications for both adults and children.

The next report, scheduled for early 2010, will present two-year findings for Dayton and San Diego, as well as findings after one year for Bridgeport. The report will include longer-term follow-up on both food stamps and earnings, using records data, and will present new findings from records data on the receipt of child care subsidies. Finally, the report will examine in more depth whether the program had different effects for particular subgroups of the sample.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In 2007, one in four workers in the United States earned less than $10 per hour, a wage rate that leaves many of these workers and their families poor or near poor.[1] Someone working full year, full time to support a family of four, for example, could bring his or her family to just below the federal poverty line with this wage, while a single adult who is not supporting a family would end up at about twice the poverty line. Many of these workers will leave the ranks of the working poor over time, as they gain experience in the labor market and move to higher-paying and better jobs. But many will not.[2] Those workers and their families will continue to struggle to make ends meet, while often going without health insurance and other benefits. Policymakers have become increasingly focused on ways to help these workers boost their incomes by advancing in the labor market and by taking up the benefits for which they are eligible.

To date, however, these workers are on the margins of the two public systems that might help. The workforce development system — the One-Stop Career Centers funded by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to provide a range of services to job seekers — largely serves the unemployed.[3] And, although it provides some opportunities for training, the system's key emphasis is on job placement. The welfare system, consisting of multiple programs and agencies, has typically not served a working population. Working individuals are often unaware of benefits for which they are eligible, believing in some cases that they need to be unemployed or on welfare to receive other benefits. In other cases, they have little time to complete the often burdensome application process or to visit benefit offices that are typically open only during workday hours.

This report presents early results from the Work Advancement and Support Center (WASC) demonstration, an initiative designed to fill the gap in services for low-wage workers and test innovative ways to help them advance and increase their incomes. First, WASC aims to offer intensive retention and advancement services — that is, helping working individuals stabilize their employment, find better-paying jobs, and improve their skills. At the same time, WASC makes it easier for these workers to receive existing benefits, or work supports — a "make work pay" strategy that should help to increase their incomes and stabilize their employment. A key feature of the program is that both types of services are offered in one

[1] Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009b).

[2] Andersson, Holzer, and Lane (2005).

[3] The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 created a new, comprehensive workforce development system, replacing the Job Training Partnership Act and other federal job training programs with an integrated "One-Stop" system providing employment and training services to students, dislocated workers, and youth.

location — in existing One-Stop Career Centers — and by colocated teams of workforce development and welfare staff.

MDRC developed and manages the WASC demonstration and is responsible for its evaluation. The demonstration is currently being funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, the Ford Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The project has also been supported by earlier grants from The Annie E. Casey Foundation, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

This report presents findings on the implementation of the program in the three evaluation sites — Dayton, Ohio; San Diego, California; and Bridgeport, Connecticut — and its effects on the use of work supports, employment, and earnings after one year in Dayton and San Diego.[4] The findings are a preliminary and early look at the program's effects, given that they do not include effects from Bridgeport and cover only a partial sample in San Diego. In addition, the program's effects on advancement may take more than one year to emerge, particularly if participants pursue training as a route to higher earnings.

By expanding the One-Stop Career Centers' mission to include low-wage workers, the WASC model challenges the existing workforce development system to be more comprehensive, recognizing that in today's labor market, finding a job is only the first step. Bringing low-wage workers into the system and helping them to acquire the skills needed to advance is a broader approach to workforce development and one that would simultaneously benefit employers in their search for more highly skilled labor. In fact, as Congress considers reauthorization of the original WIA legislation, some proposals call for expanding services to low-wage workers. Findings from the demonstration will speak to the challenges and feasibility of serving this group and what works to help them advance. Although much is known about how to help the unemployed move into work, much less evidence exists on what strategies help workers stay employed and move up.

Findings from WASC will also help to inform several other recent policies directed to low-wage workers. For example, several initiatives have been launched or expanded to increase low-wage workers' receipt of existing work supports. These efforts range from actions taken by government agencies themselves to increase program take-up,[5] to foundation-funded efforts to

[4]Although there were originally four evaluation sites, one site later became an implementation-only site and will be discussed in a forthcoming report.

[5]See Wolkwitz (2008) for a description of efforts by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to increase food stamp take-up.

connect workers to the full array of supports.[6] The demonstration will highlight the challenges and effects of enrolling workers — many of whom had few previous connections to the benefit system — in work supports. Finally, there has been some movement in recent years to increase collaboration between the workforce development and welfare systems, with some local efforts that look very similar to the WASC model.[7] The WASC results will show the feasibility of offering advancement and work supports services in one location, within one unit.

The WASC Model

In developing the WASC model, planners sought to build on the best evidence available to date about how to help low-wage workers advance and increase their incomes. The model sought to improve the provision of retention and advancement services and to ease access to financial work supports. Each of the subsequent sections in this chapter discusses the general elements of WASC, the specific services that were offered to WASC program participants (also called "customers") in the sites, and how those services differed from what is typically available to low-wage workers.

Increasing Advancement

The primary objective of WASC is to help low-wage workers stay employed, build skills, and advance.[8] Although recent research documents that some low-wage workers advance over time on their own, many do not.[9] In a recent study, for example, workers with low earnings in a given three-year period, defined as less than $12,000 annually, were followed for another six years. Only about one-fourth of those workers consistently earned more than $15,000 at the end of the period.[10]

Workers can advance in several ways. A first step is to establish stability in the labor market. It is well documented that low-wage and less-skilled workers have relatively high rates of employment instability — that is, they lose jobs frequently — which has negative effects on earnings prospects.[11] Among those in stable work, some might advance by staying in the same job and moving up over time, while others advance by changing jobs. For low-wage workers, changing jobs appears to be an important avenue for advancement, particularly if they move to

[6]Such efforts include, for example, the Supporting Work Project, managed by The Families and Work Institute and funded by the Ford Foundation, and Single-Stop USA.

[7]New York City's Career Advancement Program, operating out of its One-Stop system, is one example.

[8]For the WASC demonstration, "advancement" is defined as obtaining an increase in wages or work hours, obtaining employer-provided benefits, or obtaining better work hours.

[9]Gladden and Taber (2000); Gottschalk (2001).

[10]Andersson, Holzer, and Lane (2005).

[11]Gladden and Taber (2000); Gottschalk (2001); Holzer and Lalonde (2000).

an industry and occupation with more training and advancement opportunities.[12] However, many of these workers lack the information and connections necessary to access these better jobs. Finally, education and skill levels are key predictors of upward mobility. Workers with higher education levels and more training experience higher rates of wage growth on the job and greater gains from changing jobs than less-skilled workers.[13] Yet many low-wage workers face formidable barriers to acquiring more skills, such as a lack of basic preparation needed to enter training programs and both the time and financial costs of attending. Underlying the WASC model is an understanding of these avenues to advancement and the barriers that low-wage workers face to pursuing them. The program was designed to promote advancement in a number of ways:

- **Career coaching.** Career coaches work with participants to identify short- and long-term advancement goals and the steps necessary to reach them. For example, participants receive guidance about securing promotions, raises, increased hours, and benefits in their current jobs. WASC staff also help participants find higher-paying positions elsewhere, with job developers sometimes identifying such positions. To increase participants' knowledge about career opportunities, WASC staff use skills and interest assessments and set up informational interviews with employers. Finally, career coaches work with participants who have not been able to remain steadily employed to identify and address barriers to job retention.

- **Skills development.** Participants can increase their skills to qualify for better-paying jobs through traditional classroom-based training, on-the-job training opportunities, and paid work experience. WASC refers participants to other workforce development providers, some of whom may be based in the One-Stop. In addition, some WASC sites have set aside substantial resources for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and to underwrite a variety of education and training costs.

- **Working with employers.** From the outset, WASC planners had hoped that working with employers would be a key component of the model. The main goal in this area was to offer services to groups of participants at their workplaces, which would make participation more convenient, strengthen ties with employers, and facilitate advancement within the firm. For participants served through the One-Stop office, another goal was to cultivate the support of their employers for training and advancement. However, for rea-

[12]Even and MacPherson (2003); Andersson, Holzer, and Lane (2005).
[13]Connolly and Gottschalk (2006).

sons discussed later, working with employers did not turn out to be a feature of the WASC model as it was actually implemented.

Table 1.1 summarizes the advancement services available to WASC participants and how those services differ from services that typically would be available to low-wage workers. The table illustrates that although WASC was a "franchise" model — that is, services were designed to be delivered in a uniform way across all sites and all participants were to have access to the same types of services — all sites had leeway to offer services to fit their local needs or to take advantage of existing funding opportunities. For example, the WASC model calls for the promotion of skills development. Within this domain, the Dayton site had considerable discretionary funding and was able to offer generous cash incentives to participants for enrolling in and completing education or training. The table also highlights that, in the absence of WASC, few services are typically available for low-wage workers at the One-Stops, although they could seek out services from within the community — for example, through community-based organizations or community colleges. Although workers are free to enter the One-Stops and take advantage of job boards and other information, more intensive services and training are largely reserved for unemployed clients. The One-Stop in Dayton stands out in serving employed clients, but these clients typically do not receive advancement coaching and are unlikely to be eligible for training funds.

Increasing Take-Up of Work Supports

The second goal of WASC is to increase the rate at which low-wage workers take up available work supports. Work supports are defined here as public programs, not all of which are conditional upon work, intended to supplement the incomes of low-wage workers and their families. WASC considers the following work supports a priority: food stamps,[14] medical insurance for adults (Medicaid) and children (Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program, known as SCHIP), subsidized child care, federal and state Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC), and the federal Child Tax Credit (CTC). Individually, these supports have been found to have positive effects on families; combined, they can significantly increase family income and resources.[15] However, many programs are underused and take-up rates vary from program to program. In 2005, for example, only 57 percent of low-wage workers who were eligible for food stamps received them, and this fraction varied considerably across states. Among the three states where WASC is being evaluated, California and Connecticut ranked

[14]In October 2008, the federal Food Stamp program was renamed the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

[15]Moffitt (2002).

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Table 1.1

Advancement Services in WASC Sites

Dayton, San Diego, and Bridgeport

Type of Service	Services Available Under WASC	Typical Services Prior to WASC
Active advancement coaching	- Consistent contact with staff - Develop advancement plan - Discuss interaction of advancement and work supports	- No advancement coaching available - Case management at One-Stop Career Centers focused on job placement only - Bridgeport: Provided advancement services to low-wage workers through the Academy for Career Advancement
General employment assistance	- Staff-assisted career assessments, labor market information, and job search assistance - Dayton: Generous cash incentives for maintaining steady employment	- Career assessments, labor market information, and job-search assistance available at One-Stop Career Centers, but largely self-directed for working individuals - Dayton: One-Stop Career Center serves working individuals
Training assistance	- Assistance applying for existing training funds, some of which are through WIA - Dayton and Bridgeport: Streamlined application for WIA funds - Dayton: Generous cash incentives for participating in training while working, and for completing training	- WIA funds for training generally not available to working individuals, except in Dayton, where access to training funds is still very limited for workers

NOTE: WIA = Workforce Investment Act.

relatively low, at 34 percent and 45 percent, respectively, while Ohio was just above the national average.[16] Data on health coverage also suggest room for improvement. For example, one in five poor children was uninsured in 2006. Lack of coverage is relatively high for Hispanic children and for foreign-born adults, especially those who are not citizens.[17] Finally, research on the EITC suggests fairly high take-up rates, around 85 percent, although rates vary across

[16]Cunnyngham, Castner, and Schirm (2007).
[17]DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, and Smith (2007).

different types of workers and across areas.[18] Survey data suggest, for example, that awareness and use of the EITC is much lower among low-income Hispanic parents than other parents.[19]

An individual's decision to take up work supports depends on the benefits and costs of participation, where costs can include the inconvenience of applying, the time and effort of learning about eligibility and program rules, and any stigma associated with receiving benefits. The evidence suggests that each of these factors affects take-up rates, although the effects of stigma appear to be fairly modest.[20] Lack of knowledge, for example, appears to be an important barrier to applying for food stamps, with many eligible families mistakenly believing that they are ineligible,[21] or finding the application process too daunting.[22] The perceived complexity of the Medicaid application has also been found to be an important cost that reduces use among eligible families.[23] Adding to this burden, benefit offices are often only open during traditional nine-to-five weekday hours, requiring time off from work to apply. Recent research finds that efforts to reduce these costs result in an increase in take-up rates.[24] WASC attempts to counter the barriers to participation in several ways:

- **Educating customers about work supports.** WASC staff use a tool developed for the demonstration, the Work Advancement Calculator, to inform customers about supports for which they are eligible. Staff first enter information into the calculator on participant's household income and size. The calculator then presents all the supports for which the participant appears to be eligible and the combined effect of those supports on household income. The calculator can also be used to estimate how changes in earnings will affect the amount of benefit that participants stand to receive.

- **Simplifying enrollment and recertification procedures.** WASC sites have dedicated staff who are responsible for assisting with work support applications for all programs, reducing the need for participants to travel to several different offices and fill out several different applications. WASC seeks to eliminate multiple, sometimes conflicting eligibility requirements by, whenever possible, creating common eligibility criteria for work supports, reducing the number of procedures and face-to-face interviews and the amount of documentation required to enroll in these programs, and extending the intervals between required recertifications for benefits.

[18]Berube (2004); Holt (2006).
[19]Ross Phillips (2001).
[20]Remler and Glied (2003).
[21]Bartlett, Burstein, and Hamilton (2004).
[22]O'Brien et al. (2000); Ponza et al. (1999).
[23]Stuber, Maloy, Rosenbaum, and Jones (2000).
[24]See, for example, Currie and Grogger (2001); Bansak and Raphael (2007).

Table 1.2 summarizes work support services that are available to WASC participants, compared with those typically available to low-wage workers. The table illustrates that a key benefit of WASC is the availability of one staff person, in one location, to guide the customer through the application process for multiple benefits. Without WASC, in contrast, customers would be required to visit multiple offices, often during work hours, and to wait in long lines to apply. WASC in San Diego represented the biggest change from "business as usual" for the application itself, since Dayton and Bridgeport already had fairly simplified applications. Finally, WASC guaranteed immediate access to child care assistance for all eligible families. This program feature was relevant primarily to the San Diego site, since Dayton and Bridgeport did not have waiting lists for child care assistance. In fact, WASC in San Diego avoided waiting lists entirely by subsidizing clients' child care with its own discretionary funds.

Offering Employment and Work Supports Assistance in One Place

WASC brings the complementary expertise of staff from the workforce development and welfare systems together under one roof and one unit within the WIA One-Stop Career Center. Colocating staff in this way increases the convenience of taking advantage of available services and may also reduce any stigma associated with receiving work supports, since services are offered within a workforce development agency. Another potential benefit of colocation is that staff may develop new approaches to serving participants as they relinquish their individual agency affiliations and assume a new identity as a unit.

Although colocation of staff from the two agencies is not typical, there has been a move in recent years toward colocation. However, even in One-Stop Career Centers in which staff are colocated, including Dayton, staff from the two agencies are not located within the same unit, as they are under the WASC approach.

Goals and Expected Effects

WASC services are available to participants for two years in San Diego and Dayton, and for 18 months in Bridgeport. The provision of these services should increase earnings and the use of work supports in several ways. Staff should increase participants' take-up of work supports fairly quickly, by providing information about existing benefits and simplifying the application process. Effects on earnings should occur through several avenues, some of which may take much longer to occur. Career coaches will help some workers stabilize their employment by addressing various barriers to job retention. Staff can help participants navigate advancement opportunities with their current employers, encouraging them to ask for more hours or to pursue promotions. Career coaches might help other participants explore opportunities in different fields and at other employers, eventually leading them to move to better-paying jobs, although these effects may take longer to observe. Finally, WASC might increase earnings

The Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

Table 1.2

Work Support Services in WASC Sites

Dayton, San Diego, and Bridgeport

Type of Service	Services Available Under WASC	Typical Services Prior to WASC
Education and information	- Work Advancement Calculator to estimate eligibility for all relevant work supports	- Not available
Physical access	- Flexible office hours, including evenings and weekends; staff available to meet outside the office at convenient locations for customers - Application for all relevant work supports at one location - One staff person determines eligibility for all programs and helps customers with applications - Quick access to a staff person - Face-to-face meeting for food stamp redetermination waived	- Usually open only during standard work hours - Multiple offices, staff, and applications (except in Dayton) - Long waiting lines - Must go to Food Stamp office for redetermination meeting
Application	- San Diego: Three-page application for all work supports replaced the 21 pages of applications needed to apply for food stamps, Medicaid, and child care - Dayton and Bridgeport already simplified - San Diego: Deferred requirement for fingerprinting until customer visited a county Food Stamp office	- Multiple applications in San Diego[a] - Simplified application in Dayton and Bridgeport - San Diego: Customer required to be fingerprinted immediately
Waiting lists	- Immediate access to subsidized child care - San Diego: Child care subsidized using discretionary funds	- Often must join waiting list for subsidized child care, although during WASC implementation, Connecticut and Ohio did not have waiting lists

[a]San Diego began to simplify its work supports application process for all clients during the demonstration.

in the longer term by providing guidance on and financial assistance with education and training programs and help with job placement upon completion of education and training.

The receipt of work supports might also affect earnings by increasing employment retention, in some cases by increasing the payoff to continued work and in other cases by helping participants to weather financial or other emergencies. Work supports are unlikely to encourage advancement, except perhaps through increased employment stability, and may even discourage it if participants fear the loss of benefits as their earnings increase. WASC staff are trained to help participants navigate and anticipate the loss of work supports as they advance.

Although advancement and work supports are two key outcomes in the program, WASC planners assigned advancement a clear priority in terms of the program's ultimate goals, while also recognizing that this outcome may take longer to achieve. The hierarchy of program goals is the following:

1. **Increased income through earnings alone (long term).** The best outcome is for low-wage workers to substantially increase their household incomes through earnings alone to the point that they are financially better off and no longer in need of — or eligible for — financial work supports. Although some WASC participants might significantly increase their earnings in the short run by moving from part-time to full-time work, for example, such advancement for most workers will likely take longer to achieve. Some may need to achieve employment stability as a first step, while others will enroll in education or training, with longer-term payoffs.

2. **Increased income through increased earnings and/or work supports (short and medium term).** WASC might also increase household income though a combination of increased earnings and increased use of work supports.

3. **Continued receipt of work supports for those who are unable to advance over time (long term).** Finally, recognizing that some low-wage workers are unlikely to advance in the labor market, even over extended time periods and even with access to services designed to help them do so, WASC might raise household incomes exclusively through participants' increased use of financial work supports. These supports can help workers sustain their families while they continue to work for low wages.

The WASC Evaluation

The Target Population

WASC recruited two broad and sometimes overlapping target groups: (1) low-wage workers, and (2) reemployed dislocated workers, or those who have lost a job and become reemployed at a lower wage rate. Initially, eligibility was restricted to those earning no more than $9 per hour, or roughly the twenty-fifth percentile of hourly wages in the United States in late 2004,[25] and with household incomes of no more than 130 percent of the federal poverty level. The income cutoff was used to ensure that most people who enrolled in the study would be eligible for the full set of available work supports.

After the pilot phase, however, it became evident that recruiting enough individuals into the study was going to be a major hurdle.[26] Several strategies were implemented to assist with recruitment, including raising the eligibility guidelines to a wage cap of $15 per hour.[27] Several months later, the family income threshold was also increased to 200 percent of the poverty line. Although $15 per hour and 200 percent of poverty is a higher target than program designers had planned, the majority of individuals who were eventually enrolled into the study were earning less than $10 per hour and had family incomes below 130 percent of the poverty line (see Chapter 2).

Table 1.3 presents income eligibility guidelines for key work supports. The table illustrates that most WASC participants will likely be eligible for nearly the full package of work supports, since in most cases their family income is below the maximum income allowed to receive those supports, although some may be eligible for only one or two.[28]

WASC also attempted to target a population that had limited prior connection to the welfare system, in order to focus on a group that needed the most assistance with work supports. Accordingly, the eligibility guidelines also stipulated that (1) current recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) were not eligible to enroll in the demonstration, even if they were currently working, and (2) a maximum of 50 percent of all WASC sample members in each site could be current food stamp recipients.

[25]Bureau of Labor Statistics (2006).

[26]Site staff also noted that the income threshold excluded a large number of low-wage workers who were single adults.

[27]The initial sample goal was 1,600 individuals per site, but this number was reduced to 1,000 for Dayton and San Diego, and to 700 for Bridgeport.

[28]Although income is often one of many factors used to determine eligibility (food stamps, for example, also includes an asset test), Table 1.3 provides a rough indication of participants' eligibility.

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Table 1.3

Income Eligibility for Key Work Supports: United States, California, Connecticut, and Ohio

Work Support	Maximum Income as a Percent of the Federal Poverty Level			
	United States	California	Connecticut	Ohio
Federal rules				
Food stamps	130%	—	—	—
EITC (adult with 1 child)	238%	—	—	—
EITC (childless adult)	119%	—	—	—
Child Tax Credit[a]	665%	—	—	—
State rules				
Children's Medicaid	—	100-200%[b]	185%	200%
SCHIP	—	250%	300%	NA[c]
Parents' Medicaid	—	106%	191%	90%
Child care subsidies	—	254%	218%	185%

SOURCES: For food stamps: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services (www.fns.usda.gov/snap/applicant_recipients/eligibility.htm#income). For EITC and Child Tax Credit: Internal Revenue Service, "1040 Instructions: 2008" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Treasury). For Medicaid and SCHIP: The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, "Income Eligibility Levels for Children's Regular Medicaid and Children's SCHIP-funded Medicaid Expansions by Annual Incomes and as a Percent of Federal Poverty Level, 2009" and "Income Thresholds for Jobless and Working Parents Applying for Medicaid by Annual Income as a Percent of Federal Poverty Level, 2009," *Kaiser State Health Facts* (www.statehealthfacts.org). For child care subsidies: Karen Schulman and Helen Blank, *State Child Care Assistance Policies 2007: Some Steps Forward, More Progress Needed,* Issue Brief (Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center, 2007).

NOTES: EITC = Earned Income Tax Credit. SCHIP = State Children's Health Insurance Program.
[a]Child tax credit eligibility for a single parent.
[b]Children's eligibility for Medicaid in California varies with the age of the child.
[c]Ohio does not have a separate SCHIP program.

The Sites

Table 1.4 lists the WASC demonstration sites with the institutions and agencies involved, the related local One-Stop Career Center, and the name of the unit or program that administered the WASC services. MDRC selected the first two sites in the fall of 2003: The Job Center in Dayton, Ohio, serving Montgomery County, and the South County Career Center in Chula Vista, California, part of San Diego County and commonly referred to as the "San

The Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

Table 1.4

WASC Demonstration Sites and Participating Offices

City of WASC Site	Institutions and Agencies Involved	Local One-Stop Career Center	Unit/Program Name
Dayton, Ohio	Montgomery County Department of Job and Family Services (MCDJFS)	The Job Center	Move Up (also known as the Career Advancement Unit)
San Diego, California	San Diego Workforce Partnership and the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency	South County Career Center (operated by Arbor Education and Training in Chula Vista, CA)	Project EARN (Earnings, Advancement, Retention Now!)
Bridgeport, Connecticut	Connecticut Department of Labor, Connecticut Department of Social Services, and The Workplace, Inc.	Southwestern CTWorks Center	The Academy for Career Advancement (The Academy)
Fort Worth, Texas	Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County	Services at employer sites	Project EARN

Diego" site. After an intensive selection and review process, the Southwestern CTWorks Center in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County in Fort Worth, Texas, were chosen as the third and fourth sites. These latter two sites began to pilot the WASC demonstration during the summer and fall of 2006, while the first two sites began their pilots in January of 2005 and have been operating their full programs since the fall of that year. As discussed later, findings from the Fort Worth site will be presented in a forthcoming report.

The institutional starting points for the WASC sites are state or county workforce development and welfare agencies. Across the country, these agencies are very diverse. They vary, for example, in structure, funding streams, and local priorities. In addition, they vary in the clientele they serve and the local labor markets in which they work. Collectively, the WASC sites reflect some of this diversity. These sites will therefore help test the adaptability and feasibility of the WASC program model in different contexts across the United States.[29]

[29]See Anderson, Kato, and Riccio (2006) for a fuller description of the WASC sites.

Although the sites received operating funds from MDRC, passed through from the demonstration's funders, they were also expected to dedicate or raise local funds to support service delivery. For example, some sites chose to use WIA formula funds, which came with fairly strict guidelines, or WIA Governor's Discretionary Funds, which allowed the sites more flexibility in the types of services they offered and the customers they served. One site also received funding from the state human services agency, and another site had a diverse set of local funders.

Research Design and Key Research Questions

WASC is being evaluated using a random assignment research design, in which individuals who are eligible for the demonstration are assigned at random, using a lottery-like process, to one of two groups (that, together, make up the research sample): (1) the WASC group, which qualifies them to receive WASC benefits and services; or (2) a control group, whose members are not eligible to receive WASC services but who can seek out existing services for which they are eligible in the community. Random assignment ensures that, on average, the characteristics, backgrounds, and motivation levels of WASC and control group members did not differ systematically at the beginning of the study. Therefore, any significant differences between the two groups in outcomes that emerge over time — such as in work supports receipt and earnings — can be attributed to WASC.

To conduct random assignment, site staff recruited interested individuals into the One-Stop offices, using a variety of methods that are discussed in Chapter 3. Once an individual was determined to be eligible for the study, consented to participate in the research, and filled out a baseline questionnaire, site staff submitted the information online, and an MDRC-created algorithm assigned the individual at random to either the WASC group or the control group. If assigned to the WASC group, the individual typically went directly to an orientation and first meeting with a career coach. Individuals assigned to the control group received a gift card for participating in the study and were escorted to the main One-Stop entrance, where they could access any services for which they were eligible.

The WASC concept represents a promising and potentially transforming innovation in workforce development policy — but one that is largely untested. As such, the evaluation attempts to address a range of questions, from the feasibility of implementing such an ambitious model to an assessment of its ultimate effects. Key questions addressed in this report, covering the implementation experiences in three sites and impacts after one year in two sites, include the following:

- **Implementation.** What were the sites' experiences in setting up and operating WASC? Were they successful in integrating the functions of the workforce development and welfare staff? What challenges did they face in recruiting low-wage workers into the study and engaging them in services?

Were the sites able to make work supports more accessible, while at the same time creating a focus on advancement as the ultimate goal within the unit?

- **Participation.** Did WASC succeed in engaging a substantial proportion of individuals in retention and advancement services and help them access work supports? Did the program assist workers with access to training? To what extent did the program increase service levels above the levels that would "normally" be received, as represented by outcomes for the control group?

- **Impacts.** Did WASC increase low-wage workers' take-up of work supports? Did it help participants increase their employment and earnings? Did participants advance by increasing their work hours, obtaining wage gains, or changing jobs?

This report discusses the implementation and impact findings for each site separately. Although they were all charged with implementing the same WASC model, they each faced unique conditions in doing so, given their different local contexts. In addition, some sites focused more heavily on certain WASC components than others. Impacts are examined for Dayton and San Diego separately, given the potential implementation differences across sites, the relatively short follow-up period, and the fact that data for Bridgeport are not yet available. Impacts are also estimated for selected subgroups of the full sample. Future reports may estimate program impacts for all sites combined and for additional subgroups of the full sample, including dislocated workers.

Special Topic Study: The Effect of WASC on the Accuracy of Food Stamp Payments

A key concern among the sites at the start of the demonstration was the effect of simplifying the application process for food stamps, which could result in an increase in the number of payments made in error. Given that states are penalized for relatively high error rates, both the San Diego and Dayton sites received a waiver from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service, under which WASC cases will not count toward the state's error rate. In return, MDRC will conduct a separate analysis for the evaluation samples in those sites to assess the effect of WASC on food stamp error rates. The results of this study will be published in 2009.

Findings to Date

The demonstration has produced three reports describing the WASC model and early implementation experiences in Dayton and San Diego.[30] Early findings included the following:

[30]Anderson, Kato, and Riccio (2006); Tessler and Seith (2007); Tessler, Seith, and Rucks (2008).

First, recruitment was a key problem and staff relied on a variety of methods to bring low-wage workers into the demonstration; second, although moving up at one's current place of employment is an avenue to advancement, most participants in early focus groups wanted to leave their jobs for a new career; and, third, tangible incentives, such as gift cards, appear to be an effective way to sustain engagement in a postemployment program like WASC. Finally, although the role of coach as a motivator and source of encouragement was deeply valued by program participants, engaging participants was difficult, as was delivering high-quality advancement coaching. These early findings are developed further in Chapter 3 of this report.

In addition, although not discussed in the earlier reports, the demonstration has illustrated the difficulties of working with employers to deliver WASC services. All sites were charged with recruiting some employers into the study and serving their eligible employees, and Fort Worth had planned to be entirely employer-based, serving all individuals at their workplaces rather than at the One-Stop center. Yet, for various reasons, none of the sites was able to recruit a sufficient number of employers and their employees into the study within the timeline required for the research. The challenges of recruiting and working with employers will be discussed in a future report, but include (1) capturing and sustaining the attention of employers to secure sufficient employer leadership, time, and resources to implement the program within the workplace, (2) the constraints of the research, in which only a randomly chosen half of the firm's interested employees would receive services, (3) the challenges of recruiting employees to participate, (4) obtaining support from department managers and frontline supervisors, and (5) finding employers with sufficient advancement opportunities to warrant an advancement-focused approach.

The Context

The context in which WASC has been operating has changed significantly since the start of the demonstration. This section discusses changes in two key areas that affect low-wage workers — the economy and the policy around workforce development and work support programs for these workers. The context defines both the benchmark against which WASC will be measured and the program's relevance to current policy.

The Economy

When the first two sites started enrolling participants in the demonstration in late 2005, the U.S. economy was two years into a recovery from the recession of the early years of the decade. However, that progress proved to be short-lived, and unemployment rates began to increase again in 2006. The latest data available (through late 2008) show continued increases,

and the events of early 2009 suggest further and possibly dramatic increases in unemployment.[31] Also tracking the unemployment rate, but not captured by it, is the fraction of workers who are working part time for economic reasons, meaning that they would rather work full time but cannot find a job with more hours. This rate of part-time work fell between 2003 and 2006, but has increased since then.[32]

There is also significant variation across the three sites. As shown in Figure 1.1, for example, Dayton stands out with relatively high unemployment rates, due in part to its heavy reliance on the manufacturing industry, which has continued to lose jobs in recent years. San Diego, in contrast, has a large share of jobs in the government sector, while other key industries include services and trade. Bridgeport stands out with relatively high wage levels (wage levels not shown in figure). In 2007, for example, the average hourly wage in the service sector was $14.10 in Bridgeport, $13.05 in San Diego, and $11.25 in Dayton.[33] Another change since the demonstration began was the passage of minimum wage legislation, which increased the minimum wage to $5.85 in 2007 and $6.55 in 2008, with a further increase to $7.25 scheduled for 2009.

Differences across these local labor markets are likely to affect how the program works with participants. The broader changes in the economy are also an important backdrop for the WASC demonstration, although it is difficult to predict how the changed economy will affect program impacts, or how participants will fare compared with their control group counterparts. On the one hand, WASC staff may find it more difficult to direct participants to higher-wage opportunities, leading to fewer effects. On the other hand, staff may help workers better weather the rough economy, leading to larger effects.

Policy

The policy environment has also continued to evolve since the inception of WASC, on both the work supports and the workforce fronts. First, there has been continued and growing interest in and efforts to connect low-wage workers with work supports, coming from the administering agencies themselves, from state and local governments, and from other institutions. For example, the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture has encouraged and funded efforts by states, localities, and other organizations to increase

[31]Bureau of Labor Statistics (2008).
[32]Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009a).
[33]Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009c).

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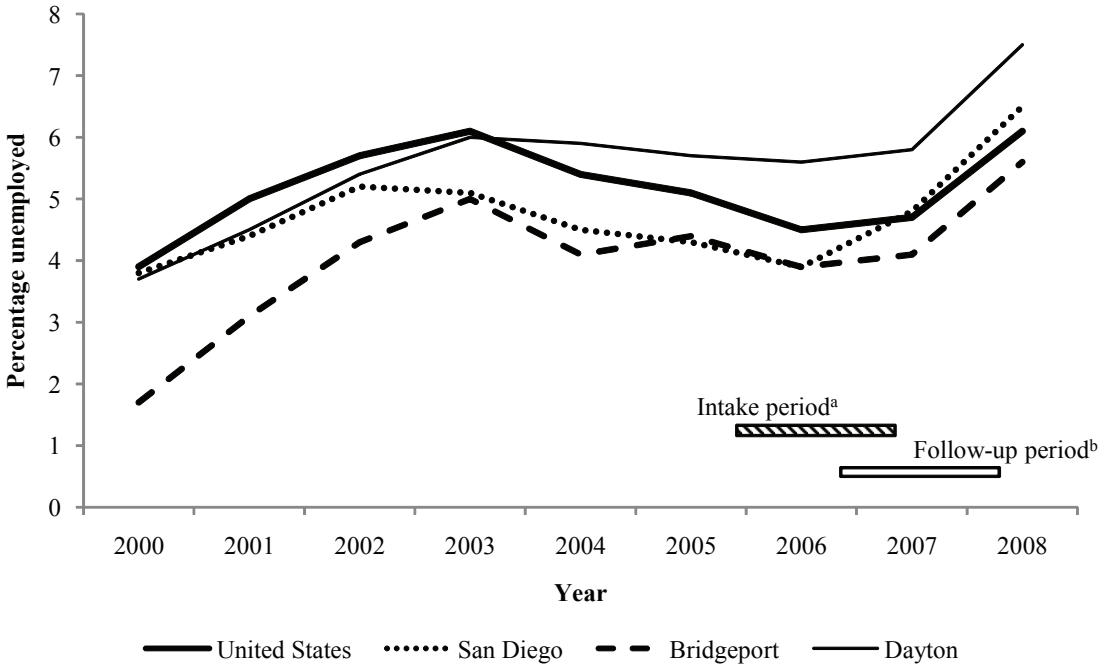
Figure 1.1

Unemployment Rates, WASC Sites and the United States, 2000-2008

Dayton, San Diego, and Bridgeport



SOURCES: Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Local Area Unemployment Statistics* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, relevant years); Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, relevant years).

NOTES: Unemployment rates are from September of each year.
[a]Intake period for sample used in report, from October 2005 through March 2007.
[b]Follow-up period from October 2006 through March 2008.

outreach to low-income families and take steps to help families participate.[34] A number of states and localities have launched media campaigns, set up hotlines to provide information, extended office hours, and started placing food stamp application materials in more convenient locations, such as food pantries and health clinics. Some even outstation food stamp eligibility staff to these locations.[35] Many states now conduct food stamp eligibility interviews in some of their

[34]Wolkwitz (2008).

[35]FNS also recently partnered with H&R Block to promote food stamp use among tax filers who are eligible for the EITC (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2004).

WIA-funded One-Stop centers. Although these practices have not been formally evaluated, they have likely contributed to the recent increase in participation among eligible families and among the working poor. Between 2003 and 2005, for example, food stamp participation rates among low-income working families increased from 48 percent to 57 percent.[36]

States have also expanded outreach for Medicaid and SCHIP and simplified the enrollment process for those programs, resulting in a significant decline in the number of uninsured children. However, beginning in 2003, some states began to face budget shortfalls and responded by reducing outreach and benefit levels for SCHIP.[37] In more recent years, federal funding for the SCHIP block grant has not kept pace with health care costs, which could lead to more cutbacks in coverage by states.[38]

Several nongovernmental organizations and foundations have also launched projects to connect low-wage workers to work supports. SingleStop USA, for example, is an initiative that has placed offices in low-income communities to provide information on a range of work supports.[39] The Supporting Work Project, managed by the Families and Work Institute, supports various initiatives around the country to connect low-income families to available work supports by marketing those supports to employees at the workplace.[40] Finally, many cities around the country have launched EITC campaigns, usually along with access to free tax preparation services, to encourage low-income families to claim benefits.[41]

There has also been notable change on the workforce development side. For example, states are increasingly coordinating TANF and workforce development services, with a growing number of states reporting that cash assistance services are available at some of their One-Stop Career Centers.[42] Some localities have also moved to provide services to all low-wage workers, rather than focusing exclusively on the unemployed. As one example, New York City's Career Advancement Programs operate within the One-Stop Centers and are based on the WASC model, providing career coaching, education and training, screening, and facilitated access to work supports for low-wage workers.

However, these changes have taken place against a backdrop of significantly reduced funding. In real dollars, funding for the WIA adult program fell by 25 percent between 2002

[36]Cunnyngham, Castner, and Schirm (2007).
[37]Hill, Stockdale, and Courtot (2004).
[38]Broaddus and Park (2007).
[39]See www.singlestopusa.org.
[40]See http://familiesandwork.org/site/work/projects/supportingwork/about.html. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Centers for Working Families is another example.
[41]Berube (2004).
[42]U.S. General Accounting Office (2002); U.S. Government Accountability Office (2007).

and 2008.[43] In addition, WIA remains to be reauthorized, leading to a growing debate over how it should be modified. Many proposals call for some of the changes that have slowly been happening on the ground, such as increased coordination with work supports and expanding services to employed individuals.

Many proposals also call for more and easier access to training, given that skills development is increasingly viewed as key to advancement.[44] In the current system, basic job search assistance is the primary service provided to most participants, and the proportion of clients receiving training services has fallen in recent years.[45] The Department of Labor recently provided grants to several states to pilot Career Advancement Accounts, which provide money to individuals to pursue education and training needed for advancement. Several states in the pilot program (including Ohio) will use the accounts to target workers affected by layoffs in the auto industry.[46] Community colleges are seen as major partners in the effort to provide training to meet local needs, although the extent of their involvement with WIA varies by state.[47] Recent results from the Opening Doors project suggest that additional performance-based financial aid can increase low-income parents' performance and persistence in community college.[48]

WASC is an ambitious program that set out to build the capacity of the workforce development system's One-Stop Career Centers to serve a new population and to develop new practices to serve them. Findings from the demonstration should inform the reauthorization debate in particular, since many proposals call for similar changes to the system. But they will also be of relevance more generally, in the ongoing effort to learn what works, and what doesn't work, to help low-wage workers advance.

Organization of the Report

The balance of this report is organized as follows. Chapter 2 presents the data used for the evaluation and describes the workers who were recruited into the study. Chapter 3 describes the program implementation. Chapter 4 presents effects on participation in key WASC services. Chapter 5 looks at early effects on work supports receipt, employment, and earnings.

[43]U.S. Department of Labor (n.d.). This funding decline affected the WASC sites as well, since all of them relied to some extent on WIA funds to deliver services.

[44]Holzer and Martinson (2008).

[45]Baider (2008).

[46]Employment and Training Administration (n.d.).

[47]Visher and Fowler (2006).

[48]See Brock and Richburg-Hayes (2006) and Richburg-Hayes et al. (2009) for information about Opening Doors. The state of Ohio offers a similar type of financial assistance to low-income parents attending community college through its TANF Educational Awards Program (TEAP).

Chapter 2

Data and Samples

The evaluation described in this report uses a range of data sources to assess the impacts of the Work Advancement and Support Center (WASC) program. This chapter begins with a discussion of the data sources used for the evaluation and the sample sizes available for each data source. It then presents information on the characteristics of the research sample (which includes both the program and the control group members) as well as for key subgroups within the full sample. Recall that this report presents implementation results for Bridgeport, Dayton, and San Diego, and first-year impact results for Dayton and San Diego only.

In brief, the data show that individuals in the WASC sample earn low wages, averaging $9 to $10 per hour across sites, and that many are not receiving work supports for which they are likely eligible, including food stamps and health insurance. In this way, the sample looks fairly similar to low-wage workers nationally. In other ways, the WASC sample can be viewed as a particular segment of the broader population of low-wage workers, one that is largely black or Hispanic and consists of a relatively high percentage of single mothers. These differences likely arise from the urban location of the demonstration sites and the various recruitment methods that were used at each site to bring workers into the study.

Data Sources and Samples

Data

The data sources used for the analysis in this report are described below.

Baseline data. MDRC collected data on sample members' demographic characteristics from a baseline information form filled out just before random assignment. These baseline data were collected in all three sites and include information on marital status, family structure, education level, hours of work, wages, and benefit receipt. These data are used to describe the sample and to identify subgroups whose results are analyzed separately.

Administrative records. Effects on employment, employment retention, and earnings are estimated using automated quarterly unemployment insurance (UI) wage records data. These data are collected at the state level and were provided by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and the Employment Development Department (EDD) in California. Data on monthly food stamp receipt are used to present effects on receipt rates and amounts. These data were provided by ODJFS and the San Diego County Health and Human Services

Agency (HHSA). For these sources, MDRC has received data covering two years prior to study entry and one year after study entry for each individual. Although a key benefit of the UI data is the ability to track earnings over a long period of time, these data do have several limitations. First, the UI wage records exclude several types of workers, including the self-employed, military workers, federal government workers, and "off-the-books" workers. Since they are collected at the state level, they also do not capture employment in other states.

12-month survey. A survey was administered to a random subset of WASC and control group members approximately 12 months after random assignment in order to collect information about their participation in program services and their employment and receipt of work supports. The survey data are a valuable complement to the records data, providing information on the receipt of additional work supports, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). In addition, although the UI data will be used to capture effects on employment and earnings over the long run, the 12-month survey data capture any effects on job type, hours worked, wages, and benefits. Appendixes B and C present survey response analyses for San Diego and Dayton, respectively. For some outcomes in San Diego, impacts for the survey sample differ from impacts for the larger sample used for the records data, primarily because of cohort differences between the two samples. The survey sample was selected from cohorts that entered the study in particular months. Analyses indicated that results for the survey sample are representative of the full sample from those intake months but not of the sample from other intake months. However, the former group represents about 80 percent of the full sample. For this reason, the survey data from San Diego are used in the analysis, although the results using the survey data should be interpreted with this caveat in mind.

Enrollment and Samples

The research sample entered the study between 2005 and 2008, with the enrollment period varying across sites (see Figure 2.1). Dayton and San Diego began enrollment in fall 2005 and continued through 2007. Bridgeport, as a "second round" site, began enrolling individuals into the study in fall 2006 and continued through early 2008.

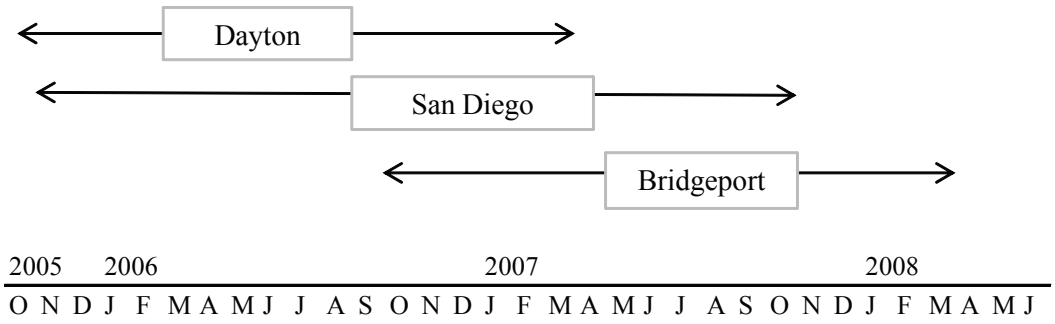
Table 2.1 shows the sizes of the full sample, the sample used for this report, and the survey sample for the three WASC sites discussed in this report. In order to ensure adequate follow-up for measuring program impacts, the sample for this report was restricted to individuals who entered the study by March 2007. Thus, the report sample in Dayton (1,184 individuals) consists of the full sample, while the report sample in San Diego consists of 793 of the 971 individuals eventually enrolled into the study, or about 82 percent of the full sample. The full sample in Bridgeport is used in this report to present characteristics of the individuals enrolled.

The Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

Figure 2.1

WASC Enrollment Periods

Dayton, San Diego, and Bridgeport



The Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

Table 2.1

WASC Sample Sizes

Dayton, San Diego, and Bridgeport

WASC Site	Full Sample	Report Sample	12-Month Survey Sample
Dayton, OH	1,184	1,184	502[a]
San Diego, CA	971	793	427[b]
Bridgeport, CT	706	706	—

NOTES: The full sample includes all individuals who entered the study, from fall 2005 to early 2008. The report sample includes individuals who entered the study from fall 2005 through March 2007 only. The survey sample is a subset of the report sample and includes only those who completed the 12-month survey.

[a]Includes all individuals who responded to the 12-month survey in Dayton.

[b]Includes a subset of individuals who responded to the 12-month survey (about 75 percent) in San Diego.

The 12-month survey samples are a subset of the report samples. In Dayton, this report presents analyses using the full survey sample of 502 individuals. In San Diego, with its later enrollment period, the survey sample used in this report consists of a subset of those who eventually completed a 12-month survey. The San Diego survey sample for this report consists of 427 respondents, representing about 75 percent of total survey respondents (or 427 divided by 570).

Sample Characteristics

Table 2.2 presents characteristics of the research sample. These data were obtained from the baseline questionnaire and cover demographic characteristics, living arrangements, work supports receipt, and employment status. Data are presented separately, by site, for both the WASC and control groups combined.

A majority of study participants across all sites are women, with a high of 81 percent in Dayton. Their average age is in the early to mid-30s, although there is considerable variation around this average. In Dayton, for example, more than a third of the sample is under age 24. As shown in the next chapter, this variation likely reflects differences in recruitment methods across sites. The sites differ substantially in the racial/ethnic composition of their samples, with Dayton and Bridgeport having a majority of black sample members and San Diego consisting largely of Hispanic sample members. As a result, a large number of participants in San Diego are foreign-born, some of whom are not citizens, but all of whom have the legal right to work in the United States.

Most sample members have never been married and about 40 percent do not have children. The WASC sample is fairly diverse in terms of family structure, with about a third of the sample consisting of single, childless adults, and most of the remaining sample being single parents. The high fraction of single parents in the sample may also reflect recruitment methods used by the sites. In Dayton, for example, staff used food stamp recipient lists as one recruitment source.

In terms of education and employment, the next several rows in Table 2.2 show that the large majority of the sample has at least a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, although education levels vary across sites. Nearly half the sample in Dayton has some college or training courses, while one-fourth of the San Diego sample lacks a high school diploma or GED certificate. The low education levels in San Diego reflect the large number of non-U.S. citizens in the sample. One in five sample members in Dayton was pursuing an associate's degree at study entry, again reflecting the recruitment methods used in this site.

The Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

Table 2.2

Selected Baseline Characteristics of Sample Members

Dayton, San Diego, and Bridgeport

Characteristic	Dayton	San Diego	Bridgeport
Demographic characteristics			
Gender (%)			
Female	80.8	72.6	66.6
Age in years (%)			
18-24	35.6	19.3	26.5
25-34	35.9	27.7	32.4
35-44	18.0	25.7	22.7
45-62	10.5	27.2	18.4
Average age (years)	30.2	36.4	33.4
Race/ethnicity (%)			
Hispanic	1.1	69.7	23.1
White	27.0	10.1	8.1
Black	67.7	11.5	60.6
Asian	0.4	5.6	1.1
Other	3.7	3.2	7.0
Citizenship (%)			
Born in United States	97.0	49.9	81.6
Naturalized	1.6	21.5	8.4
Non-citizen (work-authorized)	1.4	28.7	10.0
English proficiency (%)			
Speaks English well/very well	100.0	84.9	99.3
Family status			
Marital status (%)			
Single, never married	70.5	45.8	72.2
Married and living with spouse	9.6	21.8	10.7
Married, but living apart from spouse	5.7	13.3	8.5
Legally separated, divorced, or widowed	14.3	19.1	8.7
Living with a partner (%)	6.1	5.9	5.8
Number of children (%)			
At least 1 child	63.1	64.7	56.2

(continued)

Table 2.2 (continued)

Characteristic	Dayton	San Diego	Bridgeport
Average number of children	1.3	1.4	1.1
Youngest child less than 6 years old[a] (%)	59.6	49.0	56.8
Single and childless (%)	35.5	32.2	41.1
Single-parent household (%)	50.7	42.3	42.0
Two-parent household (%)	11.8	22.2	14.1
Education level			
Highest grade (%)			
No high school diploma or GED certificate	9.8	25.8	16.6
GED certificate	6.6	6.1	9.6
High school diploma	25.4	16.2	37.0
Some college or advanced training courses	47.8	38.1	30.2
Associate's degree	5.9	5.6	3.0
4-year college degree or higher	4.6	8.3	3.7
Currently enrolled in education or training program[b] (%)	35.0	22.1	12.9
English as a Second Language (ESL)	0.9	4.8	0.8
Adult Basic Education (ABE)	1.1	1.0	1.6
High school/GED preparation course	2.2	1.8	3.5
Vocational training	4.7	5.9	1.7
College course toward associate's/two-year degree	20.9	6.9	5.0
College course toward bachelor's/four-year degree	7.4	5.5	0.8
Other	1.6	1.1	1.7
Employment status			
Number of months in current job (%)			
Less than 1 year	54.5	55.6	59.5
Between 1 and 2 years	17.6	15.9	15.4
More than 2 years	28.0	28.6	25.1
Hours per week of work (%)			
1 - 19	20.4	19.2	22.2
20 - 34	42.0	37.2	44.1
35 - 39	12.3	11.2	7.1
40 or more	25.4	32.3	26.6
Working full time (35 hours or more) (%)	37.7	43.6	33.7
Average hourly wage ($)	8.79	9.00	9.83
Less than $7.00 (%)	20.5	13.5	2.1
$7.00 - $8.99 (%)	32.9	37.2	34.9
$9.00 - $10.99 (%)	28.4	31.6	33.5
$11.00 - $15.00 (%)	18.2	17.7	29.5
Average weekly earnings ($)	251	262	273

(continued)

Table 2.2 (continued)

Characteristic	Dayton	San Diego	Bridgeport
Fringe benefits from employer[b] (%)			
Time off with pay	46.9	36.4	54.5
Health plan offered	50.6	37.7	55.8
Dental plan offered	40.3	28.2	48.8
Retirement plan	35.8	23.6	46.6
Other	16.9	3.6	1.8
Enrolled in employer-provided health or medical insurance plan (%)	20.2	16.9	17.9
Circumstances that may affect job retention or job change (%)			
Has driver's license	81.5	83.2	72.9
Has access to a car to drive to work	77.7	75.0	65.5
Physical or mental health problem that limits work	4.2	7.7	3.8
Became a Dislocated Worker during previous two years	19.5	26.5	13.5
Current wages compared with wages at pre-layoff job[c]			
A lot less or somewhat less	65.1	69.6	79.6
Income and work supports			
Average monthly family income ($)	1,218	1,349	1,367
Family income exceeds (%)			
130 percent of federal poverty level	24.1	26.6	38.5
Income sources (%)			
Earnings from spouse or partner	6.5	10.9	7.9
Food stamps	36.4	15.9	23.1
Child support	14.8	12.2	9.3
Child care subsidy	17.6	6.8	5.7
Other types of assistance	1.4	2.0	2.1
Tax credits (%)			
Filed tax return during past 12 months	85.7	75.2	79.3
Aware of Earned Income Tax Credit	76.1	47.4	58.2
Claiming Earned Income Tax Credit	51.5	35.9	32.7
Aware of Child Tax Credit	41.7	36.9	19.2
Claiming Child Tax Credit	26.5	31.9	12.0
Medical coverage (%)			
Respondent has coverage	68.6	50.1	65.3
Employer-provided or other private health plan	34.6	25.0	18.4
Publicly funded coverage	37.0	27.6	62.7
Respondent's children have coverage[b]	89.4	69.2	88.8
Publicly funded coverage	74.2	55.1	85.6

(continued)

Table 2.2 (continued)

Characteristic	Dayton	San Diego	Bridgeport
Housing status (%)			
Current living arrangement			
Owns home or apartment	11.4	6.9	9.6
Rents home or apartment	61.6	59.8	57.2
Lives with family/friends and pays part of the rent	12.0	19.3	28.1
Lives with family/friends and pays no rent	13.5	12.2	1.0
Other housing arrangements	1.4	1.8	4.1
Lives in public housing, receives Section 8 rental assistance, or pays reduced rent because of low income	21.1	20.3	25.1
Sample size (total = 2,683)	1,184	793	706

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the WASC Baseline Information Survey.

NOTES: Sample sizes vary because of missing values. Sample members randomly assigned before January 12, 2006, in Dayton and before February 14, 2006, in San Diego were not asked to report Dislocated Worker status. Sample members randomly assigned before November 22, 2005, were not asked to report their monthly family income.

GED = General Educational Development.

[a]Child-related measures were calculated for sample members with children.

[b]Detail can sum to more than 100 percent, because sample members can record more than one response.

[c]Current wages compared with wages at pre-layoff job is measured among dislocated workers.

Despite the wage cap of $15 per hour for study entry, average wages were low, ranging from about $9 in Dayton and San Diego to $10 in Bridgeport. Less than half of the sample members were working full time when they entered the study, and most did not receive key fringe benefits from employers. Finally, over half of the sample members had been in their current job for less than a year, which may have implications for the speed at which they can advance, either within jobs or across jobs.

The next several rows present data on income and work supports. Not surprisingly, family incomes were low, averaging $1,300 per month. As a result, the majority of the sample was below 130 percent of the federal poverty level and thus likely eligible for most work supports.[1] However, most sample members did not receive food stamps, with receipt ranging from 16 percent in San Diego to 36 percent in Dayton. Most sample members reported filing taxes in the prior year, although fewer reported being aware of the EITC and the Child Tax

[1]Self-reported family income at baseline is a rough proxy for eligibility, given that income may change over the course of the follow-up year and that eligibility is often dependent on other factors as well, such as assets in the case of food stamps.

Credit. It is likely the case that some families who file taxes do not realize that they have received the EITC, particularly since it is often used to offset taxes owed. In this case, the filing rate may be the best estimate of EITC take-up. Filing and awareness rates are particularly low in San Diego. San Diego also stands out with relatively low rates of medical coverage, both for adults and their children. There is significant room for improvement to help these families, many of whom are immigrants, take advantage of this key work support.

Although the demonstration targeted all low-wage workers in low-income families, regardless of family structure and benefit receipt, the sample that was eventually brought into the study reflects the impediments that each site faced in trying to reach this population, as well as the varied recruitment methods they used. How does the WASC low-wage worker sample compare with the broader groups of low-wage workers in the United States? Table 2.3 presents a comparison of these two groups for selected characteristics. A few differences stand out. First, WASC sample members are more likely to be women and single parents than the average low-wage worker. The reason for this difference is not clear, but may reflect ways in which individuals were recruited into the study. Second, nearly half of low-wage workers in the United States are white, compared with a WASC sample that is largely black and Hispanic. On average, the WASC sample is more highly educated than the typical low-wage worker in the United States, with nearly 30 percent of the latter group lacking a high school diploma or GED certificate, compared with 10 percent to 26 percent for the WASC sample. Finally, three-fourths of low-wage workers in the United States work full time, compared with just over a third of the WASC sample. Average wages, however, are quite similar.

In sum, the WASC sample, consisting of volunteers for the demonstration, reflects a particular segment of the low-wage worker population, one that is more likely to be black or Hispanic, be a single mother, have some education beyond high school, and work part time. These differences should be kept in mind when considering how the findings might generalize to all low-wage workers. For example, if WASC increases earnings by moving workers into full-time jobs, this effect would be less applicable to the typical low-wage worker, who probably works full time already. On the other hand, assistance with education and training may be very relevant to a range of workers. Regardless, the findings will be relevant in the continued search for effective strategies to help low-wage workers advance.

Subgroups

The data shown in Table 2.2 highlighted some interesting groups within the full WASC sample. Consider part-time workers, for example. What types of individuals are they, and why are they only working part time? Are they enrolled in training or taking care of young children? Looking in more detail at several subgroups provides a richer and more accurate picture of this

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Table 2.3

Comparison of WASC Research Sample with National Sample of Low-Wage Workers: Selected Characteristics

Dayton, San Diego, and Bridgeport

Characteristic	Dayton	San Diego	Bridgeport	United States
Female (%)	80.8	72.6	66.6	54.0
Age (years)	30.2	36.4	33.4	34.5
Race/ethnicity (%)				
Hispanic	1.1	69.7	23.1	28.8
White	27.0	10.1	8.1	46.9
Black	67.7	11.5	60.6	19.1
Other	4.2	9.1	8.2	5.1
Citizenship (%)				
Born in United States	97.0	49.9	81.6	72.9
Naturalized	1.6	21.5	8.4	6.1
Non-citizen (work-authorized)	1.4	28.7	10.0	20.9
Marital status (%)				
Single, never married	70.5	45.8	72.2	43.5
Married and living with spouse	9.6	21.8	10.7	32.3
Has children (%)	63.1	64.7	56.2	56.2
Single-parent household (%)	50.7	42.3	42.0	22.3
Highest grade completed (%)				
No high school diploma or GED certificate	9.8	25.8	16.6	28.6
High school diploma/GED certificate	31.9	22.3	46.6	40.1
Some college or advanced training courses	47.8	38.1	30.2	18.8
Associate's degree	5.9	5.6	3.0	5.8
4-year college degree or higher	4.6	8.3	3.7	6.7
Working full time (35 hours or more) (%)	37.7	43.6	33.7	74.4
Average hourly wage ($)	8.79	9.00	9.83	9.00
Has medical coverage (%)	68.6	50.1	65.3	59.3
Employer-provided or other private health plan	34.6	25.0	18.4	15.6
Publicly funded coverage	37.0	27.6	62.7	47.3
Sample size (total = 2,683)	1,184	793	706	1,820

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the WASC Baseline Information Survey and March 2005 Current Population Survey.

NOTES: Sample sizes vary because of missing values. Low-wage workers for the U.S. sample are defined as individuals working at the time of the survey, aged 18 to 62, earning less than $15 per hour, and with a family income of less than 200% of the federal poverty level.

GED = General Educational Development.

group of low-wage workers. This section presents selected baseline characteristics for several subgroups, including part-time workers, workers enrolled in education/training, immigrants, and dislocated workers. In some cases, the program's effects might also be expected to vary across these groups. Chapter 5 presents an initial look at this issue, by examining program effects for selected subgroups. A fuller analysis of effects across subgroups will be included in a later report, once data are available for the full research samples across all three sites.

The subgroup results are presented in Table 2.4. Each panel highlights the characteristics that showed notable differences between the groups. Because these comparisons are only intended to be descriptive, no formal statistical tests were performed.

Part-time workers. The top panel presents selected characteristics for sample members, by hours worked at study entry ("baseline"). The first several rows show that, across all sites, individuals working part time are much more likely than those working full time to be single and childless. For this sample, at least, child-care responsibilities are not driving part-time work. There are differences in education levels, although they vary by site. In Dayton, part-time workers tend to have less education than full-time workers, whereas the opposite holds true in the other two sites. Part-time workers are more likely to be enrolled in education or training activities, although participation rates are fairly low across all groups. In San Diego, for example, only one in four part-time workers was enrolled in education or training. Finally, part-time workers earn lower wages than full-time workers, in all sites. Thus, there is considerable room for advancement for this group.

Enrolled in education or training. What types of low-wage workers are enrolled in education or training (which includes basic education, vocational training, and college courses)? The second panel of the table shows that this group is younger, more likely to be single, and less likely to have children than those who are not enrolled. Education level is strongly related to participation in training. In Dayton and San Diego, those who are enrolled in training were more likely to have a high school diploma or GED certificate, consistent with the idea that this basic level of education is a prerequisite for most training programs. Oddly, in Bridgeport, the opposite is true. In that site, however, a larger fraction of those in training than in the other sites are in basic education and GED preparation (not shown). As shown in the previous panel, work hours differ by training status. However, the data show that training is not a key reason for part-time work: among those not in training, fewer than half are working full time.

Dislocated workers. Dislocated workers in the sample differ from other low-wage workers in expected ways. They tend to be older, for example, and are less likely to be single. They tend to earn higher wages than other workers, although not by much. Finally, dislocated

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Table 2.4

Selected Baseline Characteristics of Research Sample, by Subgroup

Dayton, San Diego, and Bridgeport

Characteristic	Dayton		San Diego		Bridgeport	
	Employed Part Time	Employed Full Time	Employed Part Time	Employed Full Time	Employed Part Time	Employed Full Time
Employment status at baseline						
Marital status (%)						
Single, never married	75.0	62.9	52.8	40.2	76.9	62.9
Married and living with spouse	7.0	14.0	17.2	26.8	7.3	17.3
Has children (%)	55.9	74.8	53.2	81.0	51.0	66.4
High school diploma, GED certificate, or above (%)	88.3	93.4	78.4	70.0	84.4	81.5
Currently enrolled in education or training program (%)	40.8	24.9	25.6	13.8	14.5	9.8
Average hourly wage ($)	8.55	9.2	8.87	9.5	9.69	10.12
	Dayton		San Diego		Bridgeport	
	Not Enrolled	Enrolled	Not Enrolled	Enrolled	Not Enrolled	Enrolled
Status of education/training at baseline						
Average age (years)	31.7	27.4	37.3	32.4	33.8	30.8
Single, never married (%)	67.8	75.4	45.7	53.3	71.3	77.5
Has children (%)	67.6	54.5	69.0	51.8	57.0	48.9
High school diploma, GED certificate, or above (%)	88.4	93.6	72.1	84.8	85.7	68.9
Working full time (%)	43.2	26.8	47.6	29.8	34.9	25.6
Receiving food stamps (%)	41.0	27.7	15.5	10.6	24.0	16.7

(continued)

Table 2.4 (continued)

Characteristic	Dayton		San Diego		Bridgeport	
	Non-dislocated	Dislocated	Non-dislocated	Dislocated	Non-dislocated	Dislocated
Dislocated workers status						
Average age (years)	28.7	35.4	35.5	37.7	33.0	36.1
Single, never married (%)	75.8	49.0	51.8	39.3	74.4	57.9
Working full time (35 hours or more) (%)	34.2	55.9	45.5	46.0	34.7	27.4
Average hourly wage ($)	8.7	9.5	9.2	9.3	9.8	10.2
Receiving food stamps (%)	37.4	22.4	16.3	11.5	23.1	23.2

	Dayton		San Diego		Bridgeport	
	U.S.-born	Not U.S.-born	U.S.-born	Not U.S.-born	U.S.-born	Not U.S.-born
Immigration status (San Diego only)						
Average age (years)	--	--	32.4	40.1	--	--
Marital status (%)						
Single, never married	--	--	60.5	34.3	--	--
Married and living with spouse	--	--	13.8	29.0	--	--
Has children (%)	--	--	56.8	74.0	--	--
High school diploma, GED certificate, or above (%)	--	--	84.2	65.5	--	--
Average number of months in current job	--	--	19.2	30.4	--	--
Receiving food stamps (%)	--	--	12.9	15.8	--	--

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from WASC Baseline Information Form.

NOTE: Sample sizes vary because of missing values.
GED = General Educational Development.

workers in Dayton and San Diego are less likely to receive food stamps, although the difference is large only in Dayton. In that site, this difference is explained in part by lower rates of eligibility.

Immigrants. The final panel examines the immigrant population in San Diego. Recall that in this site, about 20 percent of the sample members are naturalized citizens and 30 percent are not citizens but have a legal right to work in the United States. The table shows that this group is considerably older, on average, than the U.S.-born group. They are also much less likely to be single and more likely to have children. There are also big differences in terms of education and employment. The immigrant group is much less educated than the U.S.-born group, and they have been in their current jobs for longer periods.[2] Although their stability in work is a positive aspect to build on for advancement, their lack of basic education credentials may be an important hurdle to overcome. Finally, data on food stamp receipt are presented, more for their similarity than differences. Although there is some belief that immigrants are less likely to take up this benefit for fear of problems with immigration or the government, this does not hold for the WASC sample. However, food stamp receipt is quite low in general for the sample in San Diego.

In sum, although the staff in all sites faced challenges in recruitment, as documented in the next chapter, they succeeded in bringing in a group of low-wage workers who clearly have the potential to benefit from WASC services. On average, they earn low wages, most live below the poverty line, the majority work part time, and many do not receive all the key work supports for which they are eligible. The following chapters document how well the program operated with this sample and, ultimately, its effects on their earnings and work supports receipt.

[2]These differences between groups in San Diego largely reflect national trends. Nationally, for example, Hispanic low-wage workers are less educated, are more likely to have children, and are more likely to be in married-couple households than their non-Hispanic counterparts (MDRC calculations from the 2005 Current Population Survey).

Chapter 3

Implementation of the Work Advancement and Support Center Program

This chapter describes the implementation of the Work Advancement and Support Center (WASC) program in Dayton, San Diego, and Bridgeport; the chapter builds on previous reports that described in detail particular aspects of the start-up and implementation of the program.[1] It covers program operations in Dayton beginning in October 2005, in San Diego beginning in November 2005, and in Bridgeport beginning in October 2006, and it discusses operations through early summer of 2008 in all three sites.

Unlike some other large random assignment demonstrations,[2] in which sites developed broad components of their own programs to provide services, WASC services were designed to be delivered in a more uniform way across the three sites; all participants were to receive — or at least have available to them — the same types of services.[3] This "franchise" model covered everything from the type of recruitment strategy to be used to how the unit should be managed. Essential service elements of the franchise included the following:

- Identify advancement and income stabilization goals using the Income Improvement and Advancement Plan (IIAP), a written plan that detailed short-term and long-term advancement goals and the steps to reach them, the customer's motivation for participating in WASC and wanting to advance, and the customer's interest in applying for work supports.
- Use the Work Advancement Calculator — a Web-based tool that was designed specifically for the WASC demonstration — to screen for work supports eligibility and to demonstrate how increases in earnings would affect work support receipt and total income.[4]

[1] Anderson, Kato, and Riccio (2006); Tessler and Seith (2007).

[2] See, for example, the Employment Retention and Advancement demonstration: www.mdrc.org/project_14_9.html.

[3] Though roughly the same set of services was offered at each site, there was some variation, as noted in Chapter 1.

[4] The Work Advancement Calculator contained two components — a work support screener and an advancement navigator — and was expected to be used early on with customers to show the value of taking up work supports and later when they were considering advancement options. It is discussed more thoroughly later in the chapter.

- Provide eased access to work supports by, for example, enabling working people to apply for supports outside of a welfare office, simplifying applications, providing one staff person to handle applications for all work supports, and providing flexible office hours.

- Maintain regular contact (two-way communication at least monthly) with at least 75 percent of the caseload, which should be no more than 100 customers per career coach.

Understanding how WASC was implemented in the three sites, and how the delivery and receipt of services differed from what participants would likely have experienced in the absence of WASC, can help explain impact findings and place them in context. This chapter lays out the program components and original vision of WASC, summarizes critical challenges and how they were addressed, and discusses key accomplishments. Using data from staff interviews, focus groups with participants, and observations of participant/staff "coaching" meetings, this chapter also includes a description of the institutional structures, staffing, management, and funding of the program in each site. Finally, the chapter describes WASC's marketing and recruitment efforts, the delivery of advancement and work support services, how delivery of those services differed from delivery of services in the control group environment, and the program's phase-out period.

Overall, WASC was implemented largely as designed in Dayton and San Diego — the program succeeded in integrating and streamlining the delivery of workforce development and work support services, and the evaluation tested the model largely as it was intended to be implemented. There were some challenges along the way — for example, caseloads occasionally exceeded the target level, and sites were sometimes hard-pressed to provide as high-quality advancement coaching as was expected. Nevertheless, managers and staff were able to put in place a strong WASC program, especially later in the demonstration period, when they were able to spend less time on recruitment and focus more on service delivery. By design, Bridgeport began its WASC program a full year after the other two sites, so that staff could learn from their experiences; in addition, a smaller staff, and a series of staff turnovers, prevented program services from being consistently and thoroughly delivered and led to less contact with participants. As a result, Bridgeport's program design appeared to be less well implemented than those of Dayton and San Diego, but it is too soon to judge, and the program may yet emerge stronger than it appears currently.

Institutional Structure, Staffing, Management, and Funding

Structure and Staffing

As described in Chapter 1, the institutional starting points for the WASC sites were state or county workforce development and welfare agencies. These agencies were expected to collaborate to deliver integrated retention, advancement, and work support services to low-wage workers in a single unit, and to provide a complement of staff for the units that would bring a "culture change" to interactions between staff and participants.[5] All three sites met these expectations, though they differed in how they structured staffing and delivered services.

The Job Center in Dayton was already unusual among One-Stop Career Centers, in that it provided both workforce development and human services programs under the same roof and managed by the same agency: The Montgomery Department of Job and Family Services.[6] The WASC unit in Dayton took the existing colocation of the workforce development and work support programs at The Job Center a step further by bringing staff from those programs together in a single unit and training each in the policies and procedures of the other.

Dayton's program design originally called for three staff people to provide intensive one-on-one career advancement coaching, including eligibility and application assistance for the full package of work supports, which included food stamps, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), the Child Tax Credit (CTC), child care assistance, and public health insurance. Two of those coaches came from a human services background, while the third had a background in Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs. The former were expected not only to determine eligibility for and administer work supports, but also to develop and work on the Income Improvement and Advancement Plans with their customers and to provide retention and advancement services. The staff person with the WIA background was expected to work with customers on their advancement plans; be the program's expert on the local and regional labor market; disseminate information on new job opportunities, career ladders, and training resources to other WASC staff; and have enough knowledge of work supports to screen for eligibility and discuss work support options with customers. All staff were expected to provide intensive advancement coaching and to go beyond conventional case management practices that focus primarily on customers' barriers to employment and personal or family crises or simply on processing applications.

[5]To help initiate that culture change, staff titles were changed from "case worker" to "career coach" or "navigator" in order to give staff a new identity reflective of their new job responsibilities.

[6]Welfare programs are commonly referred to as human services programs. The terms "welfare" and "human services" are used interchangeably throughout the chapter.

The structure and expectations in San Diego were similar to the ones in Dayton. San Diego's WASC program design called for four career coaches: two full-time Human Service Specialists from the Health and Human Services Administration and two full-time Workforce Development Advisors from the One-Stop Career Center, one of whom was to be the lead coach.

Bridgeport's model was somewhat different. Rather than try to train staff from a workforce or human services background in each other's areas, the program called on staff to focus on the area from which they had come. Two to three "career navigators" provided most of the advancement coaching and WIA services, while a staff person from the local Department of Social Services (DSS) was at the unit on a part-time basis to screen for financial work support eligibility and to process applications. As the program matured, however, these roles expanded. The career navigators started to become familiar enough with eligibility rules to do some basic screening and start the work support application process. Likewise, when the DSS staff person met with a customer to discuss work supports, she contributed to the advancement coaching.

In theory, all program staff in Dayton and San Diego were expected to feel comfortable providing the complete range of services; in practice, there was some specialization on either the workforce development or the work support side.[7] While work support staff sometimes reverted to focusing on income maintenance and crisis resolution, intensive and repeated trainings — and reinforcement by managers — succeeded, for the most part, in instilling a focus on advancement in these staff members and provided some of the skills they needed to deliver advancement services. On the other hand, the process of helping people advance in their careers is much less prescriptive than determining work support eligibility, and requires a particular set of skills and knowledge that was more likely to reside with the workforce specialists.

Over time, it became clear in both Dayton and San Diego that it was more problematic for staff from a workforce development background to learn work support eligibility requirements and handle applications — primarily because of agency regulations — than it was for the work support staff to provide advancement coaching and process WIA applications to obtain training funds for customers. Overall, advancement coaching required a much broader skill set than determining eligibility, but the details of eligibility were complicated to some workforce staff, and agency regulations often restricted eligibility determination to eligibility workers. And though Bridgeport's model was set up to be one of specialization, some cross-learning eventually occurred. In a sense, these varying models resembled each other more than intended — each drifted toward a middle position, somewhere between cross-training and specialization.

[7]While all staff in Dayton and San Diego were expected to be able to screen for work support eligibility and discuss work support goals and options with customers, only staff who were certified eligibility specialists were technically permitted to process work support applications, so this function still fell on those staff.

Managers in all three sites have expressed the opinion that, ideally, WASC staff members should maintain some degree of specialization but be fully integrated into the WASC unit. Staff should be knowledgeable about the full range of WASC services, but expecting staff people from one background to be completely fluent in the requirements of the other role is unrealistic and not the most efficient use of people's expertise. Overall, managers did feel that their staff brought about the culture change expected — a focus on advancement first and work supports second, with the programs addressing clients' barriers to employment not as isolated problems but as challenges to be viewed within the context of someone's goals for career advancement.

In some cases, having staff from one agency or the other in the unit part time, or having staff who did not report directly to the project coordinator, detracted — especially early on — from the ability to create a cohesive team. In San Diego and Bridgeport, where the coaches and other staff did not all work for the same agency as their supervisors in the WASC unit, it was sometimes problematic for project coordinators to be responsible for staff who did not report directly to them. The project coordinator in Bridgeport had an additional challenge: Because of space constraints, her office was located on a different floor from the rest of her staff until August of 2007, making it more difficult to provide the type of oversight staff needed and to institute the type of "culture change" expected. Project coordinators found that the requirements of the program's parent agencies, especially seniority rules, could complicate hiring processes — for example, by making it necessary for coordinators to ensure that candidates with seniority also had the right skills for the program. Over time, however, managers felt that they were able to build a strong team and overcome some of the initial barriers that their different agency affiliations may have created.

In addition to the career coaches and navigators, each site relied on support staff who carried out key tasks — conducting random assignment, providing WASC orientations for study participants, scheduling appointments, sending mailings, greeting customers, calling customers who had been disconnected from the program and tracking reengagement efforts, managing files, and generally supporting the unit. Over time, the roles of some support staff changed, and this flexibility — which the units valued — allowed sites to adapt to changing needs.

Different staff turnover patterns at different sites affected both the consistency of services and customers' program experiences.[8] The Dayton and San Diego sites, each of which has a larger total number of staff than the Bridgeport program, have some staff who have been on board since the start of the program. Still other positions in these sites turned over more than once — two coach positions in San Diego each turned over four times — and new staff were added. In Bridgeport, both of the initial career navigator positions turned over twice. All three sites had different staffing levels at different times during the program. Despite some turnover,

[8]For a discussion on how staff turnover affected customers' experiences, see Tessler, Seith, and Rucks (2008).

customers reported experiencing much more stable relationships with coaches in WASC than they had with case workers in other public programs. In the absence of WASC, a customer could have a different case worker for each support program — one for food stamps, one for Medicaid, one for child care assistance; in contrast, WASC provided a single coach to handle all of these work supports. Customers also described the relationships with their coaches as being much closer and more personal than their relationships with case workers in other programs; many said that their coaches really cared about them, in contrast to case managers in other programs who treated them more like a "number":

> All the staff that I came across [in the program], they have a different compassion than some of the regular caseworkers. They don't act as though they feel that, "This is just my two hours. This person is trying to get something extra." They treat you like you would like to be treated. And that makes a big difference.

Management

WASC units and their staff were managed by project coordinators — from workforce development backgrounds in all three sites — who were responsible for the day-to-day operations of the unit and ensuring that the units met the program's goals and objectives.[9] The coordinators provided the central line of communication for the sites, MDRC, senior staff at the government agencies involved in the project, and community-based partners. They were expected to develop and monitor performance benchmarks,[10] arrange training for staff, facilitate team meetings and case conferences, monitor recruitment and random assignment, and develop recruitment strategies.

Managers and staff agreed that strong unit management, including consistent practices like holding weekly or even daily case conferences to discuss individual customers and brainstorm about coaching, promoted cohesion and a focus on advancement. Regular case conferences were held in Dayton and San Diego throughout the program period; they were held less regularly in Bridgeport.

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[9]Dayton also had a unit supervisor, the second-in-command to the project coordinator, who had been promoted from the role of team leader.

[10]Performance benchmarks included outcome benchmarks for participants, such as movement of a specified percentage of participants from part-time to full-time work and receipt of wage increases of specified amounts for a given percentage of participants, as well as operational benchmarks for the program, such as provision of certain kinds of services to a specified percentage of participants. Ultimately, the benchmarks that were most closely monitored were those related to reaching the recruitment targets and maintaining the customer-coach contact rate that was set for the program. The reason for this, in part, was because managers' ability to track many of the other benchmarks was limited; staff members were very challenged to keep reliable and consistent data on participants' outcomes, given all the other pressures on their time.

According to managers, if WASC was going to be successful, the senior management at the agencies overseeing the project had to be "on board." In Dayton, at the start of the demonstration, the project benefited from the support and collaboration of the Director and the Assistant Director of the Montgomery County Department of Job and Family Services and of a senior manager at the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services. As an example of their tangible support, the Assistant Director secured the discretionary funding that enabled Dayton to offer participants financial incentives (described below).[11]

San Diego had early support from the Workforce Development Division Director of the San Diego Workforce Partnership and from two senior staff people from San Diego County's Health and Human Services Agency. These senior managers met monthly with the WASC unit staff and with MDRC's operations staff to identify issues related to service delivery and to address problems. Though these senior staff also eventually left the agency or retired, their early support was critical in ensuring that Project EARN (the name of the WASC program in San Diego) had the funding and flexibility needed for strong service delivery. In Bridgeport, senior agency staff were not as closely involved in the design or operations of the WASC program and often found their time diverted from WASC to other new initiatives being undertaken by The WorkPlace (Southwestern Connecticut's Workforce Development Board).[12] On the human services side, senior-level staff participated in the early design of the project and helped secure data for the research, but they were not involved in the routine management of the program.

Funding

Funding streams for WASC differed in each site, and the type of funding had a large programmatic effect on the kinds of services that could be delivered.[13] For example, Dayton's funding for WASC came from WIA Governor's Discretionary Funds and from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) demonstration funds,[14] and Bridgeport also had access

[11]After the program was in operation for about a year, two of these senior staff people retired, while the third changed positions, and the project coordinator found that she had to convince the new county Assistant Director that the program was valuable.

[12]Bridgeport had a project called "The Academy" before the WASC demonstration began. The Academy was a workforce development program with its own flexible training funds that working people could access. When Bridgeport was selected to be a WASC site, The Academy transformed into the WASC unit, and the unit even retained the name of "The Academy." In sum, Bridgeport was innovating around career advancement for low-wage workers before WASC began; the changes that WASC brought were the integration of work support services into The Academy's career advancement model and the introduction of protocols for advancement planning and coaching.

[13]All three sites also received operating funds from MDRC, passed through from its funders. Sites were also expected to set aside training funds for WASC participants.

[14]WIA's funding formula allocates funds for adult, dislocated worker, and youth services among local Workforce Investment Boards. Governors retain up to 15 percent of state WIA allocations of all three funding (continued)

to a pool of flexible funds that The WorkPlace raises every year to fund The Academy. Such funds were not bound by the same guidelines as WIA formula funds. For example, these funds allowed the WASC programs to offer a wider array of training providers from which to choose. Also, program staff had the discretion to approve a larger amount of training funding per participant and were not held to a set cap. In addition, by using these flexible dollars, the One-Stops did not necessarily have to meet set targets for post-training earnings, as they did for customers whose training was funded with WIA formula dollars.

In sum, sites with discretionary funding could generally be more flexible in one or more of several ways: the types of services they provided, the amount of training funds they provided, the process for individuals to gain access to training funds, and the customers they served.[15] The availability of discretionary dollars also allowed Dayton to offer very generous incentives for participation in and completion of training, described later in this chapter,[16] and they allowed Bridgeport to serve customers who were ineligible for WIA training funds. Bridgeport was able to provide more training dollars than were typically available under WIA.

Like Dayton and Bridgeport, San Diego had expected to have a pool of discretionary funds to use in WASC; the site had applied for Governors' Discretionary Funds but did not win the competition for them. In the absence of those funds, and following an unplanned reduction in the flexible site payments provided through MDRC, the site sought to use WIA Adult Program formula funding to help cover the cost of the program's core coaching staff. This

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streams and can use these funds for any allowed statewide activity under WIA, including "incumbent worker" projects like WASC.

[15]Formula WIA Adult funding requires states to monitor four performance indicators: entry into unsubsidized employment, retention in employment six months after placement, average earnings six months after placement, and attainment of recognized credentials. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) negotiates the expected levels of performance in each of these areas with the states, which in turn negotiate performance targets with the local workforce development boards. With discretionary funds, states often customize the local performance standards to fit the particular design and goals of the discretionary grant (although the outcomes for participants covered by WIA Governor's Discretionary funds are included in the statewide performance indicators that must be reported to U.S. DOL). In short, discretionary funding allowed WASC sites to have more flexible performance standards, though WASC still had its own performance benchmarks that sites were expected to meet. Web site: www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/wia/wiaslides/wia45/index.html (accessed November 26, 2008).

[16]Throughout this chapter, the word "incentives" is used broadly to describe the offer of cash — in the form of gas cards, gift cards, or actual cash payments — for ongoing participation and accomplishment of certain goals, such as completing training, participating in training while working, or maintaining steady employment. All of these are described as incentives, regardless of the funding source, which can vary. In San Diego, for example, gas cards, which are offered as a participation incentive, are processed through the Workforce Board as supportive services; they are used more as an incentive than a more typical supportive service, such as providing books or uniforms for someone in training. In Dayton, participation and completion incentives are funded through WIA Governor's Discretionary Funds, rather than WIA Adult Program supportive services, though supportive services such as books are also offered.

required WASC participants to be co-enrolled in the WIA Adult Program,[17] regardless of whether or not they were interested in training. However, the San Diego region's WIA Adult Program does not typically serve people who are employed at the time of enrollment, and it relies on enrollment procedures that were not well suited to serving WASC's employed participants. The process of enrolling Project EARN participants in the WIA Adult Program was cumbersome, requiring extra paperwork and often at least one separate meeting dedicated to completing documentation of family size and income — all before participants could even meet with a career coach or receive a service that participants would value.[18] In fact, WASC participants were asked to complete more paperwork than the typical Career Center customer (that is, an unemployed person) would have experienced.[19]

In 2007, a senior staff person at the Health and Human Services Agency was able to secure alternative funding for Project EARN from that agency. The alternative funding enabled WASC to pay for staff salaries and supportive services for customers without going through the cumbersome process of enrolling all participants in the WIA Adult Program.

All three sites received operating funds from MDRC, but this source of support was cut back in the spring of 2006 when one funder reduced the level of WASC funding to MDRC by one-third and delayed the delivery of the remaining funds. The delay led to an approximately six-month hiatus in service delivery and enrollment in Dayton and San Diego and to a start-up delay in Bridgeport. Throughout the WASC program period, none of the sites was able to rely on completely stable funding sources.

Marketing and Recruitment

If any social program is to have a chance of succeeding, it first has to persuade eligible individuals to come in and sign up. When that population is diverse and not mandated to participate — as is the case with low-wage workers targeted for WASC — recruitment can be particularly difficult. This section discusses the sites' marketing and recruitment strategies: what

[17]The WIA Adult Program, a program under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, is designed to provide quality employment and training services to assist eligible individuals in finding and qualifying for meaningful employment and to help employers find skilled workers. It consists of "core services," including job search assistance and labor market information; "intensive services," including comprehensive assessment and individual counseling and career planning; and "training services."

[18]In order for the WIA Adult Program in San Diego to work with employed people, the One-Stop Career Center had to document that these individuals had incomes below a certain self-sufficiency standard. To document their low incomes, WASC customers had to provide birth certificates for all children in the household, as well as proof of current and past employment, family size, and total family earnings over the six months prior to enrollment.

[19]In San Diego, the One-Stop Career Center is called the "Career Center." In Dayton, it is called the "Job Center."

did and did not appear to work, what program changes were made to enhance recruitment, and what it took (or would take, ideally) to successfully and simultaneously recruit and enroll new participants and provide services to those who were already enrolled.

Marketing Strategies

WASC sites worked with MDRC to develop a multipronged recruitment strategy and a clear message that would entice low-wage workers to apply for WASC. Some sites conducted surveys of prospective customers to try to understand what would appeal to them. MDRC also provided sites with assistance from a marketing consultant, who helped them further refine the marketing messages and develop marketing materials, such as posters and flyers.[20] Some WASC flyers stressed the immediate gains in income that enrollees could receive; though the flyers did not explicitly mention work supports, they did suggest that "more money" was available quickly through this program ("Make more money now. Let us show you how!").[21] Others showed a step-ladder image, indicating that one could begin to take steps, such as participating in training, that could lead to higher earnings.

Some marketing methods — for example, presentations at workplaces and notices in paycheck envelopes — focused on reaching people at their places of employment. Other methods were aimed at recipients of some work supports who might be attracted by the opportunity to take advantage of other supports or advance in their careers; these methods included posting flyers at the child care or Medicaid offices or calling individuals from past work support receipt lists, from lists of people who had exited the WIA program, or from child care subsidy waiting lists. Still other methods — including notices in *PennySaver* magazines,[22] posters on buses, and presentations at churches and community organizations — aimed to reach a broad segment of the population.

Another marketing strategy used at all sites was to create "catchy" names for program units. Rather than calling the unit the "WASC unit," for example, which would have no meaning to the general public, San Diego called its unit "Project EARN" (Earnings, Advancement, Retention, Now!). Dayton's was the "Move Up" program (also known as the "Career Advance-

[20]In order not to dilute the program's effects, the control group's experience needed to be close to what would generally be experienced in the absence of WASC; as a result, sites had to craft a message that would be appealing to potential participants, but that would not provide too much information about services before people were randomly assigned into the WASC or control group. For example, marketing materials did not specifically mention that part of the program offer was to help people get connected to work supports; if that message had been explicit, then control group members might have realized that they could seek out work supports on their own. In the absence of a research study and random assignment, a program could be more explicit about its offer, as there would be no control group, and issues related to diluted effects would be moot.

[21]From a San Diego WASC site flyer.

[22]*PennySaver* is a weekly advertising circular.

ment Unit"), and Bridgeport's was "The Academy for Career Advancement" ("The Academy"). Discussants in WASC focus groups reported that they learned about the program from a variety of sources — for example, flyers, the One-Stop Career Center, or word of mouth.[23]

The Challenge of Providing Services While Still Recruiting

WASC sites — particularly those with fewer staff — found it challenging to make the time to both recruit and serve participants. When sites had to make a push to increase enrollment, some participants went without seeing a coach for too long. All the sites initially assumed that they could manage outreach and enrollment along with service provision without dedicating special staff to recruitment. But the sites found that it was extraordinarily difficult to recruit what was initially to be 1,600 eligible people per site, while simultaneously providing services. Given the scope of the program's recruitment goals, staff were probably not aggressive enough in their initial outreach efforts: For example, Dayton staff thought they could rely exclusively on walk-in traffic at the Job Center. (With some 3,000 walk-in clients a week, this Center, which offers many county services, is the nation's largest One-Stop.) Staff in Bridgeport were relying on referrals from the One-Stops; and San Diego staff ultimately relied too much on community-based organizations for referrals.

Recruitment perhaps turned out to be far more difficult than envisioned, in part because the target population was already working and therefore harder to reach and involve than unemployed people. Also, low-wage workers might not have initially recognized the value of an advancement program. Another possible reason for the unexpected level of difficulty is that staff were unaccustomed to actively recruiting participants into their programs. As soon as the sites and MDRC recognized the magnitude of the challenge, changes were made to ensure that sites would recruit a sufficiently large number of people into the study.[24] Once the target recruitment levels had been met, the sites turned their full attention to reengaging customers. Managers and coaches from all three sites say that, in retrospect, either caseloads should have

[23]Dayton WASC staff eventually learned that unauthorized flyers stating that the program would pay for school had been posted at one of the local community colleges, and they believe that information about the program that spread via word-of-mouth came primarily from those flyers. (That is, the flyers were not the primary source of information about the program, but they were a significant source.) For a thorough discussion of where and how WASC's marketing messages were heard, see Tessler, Seith, and Rucks (2008).

[24]As described in Chapter 1, MDRC changed the eligibility criteria to increase the pool of potential enrollees. MDRC also reduced the number of people that each site was expected to enroll; while they were each originally expected to recruit 1,600 people (800 for the WASC program group and 800 for the control group), that number was lowered to 1,000 for Dayton and San Diego (though Dayton ended up recruiting more than 1,200), and 700 for Bridgeport. Finally, MDRC extended the enrollment period several times, giving the sites more time to recruit their target number of enrollees. Sites also provided incentives to staff, such as special lunches if they met monthly targets, and used volunteers to make recruitment phone calls.

been smaller during the recruitment period or additional staff should have been hired for recruitment tasks.

WASC Coaching and the Delivery of Advancement Services

Besides recruitment, staff had to engage a broad cross-section of low-wage workers in services that would, it was hoped, set them on a path toward career advancement and that would increase their short-term and long-term incomes. Since WASC had such a varied group of participants — some of whom had a clear vision of how they wanted to advance and some of whom did not — no single method of advancement coaching, and no uniform type of service delivery, was considered suitable for everyone. WASC coaches were expected to work with each customer individually toward a successful advancement plan. At the same time, across all sites and for all customers, WASC services were to be consistently delivered, to include all elements of the WASC franchise, and to follow certain guidelines — namely:

- Every interaction with a customer should leave the customer with a tangible benefit or a specific next step in realizing his or her advancement plan.
- Staff needed to:
  - be available to meet with customers on a flexible schedule, taking into account customers' work schedules;
  - be supportive and encouraging, and be able to break down both short- and long-term goals into achievable action steps;
  - think strategically and use all tools available to them (labor market information, career assessment tools, and the Work Advancement Calculator, among others) to help customers map out their advancement plans; and
  - take the initiative to stay in contact with their customers — for example, to follow up when appointments were missed and call customers who had not been in touch.

These expectations represented a "culture change" for most WASC staff, almost all of whom came from either the human services or workforce development systems, neither of which involved active coaching — that is, the development of a trusting relationship in which coaches know their customers and are actively involved in coaching them to reach their goals. The focus on active coaching, rather than simply case management — often, in a public systems context, focused largely on eligibility, application, recertification, compliance, and sanctions — was new for WASC staff. Likewise, WASC customers also often needed to adapt to the

program's expectations. Like the staff, most low-wage workers who had experience with the welfare or workforce development systems, or with any public agency, were accustomed to more perfunctory, less personal interactions and relationships with the staff that, again, were focused largely on applications and compliance.

It took some time for both staff and customers to become comfortable in an environment that encouraged initiative, creativity, and trust. Once they did, however, both staff and customers spoke very highly of participating in a program that broke the mold of typical case management and service delivery, that fostered a closer-than-usual relationship between staff and customer, and that focused actively on advancement. This focus on advancement for low-wage workers was something that was not available, without extra effort, to the control group, as existing employment services were mostly focused on job placement and not on advancement for people who were already working. Speaking about the relationship with her coach, one customer said:

> She was trying to help me to excel. And even if I couldn't make it for an appointment, if something happened, she would come to my house and work with me there. Whereas, other workers are, like, "Okay, you have to be here within this half hour."

One coach, speaking about how she needed to adjust her coaching style in order to stay focused on advancement and not get bogged down dealing with customers' barriers to employment, said:

> Well, it's difficult because a lot of customers will try to tell you all of their personal problems. What I try to do is — I listen and empathize, but then I just tell them, "Hey, look, life goes on and this is what we need to do. Those things are past and we've got to move on." I try to listen and to empathize, but it's really, like, "Okay, well, I heard your problem, and now it's time to advance."

According to the WASC model, coaches were expected to emphasize advancement and to start by discussing advancement goals; only after that were they to discuss work supports — using the WASC Work Advancement Calculator to demonstrate the value of supports — and to facilitate the application process. Finally, once work supports were in place, coaches were expected to move back to focusing on advancement. As customers prepared to make advancement decisions, the Work Advancement Calculator was to be used again, to demonstrate the effects of each advancement option on total income and the mix of earnings and work supports. Though advancement was the highest priority in WASC, in practice, it took some time to achieve an advancement goal; in contrast, applications for work supports could be processed fairly quickly. As a result, the customer almost always received the benefit of work supports before achieving an advancement goal.

Training for WASC Staff

When developing the WASC demonstration, MDRC recognized that staff could likely benefit from special training to achieve the culture change that the program hoped to inspire. MDRC contracted with a workforce development consultant to develop and provide intensive training sessions on the protocols for orientations and first meetings with customers, to develop the Income Improvement and Advancement Plan (see below) and train WASC unit staff to use it effectively, to help develop scripts for various aspects of service delivery, and to provide periodic refresher sessions.[25] These training sessions introduced staff to new ideas and approaches. For example, staff were encouraged to focus not just on a customer's goal (such as, "to be a nurse") but on that person's "motivation" or reason for advancing (such as, "to provide a better life for my children"). WASC staff were also trained to encourage customers to leave their "comfort zones" and take action to improve their work situations.

In addition to the intensive training provided by the consultant, MDRC's operations staff provided continual training and technical assistance to WASC staff to ensure that they were implementing the model effectively. MDRC staff conducted formal implementation assessments after six months to provide feedback on the program's strengths and weaknesses and to suggest actions to strengthen service delivery. MDRC staff also visited the sites periodically to observe and provide refresher training and were in regular communication with the project coordinators. Site staff were brought together five times for cross-site meetings, where they could compare notes and learn from each other. And MDRC held "Managers' Academies," where project coordinators discussed managerial issues.

Key Tools for the Delivery of Advancement Services

The Income Improvement and Advancement Plan (IIAP)

The first step toward advancement, as prescribed by the WASC model, was meeting with one's career coach and developing an Income Improvement and Advancement Plan. The IIAP asked customers to choose from among a list of the most typical advancement goals of interest to low-wage workers.

After a customer identified advancement goals, it was the job of the career coach to help the customer sort out short- and long-term goals (see the upper portion of Figure 3.1), to prioritize them, and to identify the steps needed to reach them. The IIAP was intended to act, in a sense, as a contract between the customer and the coach; each had responsibilities and assignments to carry out before the next meeting, and each completed assignment was intended

[25]All materials and training sessions mentioned here were developed and provided by Jodie Sue Kelly of Cygnet Associates. Web site: www.cygnetassociates.com.

The Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

Figure 3.1

The Advancement Goals Section and the Income Stabilization Goals Section of the Income Improvement and Advancement Plan (IIAP)

Advancement Goals (check all that apply):

Short-term Goals:

☐ Earn raise from _____ to _____

☐ Increase in hours from _____to _____

Long-term Goals:

☐ Promotion to _____

☐ Education and skills training: _____

☐ Move into _____ job in _____ career

☐ Be awarded employer benefits: _____

Income Stabilization Goals (check all that apply):

☐ Child care and/or transportation assistance

☐ Assistance with food costs

☐ Health insurance for self and/or family

☐ EITC/Child Tax Credit

☐ Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit

☐ Child support

☐ Financial education

Motivation for Achieving Goals:

NOTE: Although child support and financial education were not key components of WASC, one of the sites wanted to include them as important "extra services" to provide to program participants if possible.

to bring the customer one step closer to reaching a goal. After the IIAP was completed — which usually occurred during the first meeting — the customer and coach were to revisit the plan at each subsequent meeting to check on their progress toward the goals and to update the document accordingly.

According to coaches, the WASC sites completed an IIAP with nearly every customer and used them as overall advancement plans; however, the thoroughness of the plans, and the degree to which they were updated, varied. Perhaps the most successful element of the IIAP was the articulation of the customer's motivation; staff used the motivation often — and apparently with success — when attempting to reengage customers who had fallen out of contact with the program.

As customers were pursuing their advancement goals, the other important role of the career coach was to encourage them to take up the full package of work supports that could increase their short-term income and ease financial pressures while they pursued longer-term goals. The IIAP presented work supports as "income stabilization goals"; that is, even the receipt of work supports was framed as a goal — just one goal among others, all aimed toward advancement. The lower portion of Figure 3.1 shows the Income Stabilization Goals section of the IIAP.

Work Advancement Calculator

A key expectation of WASC was that coaches would periodically use the WASC Work Advancement Calculator with customers.[26] The calculator — a custom-designed, Web-based tool — estimated customers' eligibility for work supports and quantified how changes in earnings would affect changes in total income, given the concurrent changes in work supports and taxes.

In recent years, several organizations have developed calculators that determine an applicant's eligibility for work supports, simplify the application process, and even submit the application via the Internet.[27] WASC took its calculator a step further: Like these other tools, the calculator took information provided by the customer during a short question-and-answer session and estimated eligibility for work supports and their dollar value. But rather than end with a discussion of eligibility and application requirements, the WASC calculator then took the customer to its Advancement Discussion screen, to enter the wages or work hours that the

[26]The Work Advancement Calculator was developed by John Tapogna, Ted Helvoigt, Sam Boggess, and Carl Batten at ECONorthwest.

[27]A few online examples are (1) the Family Resource Simulator, National Center for Children in Poverty (www.nccp.org/modeler/modeler.cgi); (2) *Earn*Benefits, Seedco (www.seedco.org/earnbenefits); and (3) The Benefit Bank, Solutions for Progress (www.thebenefitbank.com); see Quick Check.

customer hoped to obtain in a target-job scenario. The calculator then displayed the customer's net income — taking into consideration the mix of earnings and work supports and work-related expenses and tax obligations — for both the current employment situation and the wages and work hours of the target job.

With this key information, the customer could see a good estimate of what the difference in income would be from taking that advancement step: how earnings would increase, work supports decrease, tax credits increase or decrease depending on the credit and on the level of earnings, and the effect on overall net income.[28] For any given target scenario, the calculator displayed the "take-home rate" (the amount of each additional dollar earned that the customer would get to keep, considering the reduction in work supports) as well as any "eligibility cliffs" (the points at which eligibility for each work support ended). The customer and the career coach were expected to use this valuable information to make the most informed decisions possible about advancement steps, to ensure that each step continued to improve the family's income, and to prepare for the loss of work supports as earnings increased.[29]

Despite its potential, the Work Advancement Calculator was not used as consistently as envisioned. In general, it was used more consistently in San Diego than in Dayton and Bridgeport. Apparent reasons for its inconsistent use in Dayton included increasing caseloads, resulting in insufficient time during appointments with customers for the calculator; some discomfort with computers; staff turnover; and staff needing to manage multiple programs and computer systems. In Bridgeport, the staff's specialization in work supports eligibility versus advancement coaching roles contributed to low use of the calculator, as did staff turnover and the need for new staff to get up to speed on all aspects of service delivery.

Moreover, the calculator did not seem to be very useful, at least in the short term, for WASC customers pursuing education and training — a high proportion of participants in Dayton and Bridgeport — or for others who knew exactly which advancement path they wanted to pursue.[30] These participants were not interested in making the kind of strategic choices about wages and hours that are central to using the calculator.

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[28]The WASC Work Advancement Calculator made some assumptions about eligibility for certain work supports; it was able to provide estimates of eligibility and benefit amounts, but not precise determinations.

[29]The use of this tool, and the incorporation of the information it provided into customers' advancement plans, was not available to control group members.

[30]See Table 4.4 in Chapter 4 for data on participation in education and training in Dayton. In Bridgeport, managers, staff, and customer focus groups asserted that education and training was the most popular WASC activity among participants. A future WASC report will include participation data for Bridgeport. See, also, Tessler and Seith (2007) for an extensive discussion of the Work Advancement Calculator.

Use of One-Stop Services

The WASC design included using currently existing services within the One-Stop Career Center, when appropriate, rather than recreating services that already existed. As a result, across all three sites, advancement services for participants who did not come into WASC with clear advancement goals or a set direction — or, in some cases, with unrealistic goals — closely mirrored the services already available at the One-Stop for unemployed individuals; they were primarily limited to career assessment, provision of labor market information, and job search services.

Career Assessments

The use of career assessments — tools to help customers identify careers that match their skills and interests — varied by site. A San Diego coach reported referring about one-third of his customers — essentially, those who were unsure of what advancement path they wanted to pursue — to the Career Center's Self-Paced Assessment, administered by Southwestern College. Geared primarily toward unemployed people, the Self-Paced Assessment is a first-level, computer-based skills inventory module. The customer enters information about skills and interests and can cross-reference that information to available careers and labor market information for the region. At the end of this process, the program suggests the customer's strengths and weaknesses and recommends a type of job that fits that profile. Customers must then take this information back to their coaches for incorporation into the advancement plan. Dayton and Bridgeport had similar tools available in their One-Stops or local community colleges that customers could use on their own: the Discovery Program at Sinclair Community College in Dayton and CT Career Paths in Bridgeport.

Labor Market Information

The sites often used labor market information — for example, information about which kinds of jobs are in demand in a given area, their pay rates, employment and unemployment rates in particular job sectors and geographic areas, and employment projections in particular industries — to explore career options with customers, and to learn about the demand for and earnings potential of specific positions or fields. In San Diego and Bridgeport, labor market information was incorporated into the information provided by the assessment tools. In general, however, not all WASC coaches had expertise in labor market information, and this information was not always incorporated into customers' advancement plans, even when it could have shed light on a chosen career path or helped customers identify a career with growth potential.

Job Search Services

While the coaches in all sites had access to job listings, they often referred participants to the job search services at the One-Stop Career Centers. These services were particularly useful for participants who lost their jobs and were looking for rapid reemployment. Participants who were referred for these services were often asked to bring job listings to the next meeting with their coaches for review; these consultations allowed coaches to reinforce employment goals like obtaining the best wages and benefit packages possible and to discuss realistic job options with participants. Coaches provided guidance to participants through services ranging from mock interviews — for which participants came dressed in interview clothes and practiced addressing interviewers and talking about their previous job experiences — to sharing books and other literature on interviewing.

Though these kinds of services are typically designed for unemployed individuals, many of them would have been available to low-wage workers in the absence of WASC. The difference was that WASC counted on its staff to provide high-quality, substantive guidance that would lead to better advancement outcomes than the customers could achieve on their own. But WASC staff found it challenging to provide such guidance to customers who were unsure of how they wanted to proceed with their careers or advancement plans, and it is unclear whether these customers received the high-quality coaching that was envisioned; it was much easier for coaches to work with customers who were motivated and had a clear sense of how they wanted to pursue advancement.[31]

Connecting Participants to Training and Facilitating Receipt of Training Dollars

A large number of participants, particularly in Dayton and Bridgeport, reported being interested in WASC as a route to subsidized education or training. Many of these customers had a clear vision of how they wanted to pursue advancement, and they looked to WASC to facilitate the process. WASC services for this type of customer were focused on procedures (for example, on WIA's set protocol) that some WASC staff had already used as WIA staff members to apply for funding, select a training program, and complete all necessary forms for getting started. In all three sites, WASC staff were proficient in connecting participants to training and drawing down training funds, though the process was more complicated in some sites than others, and it changed over time. Access to discretionary funds was critical in allowing WASC to streamline the process of getting participants connected to training and to serve a wider variety of participants than could be served through WIA.

[31]For a thorough discussion of how coaching differed depending on the degree of motivation and self-direction of the customers, see Tessler, Seith, and Rucks (2008).

San Diego had the most difficult experience connecting participants to formal training. Part of the challenge, described above, was that for WASC participants to apply for a WIA-funded Individual Training Account (ITA),[32] they had to formally enroll in WIA, which was often a burdensome process for employed individuals. Furthermore, in order to receive an ITA, employed WASC applicants had to meet self-sufficiency criteria for enrollment in and access to WIA-funded training, and the occupations for which they wanted training had to be in high demand in the local labor market; these criteria turned out to be difficult to meet. Additionally, the training providers who were certified to serve customers with ITAs tended to operate during the day, making classes inaccessible for WASC participants who worked during the day. For these reasons, many WASC customers in San Diego took advantage of free or low-cost training that was provided in the community.[33]

The story in Dayton was very different, in part because the site's WIA funds were already available to employed as well as unemployed individuals — although not with the accompanying intensive career coaching that WASC provided.[34] And WIA in Dayton already provided up to $15,000 for up to two years of undergraduate or graduate training for eligible customers who could document the market demand for the degree. However, someone who completed a WIA-funded formal training program could not pursue a second training. The Governor's Discretionary Funds in Dayton allowed WASC participants to access further training — for example, to pursue a registered nurse degree after completing a licensed practical nursing program — helping customers progress further along in their advancement plans than would have been possible in the absence of WASC.

To facilitate the completion of education and training programs, and perhaps make a difference for WASC participants over and above what they would have accomplished on their own, the Dayton WASC site put together a particularly generous package of cash incentives — made possible by the discretionary funding.[35] Anyone who was employed and engaged in one other activity (such as skills training, college courses for credit, or General Educational Development classes) was eligible to receive an incentive payment, structured as follows:

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[32]The WIA established the provision of "Individual Training Accounts" for eligible adults to "purchase" training that meets their needs from a list of eligible training providers.

[33]Despite the challenge of drawing down available ITA funds in San Diego — which amounted to more than $191,000 — close to 75 percent of those funds had been drawn down or committed by early 2009 in grant amounts averaging about $4,200.

[34]Some of the protocols followed by the Career Advancement Unit in Dayton were modeled, to some degree, after existing WIA protocols, including case conferencing and the use of assessments.

[35]These incentives were unique within WASC and were not expected as part of the WASC franchise. For other examples of the use of financial incentives in postemployment programs, see Riccio et al. (2008) for the U.K. Employment Retention and Advancement program, and Martinson and Hendra (2006) for the U.S. Employment Retention and Advancement program in Texas.

- A participant who enrolled in training and completed a course with a C-plus grade point average or higher could receive up to $800 per year for the two years of the WASC program period.
- The participant could also receive up to $300 more for completing this training with a credential.
- If the participant subsequently earned a job promotion as a result of the training and completion, he or she could receive an additional $250.

In other words, participants who enrolled in a two-year certificate program, completed the program satisfactorily, and earned a promotion as a result could receive a total of $2,150 in payments. In addition to these incentive payments, Dayton offered a child care stipend of $65 per month to help defray the child care copay cost for everyone who maintained work, as well as an $80 monthly gas card for participants who were working and in training. Participants who had children in child care, therefore, could receive another $1,560 ($65 per month for 24 months) and be eligible for $1,920 in gas cards ($80 per month for 24 months). In total, a participant could receive up to $5,630 in participation and completion incentive payments over two years, which would not count as income against eligibility for work supports. Participants in education and training programs made it clear that the receipt of these incentives, and the coaches' taking care of tuition payments, smoothed the path for them to focus on and try to complete their studies.

As in Dayton, and eventually in San Diego, the availability of discretionary funds in Bridgeport allowed The Academy to provide more streamlined access to training, and more funds for training, than would have been available through WIA. Additionally, Bridgeport was able to put together a "fast-track" process even within WIA for WASC participants to access training funds. Though Bridgeport would enroll WIA-eligible participants in WIA and make use of those funds first, when possible, staff could supplement training dollars for those people and provide access to training for customers who were not eligible for WIA.[36] The range of training programs available to participants was also broader than what was available through WIA. Participants in a Bridgeport focus group told many stories of months and months of paperwork and assessment delays when they had applied for training programs previously, but said that they had been able to start training a week or two after enrolling in WASC.

[36]In contrast to San Diego, WASC participants in Bridgeport had to enroll in WIA only if they wanted training.

Helping People Advance at Their Current Jobs

Focus group participants from the three sites were all attracted to WASC by the opportunity to get help to advance in their jobs or careers. Advancement could take many forms, including taking on more responsibilities in one's current job, increasing one's hours or going from part-time to full-time work, and being promoted in one's current place of employment. However, the vast majority of focus group participants did not like their jobs and wanted the opportunity to move into something different, particularly jobs that required more skills.[37] Coaches in all sites have confirmed that most of their customers wanted to leave their current jobs and move to new employers or new fields.

Motivational Role of Coaches

Some coaches emphasized the motivational and mentoring aspects of their roles. Their help was particularly valued among two types of customers (both often women): (1) participants at risk of "burning out" in a current training program, and (2) participants struggling with advancement and perhaps even keeping their current job in the face of employment barriers and multiple responsibilities to their families and employers. In an effort to motivate their customers, coaches conveyed a welcoming sense of acceptance and dignity, sometimes reinforced by the credibility that comes from experience — for example, the experience of raising children who were the same ages as their customers or a first-hand experience of discrimination. Some customers were surprised to find that they and their coaches shared similar career aspirations and job histories, as this participant explained:

> She gave me a lot of encouragement. She seemed to have a spirit to want to see me do good. You know, just like she's keeping her thumbs up for me.… She's always, like, "You're young. You have enough time to do it. Don't ever think you don't have enough time. 'Cause time is on your side. Don't make it on the other person's side. You've got to take your time and figure things out." And I really appreciate that she gave me a lot of words of wisdom, being that I'm a young, single mother.
>
> When I first met her, I was thinking, she's an older lady, I'm somewhat younger.… She appeared white. I consider myself black. And I thought we had nothing in common. But we followed the same path and really clicked.

[37] See Holzer (2004) for a discussion of how low-wage workers have more opportunities to advance by moving to new employers with better opportunities (job mobility) than by working their way up with a current employer (job retention).

Coaches who wanted to motivate their customers sought to help them achieve a balance between life and work and to develop a sense of efficacy, self-reliance, and an internal locus of control. As one career coach described it:

> For many of our people, it's like pushing a loaded wagon uphill.… So a big part of my job is to determine when is a good time to add more bricks to that load. We don't want to overload people and run the risk of the whole wagon breaking down…. Before we talk about training, [we ask] "Is this even a good time for them to go?".... Now might not be the time to try to add yet another brick to the load.

Ultimately, the key to successful career coaching appeared to be a mix of a strong rapport, knowing when to intervene and when not to, insightful career advice, and technical knowledge.

Delivery of Work Support Services

WASC's secondary goal, after enabling low-wage workers to advance in the labor market and thereby increase their earned income, was to increase household income by increasing the use of work supports for which individuals were eligible. Work supports not only increase income but also ease workers' financial difficulties, allowing them to pursue advancement opportunities.[38] WASC was designed to promote the take-up of work supports in several ways, including:

- Determining the eligibility of WASC customers for different kinds of work supports
- Providing applications for all work supports at one location, outside of the welfare office
- Providing dedicated staff to assist with work support applications and redeterminations
- Simplifying the paperwork required for applications

In all, then, WASC was designed so that working people would have simplified access to work supports. The simple fact of being able to apply for work supports outside a welfare office already made the supports more accessible to many workers, who resisted entering these

[38]The full package of work supports in WASC included food stamps, subsidized child care, public health insurance, the Earned Income Tax Credit, and the Child Tax Credit. Although WASC targeted low-wage workers who were not receiving TANF, each site could decide whether and when to include TANF as part of the work supports package.

offices. Also, as WASC participants, customers had much quicker access to a staff person who could assist them with eligibility screening and the application process. In some welfare offices, a customer can be required to see as many as four different staff people to apply for a range of work supports, often waiting in long lines to see each worker and sometimes having to go to separate offices in different buildings to learn about each support.

In all three WASC sites, the customer came to one location and met with just one or two staff people, who handled everything from explaining WASC, to eligibility screening, to the application, to recertification for different work supports. One of the benefits of having a single staff person or a team of two working closely together to handle applications was that rather than different staff in different offices asking customers to provide the same information about family composition, earnings, and other matters multiple times, WASC coaches could usually complete several applications by referring to the first one. Thus, the customer was asked each question only once. In some sites, the applications for several programs were combined or simplified,[39] but, even without such accommodations, the process of applying for multiple work supports was greatly eased by involving only a single staff person or a team of two.

In most sites, WASC made it even easier for customers to apply for and maintain work supports by offering flexible hours or locations to meet with the career coach or work support specialist. In practices completely different from those of most government-run programs, some sites were open late several evenings or on occasional Saturdays, or had coaches go directly to the customer's home, workplace, or another mutually convenient location.[40]

Finally, one of the most valuable elements of the WASC program for participants was immediate access to child care assistance. There are many more low-wage workers who meet the eligibility requirements for child care assistance than there is funding in most states to provide that subsidy. To be selected for the WASC demonstration, sites had to guarantee child care subsidies for all eligible participants. In San Diego, where there was initially a waiting list

[39]Since the human services agencies in Bridgeport and Dayton had already simplified the work supports application considerably, little or nothing was done to further simplify the application itself; the application process was made simpler through the ability to work with a single coach in WASC, and the waiver of face-to-face meetings simplified the food stamp redetermination process. As noted in Chapter 1, the San Diego WASC program created a single, three-page application for all work supports that simplified the 21 pages of applications that would be needed to apply for food stamps, Medicaid, and child care at the time. Since then, the state has simplified and shortened the work supports application. San Diego also deferred the requirement that a participant be fingerprinted until visiting a county Food Stamp office, and recertification took place annually through the mail, rather than twice a year through an in-person meeting.

[40]A disadvantage for Bridgeport's Academy program was that staff were not permitted to work flexible hours and had limited ability to meet with customers off site.

for child care assistance, WASC moved its eligible customers as close to the top of the list as possible given other program priorities.[41]

Not only did WASC ease access to work supports for low-wage workers, but coaches in WASC had much more discretion than they would have had in a typical human services agency about how they handled their work support cases. In San Diego, for example, one coach reported that if customers were interested in and appeared to be eligible for a work support, the application process could begin right away, enabling the customers to start receiving that work support within one week — a much quicker turnaround time than the county's. The shortened turnaround time was a result of a number of processes that were streamlined for Project EARN: (1) less paperwork; (2) fewer intake workers needed to review the application; and (3) the project's ability to do a one-on-one orientation for the work supports, while county programs required group orientations.

In some cases, the application process was streamlined and a work support was delivered sooner because of a proactive coach. San Diego County, for example, gives an applicant 10 days to bring in necessary documentation after applying for a work support. The coach mentioned above reported that he encouraged his customers to act more quickly; he would tell them what he needed and say, "Bring it tomorrow!" Similarly, coaches also had more leeway when it came to helping customers access work supports or keep them for as long as possible while remaining compliant with work support rules. In Dayton, for example, coaches were willing to accept self-attestations that customers met certain requirements for work supports when it was burdensome for customers to produce documentation. Coaches also encouraged their customers to report income losses right away; coaches would then immediately report the losses so that customers could begin to receive more work supports quickly. In contrast, at county offices, workers might wait to record income losses until the next eligibility review.

Coaches in all three sites have spoken about being more proactive than a typical human services case worker would be with customers to make sure that they return necessary documents — for example, by following up with phone calls, reminder letters, and second phone calls. Focus group participants spoke about how deeply they valued the convenience of getting work supports in one office through a team they knew:

[41]Moving WASC customers to the top of the waiting list in San Diego may have pushed some members of the control group farther back, but there is no way to know to what extent that happened, if at all. The waiting list that existed in San Diego at the start of the demonstration dissipated over time, and, therefore, quick access to child care assistance became less of a special feature of the WASC program there — though alternative funding for child care made it quicker and easier for WASC participants to access the subsidy. Although there was no waiting list for child care assistance in Bridgeport, subsidized child care was not an integral part of the work support package offered there.

> I think it's way easier [handling all the work supports at the WASC unit]. It alleviates a lot of paperwork and a lot of having to go back and forth.
>
> I think it's better for it to be all here because when you go there, there [are] a lot of people and it takes too long. But here, they immediately ask you if you need help to be qualified. So it's better like this…it's faster here.

Challenges Involved in Providing Work Supports

Despite the overall success in streamlining access to work supports, some supports were not delivered as successfully as others. In Bridgeport, for example, an independent nonprofit agency administered child care assistance, and, therefore, the work support specialist at The Academy could only inform customers about the availability of child care assistance, refer them to the other agency to complete an application, and offer to help guide them through the application process, which could be completed via telephone and mail.[42] In San Diego, only TANF recipients could receive immediate access to child care assistance; other customers were put on a waiting list. To remedy this situation, WASC managers in San Diego obtained alternative funding to separate child care assistance from the state child care program.

The WASC demonstration always intended its work support component to be secondary to its emphasis on advancement, and focus group participants and coaches indicated that, for the most part, the program reflected this emphasis. Advancement was the primary draw and remained the primary focus for participants, though participants and coaches reported that most did take up work supports for which they were eligible.

According to coaches, a minority of participants in each site used WASC only as a convenient way to get and maintain their work supports. Particularly in Dayton, but also in the other sites, coaches and managers mentioned that some customers — some of whom had never received work supports before — seemed to become accustomed to having that income, and this became a deterrent to advancement, since the customers knew that work support income would decrease as their earnings increased. But in most cases, when faced with advancement opportunities that would reduce some supports, coaches reported that their customers usually took the opportunity anyway.

A more common story than work supports deterring advancement was that, upon taking a new job at a higher wage or more hours, some participants experienced unanticipated changes in their work supports allocation. Staff were trained to use the Work Advancement Calculator in precisely this situation, so that customers could make informed choices about advancement

[42]The absence of subsidized child care as part of the package of work supports provided by WASC in Bridgeport marked a key way in which the WASC program there did not conform to the intended model.

opportunities and anticipate any reductions in work supports. But even though the calculator allowed coaches to compare work supports receipt at different hours and hourly wage rates, it was rarely used to demonstrate this point. More commonly, it was used to determine initial eligibility for work supports.

Reengaging Customers Whose Participation Had Declined

Sites used a wide variety of strategies to try to reengage customers who were not regularly involved with WASC. San Diego hired a program assistant dedicated to participant outreach, reengagement, and sustaining engagement. She created and maintained contact logs, scheduled appointments, contacted friends and family members to locate participants who had fallen out of contact with WASC staff, updated addresses and phone numbers, and followed up with participants who dropped off. In addition, the site offered gas, grocery, and/or gift cards as incentives for inactive participants to return and continue meeting with their coaches. Bridgeport took advantage of having new coaches by appealing to customers to come in and meet them. San Diego and Bridgeport also linked their reengagement efforts to tax season and the value of the EITC by offering participants the chance to enter a lottery to win a cash prize if they brought in a completed tax return and met with their coaches. The Dayton WASC team attempted to reengage participants primarily by stressing that the project was coming to an end and that the opportunity to receive services was time-limited. At various times in all three sites, coaches and other WASC staff conducted a series of targeted phone calls and mailings notifying participants about a wide variety of work supports, services, and employment and training opportunities offered through WASC or its partner agencies.

Phasing Out of Service Delivery

As customers entered the last year, or last six months, of WASC services, the Dayton and San Diego sites encountered new challenges. A sense of urgency about engaging customers set in as staff at the sites realized they had little time left to make a difference. As noted, intensive efforts were made to reconnect both with customers who had fallen out of contact and with those who needed a last push to achieve a goal, often with the exclamation, "Your time is running out!" Coaches attempted to make contact with customers, find out where they were in their advancement plans, and provide a boost to move them along.

Coaches also found that they had to start preparing customers to continue with their plans in the absence of WASC. In some cases, paperwork was submitted to pay for one last semester of school through WASC, while the coach and customer worked out a plan that would enable the customer to pay the remaining tuition on her own. In other cases, coaches began to work with customers who were still in training programs to encourage them to think about what their job searches would look like once the training was completed. Finally,

coaches prepared customers who were receiving work supports to fulfill obligations related to redeterminations on their own, in their county's human services offices, to reduce future risks that they would lose the supports.

A final phase-out challenge was that, as caseloads declined, managers had to figure out how to cover their staff's time. Some coaches were assigned part time to other projects, diluting the team feeling of the WASC unit. Some coaches who were preparing their customers for life without WASC realized that they, too, were going to have to adjust to going back into the "regular" work support or workforce development agencies from which many of them had come. WASC staff expressed just as much reluctance to return to the "old ways" as did many of their customers. For these staff, the experience of delivering WASC services had been invaluable and would be a difficult act to follow.

Operational Lessons

Among the many components of the WASC program's implementation, certain elements stand out as having been central to operational success. Not all these elements were present at the same time in every site, but the WASC sites' experiences suggest that a convergence of all the following elements could produce the most successful program implementation:

- **Absence of the conflicting demands of recruitment and service delivery.** Managers and staff from all sites agreed that "something needed to give" during the high-pressure period when it was urgent to both recruit customers and start services. Either having additional staff who could focus solely on recruitment while coaches began engaging customers, or having lower caseloads during that time, would have helped sites meet both demands.

- **Sufficient staffing levels and manageable caseload sizes.** A point related to the conflicting demands of recruitment and service delivery is that having sufficient numbers of staff was key to being able to serve all customers well, both during recruitment and after it was over. Compared with the other sites, Bridgeport was continually at a disadvantage because it had a much smaller staff size, even relative to its smaller sample size.[43] Though caseloads in WASC were not to exceed 100 per coach, they sometimes did because of policy environments that could not support this lower-than-usual staff-to-client ratio. But even 100 is too many for the intensive service delivery that the WASC program prescribed, and most WASC coaches

[43]Bridgeport eventually hired a third coach, which brought its staff-to-client ratio more in line with the other two sites.

and managers agreed that caseloads of between 70 and 80 would have been more appropriate.

- **Staff who bring a mix of technical knowledge (of labor market information, training programs, and other relevant skills) and motivational/interpersonal skills to the program.** Observations of coaches with their customers, focus groups with customers, and interviews with coaches revealed that many coaches brought one or the other of motivational and technical skill sets to the program, but it was the rare coach who was able to bring all the relevant skills into the interactions with customers.

- **Staff with specialized workforce development and work support skills who remain specialized but work together as a team in one location.** Managers and staff repeatedly told researchers that staff people should play to their strengths but collaborate to serve customers. In retrospect, some managers felt it was unrealistic and inefficient to expect a single staff person to master all the knowledge and skills needed to provide both workforce development and work support services. Nevertheless, they agreed that, ideally, staff from both backgrounds should learn about each other's roles, support one another, and work together as a team.

- **High-level buy-in.** Collaboration and support from senior management at the workforce development and work support agencies, when it was present, engendered the will and the means to overcome obstacles and create the best environment for the program. In contrast, without senior staff involvement, the programs were more constrained and the breadth of service delivery was more limited.

- **Flexible funding.** Sites that had discretionary funding were able to do one or more of the following: streamline the process of connecting customers to training, provide more funding for training than was available in the absence of the program, provide more funding for supportive services, offer incentives for participation and completion of education or training, and even offer a fundamental work support (child care assistance in San Diego) that would likely have been unavailable to the program without the flexible funding source.

Chapter 4

Participation in the Work Advancement and Support Center Program

This chapter analyzes results from the Work Advancement and Support Center (WASC) 12-Month Survey.[1] It includes a description of the extent and nature of contact between agency staff and customers in the Dayton and San Diego WASC sites;[2] the messages that customers received from the program; and customers' patterns of participation in education, training, or employment activities. These participation indicators are compared for program group members and their control group counterparts in each site, representing the participation "impacts" of WASC — that is, the extent to which WASC increased (had a positive impact on) or decreased (had a negative impact on) the outcomes of program group members relative to control group members. (All references to the program's "increases" or "decreases" throughout the chapter are relative to the control group.) Unless otherwise noted, all impacts discussed in this chapter are statistically significant. Box 4.1 explains the four approaches that the WASC 12-Month Survey took for the purpose of measuring receipt of services or participation in the program.

Summary of Key Findings

In both sites, WASC increased the proportion of participants who said that staff encouraged them to apply for food stamps, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), child care assistance, public health insurance for themselves or their children, and cash assistance. Also, in both sites, WASC increased the extent to which participants reported being encouraged to go to school or get training, get a better job, and focus on long-term career goals. These findings suggest that WASC staff were more proactive with customers in encouraging them to take up work supports and advance in their careers than other program or agency staff were with control group members.

In Dayton, WASC increased the proportion of sample members participating in education or training programs while working. It especially increased participation in college courses and vocational training. The cash incentives provided in Dayton for participation in education or training while working may have contributed to this impact. In San Diego — where the WASC

[1] As discussed in Chapter 2, program impacts differ somewhat between the survey respondent sample in San Diego and the full research sample in that site. The results for San Diego should be interpreted with those differences in mind.

[2] Survey results for Bridgeport sample members are not presented here.

Box 4.1

Measuring Participation in the Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

In order to interpret the results of a random assignment evaluation, it is critical to understand the "dose" of services that each research group receives. In many studies, this is relatively straightforward because the "treatment" is easy to measure (for example, the number of hours of training or the dollar value of incentive payments). In contrast, WASC's services were delivered mostly in one-on-one interactions, during which staff advised or "coached" participants.

MDRC sought to measure the receipt of services in the WASC program using the WASC 12-Month Survey. Because it was administered to both research groups — that is, the WASC program and control group members — the survey could not refer to the WASC program in particular; instead, it contains general questions about the kinds of services that WASC provides, using four main approaches. Each approach has both strengths and limitations, and each one contributes to the overall analysis:

- First, the survey asked how frequently respondents had had contact with staff members from employment or social service agencies (Table 4.1). The questions aimed to elicit responses that were related to WASC (for program group members) and to any similar services (for control group members), but it is difficult to determine whether program group members were referring to WASC when they replied to these questions. For example, contact with a worker who determines food stamp eligibility is likely to be quite different from contact with a WASC coach. Moreover, it may be difficult for respondents to recall the number of such contacts over a one-year period. Still, while the overall levels may be inaccurate, the estimated *impacts* on this measure are reliable, since respondents' perceptions and recall should be the same for members of both research groups.
- Second, the survey asked whether respondents received assistance in a variety of specific areas and where they received this assistance (Table 4.2). Some of these specific types of assistance — such as help "looking for a job while employed" — are central to WASC. These questions are fairly straightforward, but they do not provide any information about the *amount* or *quality* of service that was received in each area.
- Third, the survey asked what kinds of messages respondents received from any program staff — in other words, ways in which staff encouraged them to take action related to retention and advancement (Table 4.3). These questions get at the core of WASC service delivery — that is, whether WASC staff were more likely than their control group counterparts to be proactive in encouraging customers to advance.
- Fourth, the survey asked whether respondents participated in employment-related services such as individual job search or education and training classes, and how many weeks they participated (Table 4.4). These services are relatively easy to measure, but they vary as far as how central they are to the WASC model: Job search and other employment-related activities, such as on-the-job training, were less relevant for WASC, while participation in education and training turned out to be key WASC activities.

advancement message focused more than it did in Dayton on encouraging participants to advance at their current jobs by increasing work hours, negotiating pay raises, and getting a promotion — there was an increase in the proportion of participants who reported being encouraged to pursue these goals. In contrast, in Dayton — where more participants reported being in education or training programs at baseline (that is, at the time of random assignment) and where, according to coaches, more knew they wanted a better job and needed training to get it — there was no impact on the extent to which they reported being encouraged to advance in their current jobs.

Extent and Nature of Contact Between Coaches and Participants

As a program intended to provide intensive career coaching to its participants, WASC was expected to increase the frequency, relative to the control group, of the interactions that took place between coaches and participants. Specifically, the WASC model called for coaches to interact with at least 75 percent of their customers once every 30 days and to be proactive in reaching out to them. WASC coaches were also expected to provide more help with retention, advancement, and the receipt of work supports than participants would have received in the absence of the program. For the most part, WASC appears to have met these expectations.

- **WASC group members were more likely to have spoken with a career coach in the four weeks prior to the survey interview than control group members were likely to have spoken with case managers or staff from other programs or agencies that were available in the community.**

Table 4.1 shows that WASC increased the percentage of respondents who interacted with a case manager or agency staff (that is, a career coach in WASC) during the four weeks prior to the survey interview by 25 percentage points in Dayton and by 22.8 percentage points in San Diego above the control group averages of 17.2 percent and 13.8 percent, respectively. Given that coaches were expected to have regular contact with at least 75 percent of their customers, the percentage of WASC respondents who reported any contact was lower than expected — though still significantly more than the contact that control group members had with their case managers.

Intervention with employers was not a core element of the WASC program but, rather, was at the discretion of the coaches, so no effects were expected here. The percentages of both program and control group respondents who reported that staff spoke to their employer were low, and there was no discernible pattern of effects.

The Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

Table 4.1

Year 1, Impacts on Contacts with Program Staff

Dayton and San Diego

Outcome (%)	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Contact with any staff/case manager								
Talked with staff/case manager in past four weeks	42.2	17.2	25.0 ***	0.000	36.6	13.8	22.8 ***	0.000
Staff/case manager talked with respondent's employer								
Never	78.4	74.0	4.5	0.256	74.2	79.5	-5.4	0.204
Once or twice	10.6	17.9	-7.3 **	0.023	12.7	11.7	1.0	0.762
More than twice	4.4	5.6	-1.2	0.539	5.8	5.9	-0.1	0.951
Don't know if the case manager talked with an employer	6.6	2.5	4.0 **	0.036	7.4	2.8	4.5 **	0.041
Sample size (total = 929)	254	248			219	208		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from responses to the WASC 12-Month Survey.

NOTE: Sample sizes vary because of missing values.
A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

- **In nearly every area in which a participant could have reported receiving help from a career coach (in WASC) or from a case manager or other program or agency staff (for the control group) — including help with retention and advancement, public benefits, job preparation, and supportive services — WASC increased the proportion of individuals who reported receiving such help either in Dayton or in San Diego, or, in some cases, in both sites.**

Nearly 81 percent (80.7) of WASC respondents in Dayton and more than 89 percent (89.2) in San Diego reported receiving any help with retention, advancement, work supports, or other supportive services. (See Table 4.2.) By comparison, 51.7 percent of the control group in Dayton and 51.5 percent in San Diego reported that they received any help. The impacts on receiving any help were larger than those for help with any individual service, suggesting that WASC touched many people and provided them with at least one or two individual services. Additionally, some proportion of WASC participants were likely ineligible for certain work supports, which could explain — at least in part — the relatively low proportions reporting that they received help with some work supports. The relatively high proportion of control group members who reported receiving any help (more than 51 percent in both sites) suggests that this was a highly motivated sample operating in a relatively service-rich environment, and that even control group members made a substantial effort to receive services.

As intended, WASC appears to have provided more help to participants with retention and advancement services and job preparation than they would have received in the absence of the program, with Dayton producing impacts on help with retention and advancement and San Diego producing impacts on help with job preparation. Nearly 54 percent (53.7) of WASC respondents in Dayton and just over 62 percent (62.1) in San Diego reported receiving help with retention and advancement or with job preparation — an increase of 22.0 and 22.7 percentage points, respectively, over control group levels. WASC respondents in Dayton and San Diego were also more likely than the control group to have reported receiving help getting a career assessment.

Help with job preparation includes help with enrolling in job readiness or training classes, finding a job while working, finding a job while unemployed, or help with finding clothes, tools, or supplies for work. Since WASC is a post-employment program (that is, it provides services to individuals who were employed at study entry), it is likely that help with job preparation was related to a participant either changing jobs in order to advance or obtaining a new job after losing employment, but any of the activities listed above could apply. WASC increased the likelihood that people would get help with job preparation in both sites, but to a greater extent in San Diego than in Dayton. Most of the impact in Dayton was associated with

The Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

Table 4.2

Year 1, Impacts on Areas in Which Survey Respondents Received Help

Dayton and San Diego

Outcome (%)	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Received any help	80.7	51.7	28.9 ***	0.000	89.2	51.5	37.7 ***	0.000
Received help with retention/advancement or with job preparation	53.7	31.7	22.0 ***	0.000	62.1	39.4	22.7 ***	0.000
Received help with retention/advancement	44.2	18.7	25.5 ***	0.000	23.7	17.6	6.1	0.135
Career assessment	40.9	16.8	24.2 ***	0.000	22.2	12.8	9.4 **	0.014
Dealing with problems on the job	9.3	6.2	3.0	0.220	6.9	7.8	-0.9	0.724
Received help with job preparation	33.6	24.2	9.3 **	0.022	57.6	36.2	21.4 ***	0.000
Enrolling in job readiness or training classes	18.9	15.0	3.9	0.255	20.8	13.7	7.0 *	0.062
Looking for a job while employed	14.9	11.9	3.0	0.335	35.5	15.5	20.0 ***	0.000
Looking for a job while unemployed	13.1	13.4	-0.3	0.925	32.7	20.6	12.0 ***	0.007
Finding clothes, tools, or supplies for work	14.7	8.8	5.9 **	0.040	19.1	7.9	11.2 ***	0.001
Received help with public benefits	47.8	31.4	16.5 ***	0.000	37.5	19.2	18.3 ***	0.000
Getting Medicaid for self	31.8	15.4	16.5 ***	0.000	21.4	11.1	10.3 ***	0.004
Among those not covered at time of enrollment	23.1	10.0	13.0 ***	0.001	18.7	10.7	8.0 *	0.053
Getting Medicaid for child	46.3	32.3	14.0 **	0.017	27.7	14.2	13.5 ***	0.007
Among those not covered at time of enrollment[a]	27.8	28.1	-0.3	0.976	24.6	13.9	10.7	0.156
Getting food stamps	36.1	25.3	10.8 ***	0.007	23.2	9.2	14.1 ***	0.000
Among those eligible and not covered at time of enrollment	34.8	20.3	14.5 **	0.022	27.0	7.8	19.2 ***	0.000
Received help with support services	35.0	13.4	21.6 ***	0.000	51.4	14.1	37.3 ***	0.000
Finding child care provider or getting referrals for child care[b]	22.0	14.2	7.8	0.128	31.9	14.9	17.0 ***	0.006
Finding or paying for transportation	28.3	9.4	18.9 ***	0.000	42.4	8.7	33.7 ***	0.000
Received help handling a financial emergency	18.5	9.7	8.8 ***	0.005	7.6	4.5	3.1	0.200

(continued)

Table 4.2 (continued)

Outcome	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Agencies where clients received the most help[c]								
Dayton site								
Move Up/Career Advancement Unit (WASC)	63.1	11.2	51.9 ***	0.000	--	--	--	--
The Job Center (One-Stop Center)	32.3	51.1	-18.8 ***	0.000	--	--	--	--
Community college	9.2	18.3	-9.1 ***	0.003	--	--	--	--
Montgomery County Jobs and Family Services	7.0	12.0	-5.0 *	0.064	--	--	--	--
The Urban League	2.2	4.7	-2.5	0.122	--	--	--	--
Community or neighborhood organization	1.6	1.2	0.4	0.686	--	--	--	--
Other	0.6	3.9	-3.3 **	0.015	--	--	--	--
San Diego site								
Project EARN (WASC)	--	--	--	--	80.8	31.1	49.7 ***	0.000
South County Career Center (One-Stop Center)	--	--	--	--	15.8	31.8	-16.0 ***	0.000
Community college	--	--	--	--	4.8	10.7	-5.9 **	0.023
City or county agency	--	--	--	--	1.1	3.8	-2.7 *	0.080
Family resource center, welfare, or food stamp agency	--	--	--	--	4.6	14.5	-9.9 ***	0.000
Regional occupational program	--	--	--	--	3.8	7.4	-3.7	0.109
Other	--	--	--	--	1.2	8.7	-7.5 ***	0.000
Sample size (total = 929)	254	248			219	208		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from responses to the WASC 12-Month Survey and Baseline Information Form.

NOTES: Sample sizes vary because of missing values.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]Among sample members with at least one child at time of random assignment.

[b]Among sample members with at least one child age 11 years or younger at time of random assignment.

[c]Percentages may add up to more than 100 because respondents could provide multiple responses. WASC agencies and One-Stop Centers noted in parentheses.

an increase in the help that people got finding clothes, tools, or supplies for work. In San Diego, increases in looking for a job contributed most to this overall impact, especially among those who were working (35.5 percent of WASC respondents reported receiving this help, compared with 15.5 percent of the control group), but there was also a relatively large increase in the percentage looking for a job while unemployed.

The next panel in Table 4.2 considers the help that sample members received with work supports ("Received help with public benefits"), from either WASC coaches (for the WASC group) or, presumably, human services agency staff (for the control group); the panel presents estimates for the full sample and for the group not receiving benefits at the time of enrollment. WASC increased the percentage of respondents who reported receiving help with public benefits (or what are generally referred to as "work supports" in this report), including Medicaid for themselves and their children and food stamps. This was expected, since eased access to work supports was one of the central components of the WASC model. Nearly 48 percent (47.8) of WASC respondents in Dayton and 37.5 percent in San Diego reported receiving help with public benefits — an increase over the control group of 16.5 and 18.3 percentage points, respectively.

A higher proportion of WASC than control group members in both sites also reported receiving help specifically with getting Medicaid for their children and help with obtaining food stamps. Generally, the proportions receiving help with public benefits among those who were not covered at the time of enrollment are lower than the proportions for the total group of respondents, possibly because some of those who were not covered at the time of enrollment were not eligible for those benefits.

WASC respondents in both Dayton and San Diego were more likely than their control group counterparts to have reported receiving help with supportive services — by 21.6 and 37.3 percentage points, respectively. In San Diego, this impact represented increases in helping people find or pay for transportation or child care; in Dayton, it represented increases in transportation help only. WASC in Dayton also led to an increase in the proportion of people reporting that they received help with a financial emergency; there was no significant difference on this measure in San Diego. The agencies that respondents named as the places where they received help reflect clearly that WASC participants largely received most of their help from the WASC units and some additional help from other agencies available in the community, while the control group members reported receiving most help from the One-Stop Career Centers and other community agencies.[3]

[3]A relatively large proportion of control group members in San Diego reported receiving help from the WASC unit (31.1 percent), which may reflect control group respondents' memories of going to the WASC unit for random assignment and getting "assistance" from the unit in the form of a referral to the One-Stop.

Messages Received

WASC's model encouraged "proactive" coaching; in other words, coaches were expected to actively encourage their customers to take steps toward advancement and income improvement. The type of case management that control group members were likely to find at the One-Stop or other community agencies was not typically proactive, but rather was more reactive to clients' initiative. Therefore, WASC was expected to have an impact on the proportion of the WASC group members, relative to their control group counterparts, who reported getting encouragement to advance or to apply for work supports. In nearly all ways measured, WASC met this expectation.

Messages Relating to Retention and Advancement

- **WASC increased the percentage of respondents who reported being encouraged to go to school or get training by 19.9 percentage points in Dayton and 20.6 percentage points in San Diego. In San Diego, WASC respondents were also more likely to report that they were encouraged to negotiate a pay raise or promotion or to increase their hours of work.**

In Dayton, WASC had an impact on the proportion of survey respondents reporting that program staff encouraged them to go to school or get training, get a better job, and focus on long-term career goals. Nearly 42 percent (41.7) of WASC survey respondents reported being encouraged to go to school or get training, compared with 21.8 percent of the control group — an increase of 19.9 percentage points. Thirty-five percent of the sample in Dayton was already enrolled in education or training at the time of random assignment, and qualitative research indicated that a disproportionately large number of WASC participants in Dayton were interested in pursuing education or training when they enrolled, especially when compared with San Diego. As is reported later in this chapter, a significantly large percentage of WASC participants in Dayton reported participating in education or training programs. The combination of a motivated group of individuals and the incentives offered in Dayton for participation in training likely contributed to this impact.

WASC had no impact in Dayton on the proportion of respondents who reported that they received encouragement to increase their work hours, get a pay raise, negotiate better terms in the job, get a promotion, or deal with personal problems that make it hard to keep a job. Rather, as shown in Table 4.3, most of the effects in Dayton centered on changing jobs: 20.4 percent of WASC respondents in Dayton reported being encouraged by program staff to get a better job, compared with 14.2 percent of the control group. This impact appears to reflect the composition of the population of WASC participants in Dayton — a highly motivated group of participants who were particularly interested in leaving their jobs and pursuing education and training to move into a new career.

The Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

Table 4.3

Year 1, Impacts on Messages from Program Staff Relating to Retention and Advancement

Dayton and San Diego

Outcome (%)	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Messages received from any program staff while participants were working[a]								
Encouraged participants to go to school or to get training	41.7	21.8	19.9 ***	0.000	44.3	23.7	20.6 ***	0.000
Encouraged participants to get a better job	20.4	14.2	6.2 *	0.069	37.0	12.8	24.2 ***	0.000
Encouraged participants to focus on long-term career goals	37.4	20.9	16.5 ***	0.000	39.4	19.8	19.6 ***	0.000
Provided participants with specific job leads	17.1	13.6	3.6	0.276	31.3	16.6	14.7 ***	0.000
Encouraged participants to increase work hours	16.6	12.5	4.0	0.216	20.3	10.3	10.0 ***	0.005
Encouraged participants to negotiate pay raise	7.8	4.3	3.5	0.112	16.8	9.1	7.7 **	0.023
Encouraged participants to negotiate better terms in job	11.3	7.9	3.3	0.219	13.4	12.3	1.1	0.747
Encouraged participants to pursue a promotion	10.4	9.4	1.0	0.714	20.1	11.0	9.1 **	0.011
Helped participants deal with personal problems that make it hard to keep a job	13.4	17.5	-4.1	0.224	25.6	14.8	10.7 ***	0.008
Available to meet at a convenient time	42.1	29.9	12.2 ***	0.006	48.2	28.4	19.9 ***	0.000
Available to meet at a convenient place	32.4	26.0	6.4	0.129	48.8	27.3	21.5 ***	0.000

(continued)

Table 4.3 (continued)

Outcome (%)	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Helped participants understand how changes in earnings would affect eligibility for certain benefits	33.8	23.5	10.2 **	0.011	38.5	18.7	19.8 ***	0.000
Staff helped participants work out how much better off they would be if they increased hours worked or moved to new job	22.5	13.5	9.0 **	0.010	33.7	15.4	18.2 ***	0.000
Messages received from any program staff relating to government benefits								
Staff encouraged participants to think about applying for the following benefits since random assignment[a, b]								
Food stamps	35.9	18.1	17.8 ***	0.000	34.6	11.4	23.2 ***	0.000
Earned Income Tax Credit	40.3	15.9	24.5 ***	0.000	41.2	13.5	27.7 ***	0.000
Child care[c]	49.9	25.1	24.8 ***	0.000	51.3	19.8	31.5 ***	0.000
Health insurance for self or children	37.5	27.0	10.5 **	0.010	34.4	16.8	17.6 ***	0.000
Cash assistance[d]	15.8	7.2	8.6 ***	0.003	21.0	8.9	12.2 ***	0.001
Unemployment insurance	5.6	6.7	-1.1	0.620	14.6	9.7	4.9	0.125
Child support[c]	29.9	17.6	12.3 **	0.028	15.8	10.8	4.9	0.328
Sample size (total = 929)	254	248			219	208		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from responses to the WASC 12-Month Survey and Baseline Information Form.

NOTES: Sample sizes vary because of missing values.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]Percentages may add up to more than 100 percent because respondents could provide multiple responses.

[b]Responses shown only for those who responded "agree a lot" to the statement.

[c]Among sample members with at least one child age 11 years or younger at time of random assignment.

[d]Includes Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Ohio Works First, CalWORKS (California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids), and so on.

In San Diego, in contrast, WASC increased the receipt of a wider variety of types of encouragement, with the exception of negotiating better terms in a current job. For example, more WASC respondents (44.3 percent) than members of the control group (23.7 percent) reported being encouraged by program staff to go to school or get training — an increase of 20.6 percentage points. The WASC group in San Diego was also more likely to report being encouraged to get a better job and to focus on long-term career goals.

San Diego also had positive impacts on messages related to retention and advancement at one's current job — a contrast with Dayton. For example, in San Diego, WASC respondents were more likely to be encouraged by program staff to increase work hours than control group respondents (20.3 percent of WASC respondents versus 10.3 percent of control group respondents). WASC also increased the percentage of WASC respondents in San Diego who were encouraged to negotiate a pay raise and to get a promotion.

One of the expectations for the WASC program was that it would provide services in a way that was more convenient for working people. In both Dayton and San Diego, WASC survey respondents were more likely than their control group counterparts to report that program staff were available to meet with them at a convenient time.

As reported in Chapter 3, focus groups with WASC participants, as well as interviews with staff, suggested that the Work Advancement Calculator — a special tool designed to provide information about how earnings and work supports interact and to demonstrate how advancement can increase total income — was not used in any of the sites as often as intended. Moreover, a substantial number of focus group participants related that they felt they were not informed well enough about changes in the receipt of work supports that would result from changes in earnings. Results from the survey indicate that WASC did increase the proportion of WASC respondents reporting that program staff helped them understand how changes in earnings would affect eligibility for certain benefits. Similarly, WASC increased the percentage of respondents from both sites reporting that program staff helped them work out how much better off they would be if they increased the number of hours they worked or moved to a new job. Given the reportedly infrequent use of the Work Advancement Calculator, it is possible that this type of information was delivered in an alternative way, that the calculator was used more than was reported by staff or focus group members, or that while this information was not conveyed frequently, it was still more information than control group members received.

Messages Relating to Work Supports

- **WASC nearly doubled the proportion of respondents in Dayton and tripled the proportion of respondents in San Diego who were encouraged to apply for food stamps in these two sites. Similar patterns were**

seen for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), child care subsidy, and health insurance for one's self or one's child.

As presented in the last panel of Table 4.3, 35.9 percent of WASC respondents in Dayton (versus 18.1 percent of the control group) and 34.6 percent in San Diego (versus 11.4 percent of the control group) reported being encouraged to apply for food stamps — an increase of 17.8 and 23.2 percentage points, respectively. The largest impacts were on child care assistance, with impacts of 24.8 percentage points in Dayton and 31.5 percentage points in San Diego. WASC also had an impact in both sites on staff encouraging respondents to apply for the EITC and for health insurance for themselves or their children. Since cash assistance was not a core component of the WASC work support package, it is somewhat surprising that WASC also had an impact in both sites on staff encouraging respondents to apply for cash assistance, though the percentage who reported receiving this help was smaller relative to the other work supports. Given the impacts on encouragement to apply for work supports, impacts on actual take-up rates for work supports would be expected.

Participation in Job Search, Education, and Training

Table 4.4 presents impacts on participation in job search, education, training, and related activities. Control group levels of participation were very high, and they were operating in a relatively service-rich environment, so the WASC program had a high bar to surpass in order to produce impacts for program participants. Perhaps the most surprising participation finding is the differences between Dayton and San Diego.

- **Dayton's WASC respondents reported significantly more participation than the control group respondents in education and training activities — particularly in college courses and vocational training.**

In Dayton, 88.5 percent of WASC respondents compared with 76.2 percent of the control group reported participating in any employment or training-related activity — including individual job search, English as a Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED), high school, vocational training, college courses, and on-the-job training. Though 76.2 percent was a high participation rate for the control group, the difference of 12.3 percentage points between the WASC and control groups was still statistically significant. The difference is even larger for education and training activities: 76.6 percent of WASC respondents and 53.7 percent of control group respondents reported participating — an increase of 22.9 percentage points. Dayton's WASC respondents were also more likely than their control group counterparts to obtain a license, certificate, or degree (by 8.2 percentage points); to participate in education or training activities while working (by 19.5 percentage points); and to spend more weeks in their training programs (by an average of 6.8 more weeks).

The Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

Table 4.4

Year 1, Impacts on Participation in Job Search, Education, Training, and Other Activities

Dayton and San Diego

Outcome	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Ever participated in any activity[a] (%)	88.5	76.2	12.3 ***	0.000	71.1	65.3	5.9	0.193
Participated in any employment-related activity[b] (%)	48.1	43.5	4.6	0.306	50.9	40.1	10.9 **	0.024
Ever participated in individual job search (%)	38.3	32.5	5.8	0.180	42.7	32.2	10.5 **	0.027
For one week	*15.8*	*15.7*	--	--	*12.0*	*17.0*	--	--
For two weeks	*13.0*	*2.6*	--	--	*17.4*	*12.5*	--	--
For three weeks	*14.5*	*21.1*	--	--	*9.9*	*9.2*	--	--
For four weeks or more	*56.7*	*60.6*	--	--	*60.7*	*61.2*	--	--
Participated in an education/training activity (%)	76.6	53.7	22.9 ***	0.000	44.6	44.3	0.3	0.953
ABE/GED/HS	6.7	5.6	1.1	0.589	9.1	9.2	0.0	0.991
ESL	3.1	0.4	2.7 **	0.024	11.2	11.8	-0.6	0.847
College courses	56.2	39.2	17.0 ***	0.000	18.9	20.3	-1.4	0.670
Vocational training	32.8	19.8	13.1 ***	0.001	18.8	14.8	4.0	0.282
On-the-job training	17.6	17.9	-0.2	0.945	13.6	10.2	3.4	0.284
Obtained a license, certificate, or degree (%)	23.4	15.2	8.2 **	0.022	12.3	8.5	3.8	0.208
License or certificate[c]	18.1	11.3	6.8 **	0.034	10.5	5.4	5.1 *	0.054
Any degree or diploma[d]	7.3	5.1	2.2	0.307	2.5	4.6	-2.1	0.258

(continued)

Table 4.4 (continued)

Outcome	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Ever participated in an employment or education activity while working (%)	71.4	51.9	19.5 ***	0.000	48.7	42.4	6.3	0.181
Average number of weeks participating in education/training activities	24.3	17.5	6.8 ***	0.002	13.9	11.9	2.0	0.333
Average number of weeks participating in								
Individual job search [e]	*9.0*	*11.7*	--	--	*12.6*	*11.4*	--	--
Education/training activities [f]	*32.5*	*32.3*	--	--	*32.0*	*26.7*	--	--
Sample size (total = 929)	254	248			219	208		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from responses to the WASC 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: Sample sizes vary because of missing values. Italicized measures indicate that they are nonexperimental; thus, statistical tests were not performed, so the relevant cells are blank. All measures refer to participation in activities since the time of random assignment.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

ABE = Adult Basic Education certificate. GED = General Educational Development certificate. HS = high school diploma. ESL = English as a Second Language.

[a]"Any activity" includes individual job search, ESL, ABE/GED/high school, vocational training, college courses, and on-the-job training.

[b]Employment-related activities include independent job search activities and on-the-job training.

[c]Includes trade license and training certificate.

[d]Includes GED certificate, high school diploma, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, and graduate degree.

[e]Among sample members who participated in individual job search activities.

[f]Among sample members who participated in education/training activities.

Impacts on participation in education and training were different for different kinds of activities. The largest impact in Dayton was on participation in college courses — 56.2 percent for the WASC group compared with 39.2 percent for the control group. WASC also increased participation in vocational training and program completion — specifically, obtaining a license or certificate — which could be a result of the use of financial incentives for program completion in Dayton. Finally, for WASC participants, most of this activity was happening while they were working: 71.4 percent of WASC respondents reported participating in employment or education activities while working, while 51.9 percent of control group respondents reported this activity — an increase of 19.5 percentage points.

- **In San Diego, WASC respondents reported significantly more participation, relative to their control group counterparts, in only two activities: participation in any employment-related activity, which includes independent job search activities and on-the-job training (by 10.9 percentage points), and specifically in individual job search (by 10.5 percentage points).**

Given that there was a positive impact in San Diego on the proportion of respondents who reported that they were encouraged to go to school or to get training, impacts on levels of participation in these activities in San Diego are surprisingly absent. It is possible that the challenge of using the Workforce Investment Act funding stream in San Diego to fund training for WASC's employed population, described in Chapter 3, contributed to the lack of participation in education and training there.

Summary

Chapter 3 found that the WASC program was largely implemented as designed, and the participation data support that finding — specifically, WASC participants reported receiving the encouragement and assistance that the program was expected to deliver. WASC had large impacts in both Dayton and San Diego on the proportion of participants who reported being encouraged to apply for food stamps, subsidized child care, the EITC, and health care, and the program produced a fairly large increase in the provision of help with getting these work supports in both sites.

WASC offered encouragement to advance in different ways: In both sites, WASC participants were more likely than their control group counterparts to report that program staff encouraged them to go to school or to get training, and San Diego participants were also more likely to report that they were encouraged to advance at their current jobs. WASC's impacts on

participation in these activities varied by site: Dayton's WASC group members were significantly more likely to participate in education and training activities — especially college courses and vocational training — than their control group counterparts; in contrast, the program did not have an impact on participation in these activities in San Diego. The next chapter examines whether the increased help and encouragement that WASC provided resulted in increased benefit receipt, employment, and earnings.

Chapter 5

Impacts on Work Supports and Advancement

This chapter analyzes administrative records and survey data to determine whether the Work Advancement and Support Center (WASC) programs in Dayton and San Diego produced short-term impacts on work supports and advancement. The chapter covers impacts on work supports first, as this is where impacts should be observed in the short run, and then impacts on employment and earnings, which might take longer to emerge than one year (the duration of the follow-up period covered in this report), especially for individuals in education or training. The discussion of impacts on employment and earnings is therefore more preliminary than that of the impacts on work supports.

The key findings are as follows:

- WASC increased the percentage receiving food stamps by 5.5 percentage points above the control group averages in both Dayton and San Diego over year 1. This impact represents a 23 percent increase in receipt of food stamps in San Diego, given its relatively low receipt rates, and a 10 percent increase in Dayton. Individuals in the WASC group also received food stamps for more months, on average, in both sites. As a result, the average amount (that is, the total dollar value) of food stamps received over the one-year follow-up period was $126 higher for the WASC group in Dayton and $135 higher for the WASC group in San Diego, compared with the control group in each site.

- In addition, the percentage who had publicly funded health care coverage for their dependent children increased for WASC participants in Dayton and San Diego, but those effects were partly offset by a decrease in the use of privately funded health care coverage. The WASC program in San Diego, on the other hand, also increased the percentage of adults with publicly funded health care coverage for themselves — where the effect on adults with any health coverage (that is, public or private) was similar in size but just missed statistical significance — and parents with health care coverage for both themselves and their dependent children. Neither program increased the receipt of other work supports, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and subsidized child care, but the San Diego program did increase the use of child care more generally.

- WASC generated no impacts on employment or earnings over year 1 in Dayton, but decreased the percentage employed in all four quarters of year 1 by

6.5 percentage points in San Diego. Although not statistically significant, individuals in the WASC group also had lower earnings than those in the control group in San Diego. A longer-term follow-up and a more comprehensive analysis are needed to see whether these trends prevail over time and determine what may have caused them. One preliminary hypothesis is that the increase in work supports may have allowed some individuals to work part time, to retain a job that was not covered by the unemployment insurance (UI) system for a longer period, or, if unemployed, to take more time to reenter the labor market.

Impacts on Work Supports

This section describes the impacts of WASC on the use of available work supports such as food stamps, publicly funded health care insurance, federal EITC, and subsidized child care. An impact of WASC is defined as an increase or decrease in the receipt of a work support, relative to the control group average, over time. Thus, the control group average represents the benchmark against which the WASC programs in Dayton and San Diego were tested. Some control group outcomes are described in the text to illustrate what happens when low-wage workers rely mostly on their own initiative to take up and receive work supports. Unless otherwise noted, all impacts discussed in the text are statistically significant.

The administrative records of food stamp receipt cover one year after the time of random assignment for all study participants included in this report. The survey findings contribute information on receipt of work supports for a subset of study participants. As noted earlier, impacts for the survey sample in San Diego differ from impacts for the full sample for some outcomes, largely because of cohort differences between the two samples.[1] About 80 percent of the report sample was enrolled during the months of study intake from which the fielded (that is, targeted) survey sample was selected. Thus, although the survey results do not generalize to the full sample, they do generalize to the majority of the sample. Results using the survey data should be interpreted with this caveat in mind.

As described in Chapter 3, by offering easier access, better outreach, coordinated service delivery, simplified eligibility, and application assistance, WASC has attempted to counter some of the potential reasons that eligible program group members might give for not using available work supports. And, as noted in Chapter 4, more respondents in the WASC group than in the control group were encouraged by staff to apply for and/or received help getting

[1]The survey response analysis is presented in Appendixes B and C.

financial work supports. Thus, at least over the short term, there appears to be a basis for an increase in the use of work supports.

Food Stamps

As noted in Chapter 1, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture has encouraged and funded efforts by states to help families participate in Food Stamp programs.[2] Although these practices have not been formally evaluated, they have likely contributed to the recent increase in participation among eligible families and among the working poor. Between 2003 and 2005, for example, the nationwide participation rates among low-income working families increased from 48 percent to 57 percent.[3] The fraction of eligible low-income working families receiving food stamps, however, varies considerably across states. In 2005, California ranked relatively low, at 34 percent, while Ohio ranked above the national average, at 63 percent.[4]

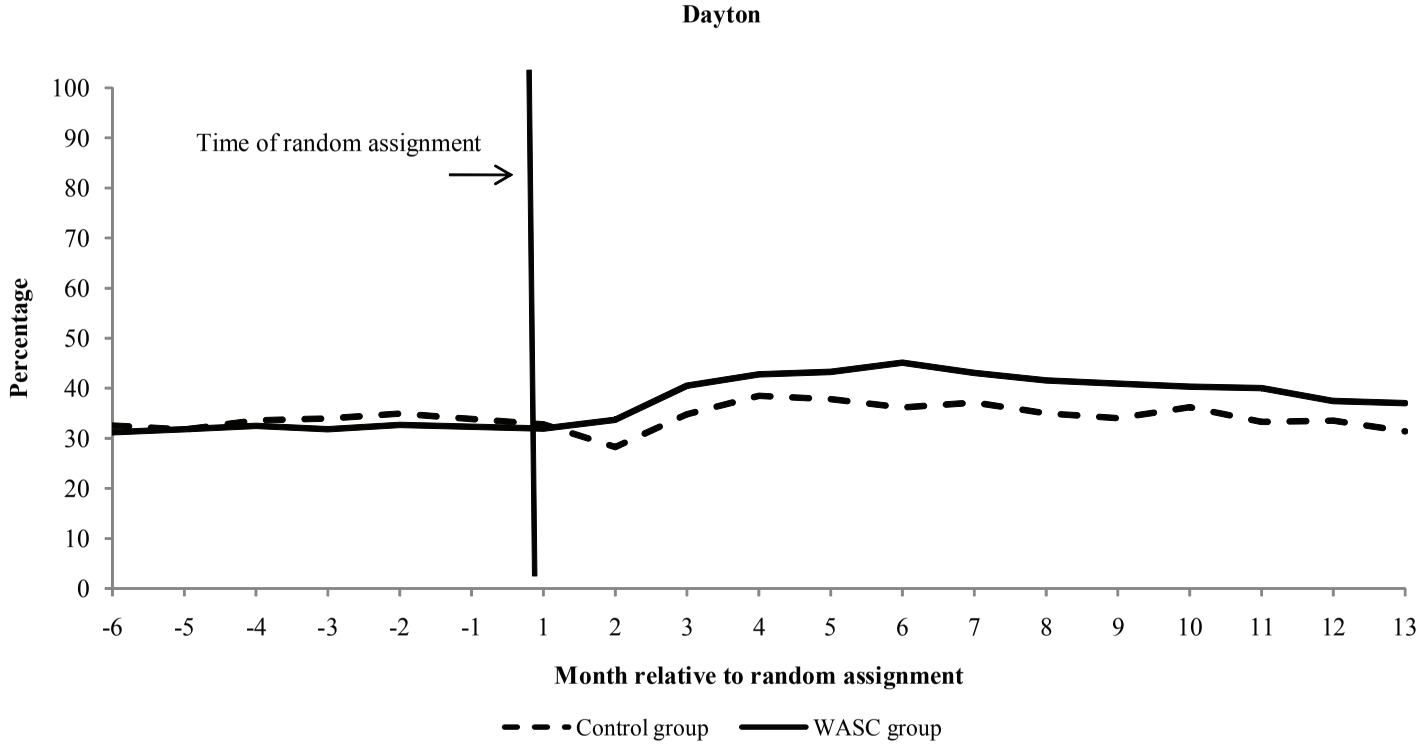
An increase in food stamp participation rates over time and variation across states are also seen in the WASC sites. Figure 5.1 shows food stamp receipt rates by month relative to each WASC study participant's time of random assignment and covers six months prior to random assignment (shown as months –6 through –1), month of random assignment (shown as month 1), and 12 months after random assignment (shown as months 2 through 13). These estimates are calculated using the full research sample, including some individuals who may have been ineligible to receive food stamps during the months in question; eligible individuals who were not receiving food stamps and those who were ineligible are otherwise included as zero values. During the two years prior to random assignment (only the six most recent months are shown in Figure 5.1), the percentage of individuals in the control group receiving food stamps, shown by the dotted line, increased from about 24 percent to 33 percent in Dayton and from about 5 percent to 16 percent in San Diego. Thus, the benchmark that WASC must improve upon appears to have increased over time in both sites. The trend among individuals in the WASC groups, shown by the solid line, was almost identical to that of their respective control groups in the months prior to random assignment, but was higher in the 12 months after the month of random assignment. Impacts for the 12 months after the month of random assignment are the focus of this analysis.

[2]Wolkwitz (2008).
[3]Cunnyngham, Castner, and Schirm (2007).
[4]Cunnyngham, Castner, and Schirm (2007).

Figure 5.1

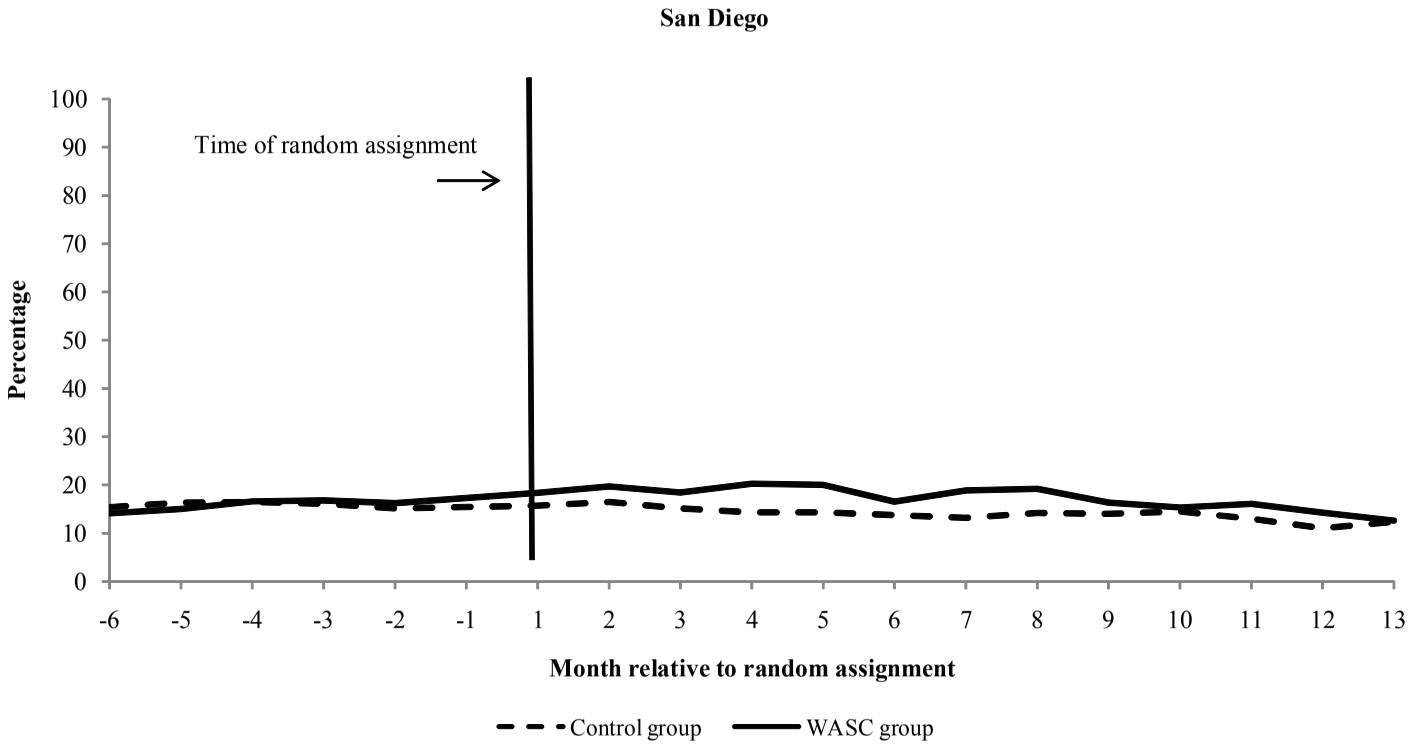
Percentage of WASC Group and Control Group Members Receiving Food Stamps, by Month Relative to Random Assignment

Dayton and San Diego



(continued)

Figure 5.1 (continued)



SOURCES: MDRC calculations from administrative records from Dayton and San Diego.

NOTE: Months -6 through -1 are prior to random assignment; month 1 is the month of random assignment; and months 2 through 13 are after random assignment.

- **WASC increased food stamp receipt (that is, the percentage ever receiving food stamps) above the control group level during the 12-month follow-up period by 5.5 percentage points (10 percent) in Dayton and by 5.5 percentage points (23 percent) in San Diego. Individuals in the WASC group, on average, received food stamps for more months in both Dayton and San Diego, compared with the control groups.**

Table 5.1 summarizes the impacts for the research sample over a full year after the month of random assignment. The first panel in Table 5.1 presents measures of food stamp receipt over the first year of follow-up for the research sample in Dayton and San Diego. As shown, WASC increased the percentage of individuals in both sites who ever received food stamps over year 1 by 5.5 percentage points — that is, above the control group average of 53.9 percent in Dayton and above the control group average of 24.1 percent in San Diego. This impact represents a 23 percent increase in receipt in San Diego, given its relatively low receipt rates, and a 10 percent increase in Dayton. Individuals in the WASC group also received food stamps for more months in both sites. WASC increased the number of months in which food stamps were received by 0.7 month (16 percent) above the control group average of 4.1 months in Dayton, and by 0.4 month (24 percent) above the control group average of 1.6 months in San Diego. While the increase in months of food stamp receipt was almost entirely due to the increase among those who ever received food stamps in San Diego, about half of the increase in Dayton occurred because those who were receiving food stamps got the benefit for more months.

Recall, however, that only approximately 75 percent of all individuals in the report sample appeared to be eligible to participate in the Dayton and San Diego Food Stamp programs at the time of random assignment. At that point in time, the study participants with a household income of 130 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) or less were defined as eligible. Other criteria for eligibility, however, do apply — such as the amount of household assets — and might have restricted a somewhat larger percentage of study participants from taking up food stamps. Still, while the report sample is fairly close to the originally envisioned target sample for WASC (see discussion in Chapter 1), it is reasonable to wonder whether the impacts among individuals who appeared to be eligible for food stamps differed from the impacts among those who appeared to be ineligible — that is, individuals with a household income between 130 percent and 200 percent of the FPL at the time of random assignment.

The second panel of Table 5.1 presents measures of food stamp receipt over year 1 among study participants who were considered to be eligible for food stamps according to their reported household income at the time of random assignment. As shown, eligible individuals in the Dayton WASC group received food stamps for an average of 0.9 more month than their eligible counterparts in the control group. The difference between this impact among individuals in the eligible group and those in the ineligible group is statistically significant (not shown),

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Table 5.1

Year 1, Impacts on Receipt of Food Stamps

Dayton and San Diego

Outcome	Dayton				San Diego			
	WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Among full research sample								
Ever received food stamps (%)	59.4	53.9	5.5 **	0.011	29.6	24.1	5.5 **	0.020
Months receiving food stamps	4.8	4.1	0.7 ***	0.000	2.0	1.6	0.4 **	0.042
Amount of food stamps received ($)	1,410	1,284	126 *	0.080	628	494	135 *	0.070
Sample size (total =1,977)	595	589			397	396		
Among those who were income-eligible for food stamps at baseline								
Ever received food stamps (%)	69.6	63.2	6.3 **	0.010	36.5	30.3	6.1 **	0.043
Months receiving food stamps	5.8	5.0	0.9 ***	0.000	2.5	2.1	0.4 *	0.100
Amount of food stamps received ($)	1,740	1,556	183 **	0.046	793	651	142	0.150
Sample size (total =1,437)	430	425			301	281		

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from administrative records from Dayton and San Diego.

NOTE: A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as:
*** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

and is likely a result of WASC both connecting more individuals in the eligible group to food stamps and extending their months of food stamp receipt. Over the one-year follow-up period, however, the Dayton and San Diego WASC programs were just as likely to have an impact on ever receiving food stamps (or on measures that are affected by a change in the percentage ever receiving food stamps) among individuals in the eligible group as among those in the ineligible group. These results may be the consequence of a number of factors, such as an imprecise definition of eligibility or a change in food stamp eligibility over time.

Table 5.2, which summarizes the impacts on the 12-month survey respondent sample for a full year after the month of random assignment, shows that neither the WASC program in Dayton nor the one in San Diego had an impact on receipt of food stamps in the month prior to the survey interview. These results among respondents to the 12-month survey were consistent with the administrative records data estimates of food stamp receipt in quarter 5 (shown in Appendix Table A.1). The main reasons that most respondents gave for not using food stamps were having too high an income, not applying or reapplying for food stamps, or not needing food stamps. Only a few said that they did not want them, that it was too much "hassle," or that they were eligible but the amounts were too small.

- **The average total amount of food stamps that individuals in the WASC group received, compared with those in the control group, was $126 (10 percent) higher in Dayton and $135 (27 percent) higher in San Diego over the one-year period.**

In Dayton, the average total amount of food stamps that individuals in the WASC group received (shown in Table 5.1, first panel) was about $126 above the control group average of $1,284 over the course of a year. (The average total amount of food stamps received covers both individuals using and those not using food stamps; those not using are included with zero values.) Over year 1, WASC also had a larger impact on the percentage receiving food stamps than on the amount received.[5] This outcome and the fact that WASC increased the percentage working in all four quarters and receiving food stamps (not shown) suggests that, rather than an increase in the amount received among those already receiving food stamps, the effect on amount received is likely caused by more working individuals getting food stamps — individuals who may have been eligible for smaller amounts of food stamps than those who were not working.

[5]As measured by the ratio of the percentage increase in number of months received (16 percent) to the percentage increase in total amount of food stamps received (10 percent).

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Table 5.2

Year 1, Impacts on Receipt of Work Supports

Dayton and San Diego

Outcome	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Food stamps								
Received food stamps in prior month (%)	37.5	36.6	0.9	0.804	20.0	15.5	4.5	0.205
Average food stamp receipt in prior month ($)	95	100	-5	0.696	52	33	20 *	0.065
Average food stamp receipt in prior month among those receiving food stamps ($)	*254*	*274*	--	--	*262*	211	--	--
Main reason for not receiving food stamps [a] (%)								
Income too high	*45.5*	*36.1*	--	--	*31.4*	*30.6*	--	--
Too much of a hassle	*6.0*	*3.1*	--	--	*5.8*	*4.7*	--	--
Did not apply/reapply for food stamps	*18.7*	*27.9*	--	--	*26.4*	*23.2*	--	--
Problems with social services	*1.4*	*1.2*	--	--	*1.3*	*1.1*	--	--
Eligible, but amount was too small	*-0.3*	*3.5*	--	--	*0.0*	*0.0*	--	--
Not needed	*18.4*	*16.6*	--	--	*19.9*	*25.3*	--	--
Didn't want them	*2.7*	*3.1*	--	--	*5.7*	*6.6*	--	--
Not a U.S. resident long enough to qualify	*0.7*	*0.0*	--	--	*0.6*	*0.0*	--	--
Applied recently/started recently	*2.0*	*0.6*	--	--	*0.9*	*1.5*	--	--
Other	*5.0*	*8.0*	--	--	*8.1*	*7.1*	--	--
Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) (%)								
Will or did fill out federal tax return for previous year	96.2	90.5	5.6 **	0.011	85.5	93.0	-7.5 **	0.015
Will or did claim EITC in previous year	67.0	62.1	4.9	0.229	40.8	48.1	-7.4	0.150
Received free tax assistance since random assignment	25.6	12.6	13.0 ***	0.000	26.7	12.4	14.2 ***	0.000

(continued)

Table 5.2 (continued)

Outcome	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Will or did receive a tax refund from federal government for previous year	87.4	84.0	3.4	0.291	76.7	76.7	0.0	0.998
Child care arrangements[b] (%)								
Used child care since random assignment	67.1	61.8	5.3	0.436	51.3	37.4	14.0 *	0.061
Used child care regularly[c]	60.0	59.0	1.0	0.884	39.6	24.8	14.8 **	0.031
Household member paid for child care since random assignment[d]	42.6	45.0	-2.4	0.733	20.3	15.1	5.1	0.391
Received any help with child care costs[e]	38.7	34.4	4.3	0.512	21.8	14.6	7.3	0.237
Someone else paid for child care since random assignment	27.4	27.5	-0.1	0.985	17.7	12.2	5.5	0.323
Received refund for child care since random assignment	13.1	8.4	4.7	0.295	10.1	4.0	6.2	0.132
Received subsidized child care since random assignment	31.5	28.5	3.0	0.633	14.1	11.6	2.5	0.638
Health care coverage (%)								
Respondent has health care coverage[f]	67.2	64.8	2.4	0.569	69.1	61.9	7.2	0.119
Publicly funded	32.4	31.0	1.5	0.691	39.0	31.4	7.6 *	0.071
Privately funded	35.0	33.8	1.1	0.786	30.0	30.5	-0.5	0.917
All dependent children have health care coverage[f]	92.5	89.1	3.4	0.349	86.0	78.6	7.4	0.169
Publicly funded	77.5	67.6	9.9 *	0.076	71.9	57.2	14.7 **	0.026
Privately funded	14.4	21.4	-7.0	0.146	14.0	21.3	-7.2	0.174
Parent and all children have health care coverage	73.5	81.4	-7.9	0.151	78.4	63.5	14.8 **	0.017
Sample size (total = 929)	254	248			219	208		

(continued)

Table 5.2 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from responses to the WASC 12-Month Survey and Baseline Information Form.

NOTES: Sample sizes vary because of missing values. Italicized measures indicate that they are nonexperimental; thus, statistical tests were not performed, so the cells are blank.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]These measures are only among sample members in a household without food stamps during the previous month.

[b]Child care measures are among sample members with at least one child age 11 years or younger at time of random assignment.

[c]"Regular" child care is defined as at least 10 hours per week in the previous month.

[d]This includes cases where participant was paid back for expenses.

[e]Respondent is coded as receiving help with child care costs if someone else paid for child care since random assignment, if the respondent received refund for child care since random assignment, or if the respondent received subsidized child care since random assignment.

[f]The percentage of sample members who have medical insurance may not necessarily equal the sum of those with public coverage and private coverage because of missing values.

In San Diego, WASC increased the average total amount of food stamps that individuals received over the course of year 1 (as shown in Table 5.1, first panel) by $135 above the control group average of $494. The WASC program in San Diego had a slightly smaller effect on the percentage receiving food stamps than on the amount received over the one-year follow-up period.[6] This finding suggests that most, but not all, of the impact on amount received occurred because more individuals were getting food stamps, and not because of an increase in the amount received among those who were already receiving food stamps.

One question remains: Among those who signed up for food stamps because of WASC, what was the amount of food stamps received? Appendix Table A.2 presents impacts on the distribution of food stamps in months 2 and 8 after time of random assignment. The results show that the increase in the percentage receiving food stamps in month 2 occurred among individuals in Dayton with benefits in the $51–$150 range, and that the increases in month 8 occurred among individuals in Dayton and San Diego with benefits in the $151–$300 range. These effects are both within the lowest quartile of the amounts issued during those two months. But small amounts also add up over time. The impacts on amount of food stamps received and food stamps ever received over the one-year follow-up period suggest that those who took up food stamps because of WASC received fairly substantial amounts, between $2,500 and $3,000. In Dayton, individuals in the WASC group who received food stamps received somewhat lower amounts per quarter than the control group (for example, $673 versus $713 in quarter 2), as shown in the third panel of Appendix Table A.1. However, this difference diminished by quarter 4. These results provide further evidence that WASC may have brought in people at the lower end of the benefit distribution, but also that individuals in the WASC group who received food stamps shortly after time of random assignment received smaller amounts than those who took up food stamps later in the follow-up period. Alternatively, those who took up food stamps early in the follow-up period because of WASC may have been eligible for greater benefits over time.

Earned Income Tax Credit

The EITC is the largest cash transfer program in the United States for low-income families, and lifted around 4.9 million people out of poverty in 2002.[7] It is administered through the federal income tax system and is available only to low-income tax-filing individuals and families with earnings. The refund is not limited to the amount of taxes owed, but eligible taxpayers who do not claim the EITC on their tax return might not receive the credit. Data from the 1998 and 2001 National Survey of America's Families

[6] As measured by the ratio of the percentage increase (24 percent) in number of months received to the percentage increase (27 percent) in amount received.

[7] Llobera and Zahradnik (2004).

(NSAF) show large disparities across groups in terms of their knowledge about the EITC.[8] The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and many community service groups and cities around the country have since launched EITC campaigns, usually along with access to free tax preparation, to encourage low-income families to claim the credit.[9] As discussed in Chapter 4, the WASC programs in both Dayton and San Diego generated an increase in the percentage of individuals who said they had been encouraged to think about claiming the EITC since the time of random assignment. Thus, there appears to be a basis, at least over the short term, for an increase in claiming the EITC.

- **The WASC programs in Dayton and San Diego had no impact on reported receipt of the EITC, but both programs increased the use of free tax assistance.**

The second panel of Table 5.2 presents information about tax filing, EITC claims, free tax assistance, and tax refunds for individuals in Dayton and San Diego who responded to the 12-month survey. It shows that more than 90 percent of the respondents in the Dayton and San Diego control groups will or did file taxes and that 84.0 percent and 76.7 percent, respectively, will or did receive a tax refund from the federal government for the previous year. Nevertheless, only 62.1 percent of control group respondents in Dayton and 48.1 percent in San Diego claimed the credit. These percentages seem low given that almost all study participants in Dayton and San Diego at the time of random assignment had a household income of twice the federal poverty level or less, and that most, therefore, should be eligible for the credit, even if it was only for a small refund. It is possible that some respondents received the credit without knowing it or did not recall that they had received it when asked about the EITC during the survey interview, perhaps because they had received help from a tax preparer or family member. Also, it is likely that some families who file taxes do not realize that they have received the EITC, particularly since it is often used to offset taxes owed.

As shown in Table 5.2, the WASC program in Dayton increased the percentage of respondents who filed or will file a federal tax return by about 5.6 percentage points above the control group average of 90.5 percent. Those who filed or said they would file a federal tax return were also asked about whether they claimed or would claim the EITC for the previous year. The table shows that WASC had no impact on use of the tax credit. However, the program doubled the percentage of WASC group respondents receiving free tax assistance since the time of random assignment from a control group average of 12.6 percent to a WASC group average of 25.6 percent. Thus, although the survey shows that the outreach effort of WASC staff (described in Chapter 3) did not increase reported use of the tax credit, it is possible that a larger

[8]Maag (2005).
[9]Berube (2004); Maag (2005).

fraction of respondents in the WASC group than in the control group were not aware of claiming the credit because they used free tax preparation services. However, WASC also had no impact on the percentage of those who said that they will or did receive a tax refund from the federal government for the previous year.

In San Diego, WASC decreased the percentage of respondents who were filing federal taxes by about 7.5 percentage points (8 percent) below the control group average of 93 percent, but it generated no impact on the percentage claiming the EITC. These tax results are puzzling given the outreach effort of WASC staff who were promoting the tax credit among individuals in the WASC group. It is possible, however, that WASC group respondents had a lower filing rate because more of them, compared with the control group, had a gross income below the minimum that is required for filing federal taxes (discussed later). The WASC program in San Diego also more than doubled the percentage of respondents who were receiving free tax assistance since time of random assignment, from a control group average of 12 percent to a WASC group average of 27 percent, but it generated no impacts on receipt of a tax refund from the federal government for the previous year.

Subsidized Child Care

Federal welfare reform in 1996 gave states more flexibility in the design of child care policies and, along with the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), led to a consolidation of funding streams aimed at improving the affordability, accessibility, and quality of child care for low-income parents in order for them to work or participate in education or training. Under CCDF rules, child care became available to eligible families via certificates or contracts with providers, allowing parents to select any provider, including those based in the home or in day care centers, as long as they were operating legally.[10]

Funds for child care tripled over the first six years following the 1996 reform but stagnated a bit, or even declined, during the subsequent years, in part because of a reduction in the use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds for child care.[11] Data on funding are available through 2007 only.[12] Accessibility of subsidized child care, in terms of waiting lists, and eligibility (including its level of complexity) vary greatly by state, but families who meet the income requirements (which range from 34 percent to 85 percent of the state median income) and have children younger than 13 years of age are usually eligible for child care programs funded under CCDF rules.[13] As of early 2007, the number of eligible children on

[10]U.S. Government Accountability Office (2005).
[11]Matthews and Ewen (2006).
[12]Matthews (2008).
[13]NCCIC (n.d.).

waiting lists was especially high in California.[14] The most recent data, available from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, indicate that about 26 percent of CCDF-eligible children nationwide received child care services in 2001.[15]

As described in Chapter 4, the Dayton and San Diego WASC programs increased the percentage of respondents who were encouraged to apply for subsidized child care. The WASC program in San Diego also increased the percentage of respondents who received help finding a child care provider or who got referrals for child care. This does not ensure that the WASC programs in Dayton and San Diego will increase the use of child care or subsidies for child care, but it likely increases the probability that they might.

- **In San Diego, WASC led to an increase in the use of child care but not in the reported use of subsidized child care.**

The third panel of Table 5.2 includes information about child care arrangements among survey respondents with children who were 11 years of age or younger at time of random assignment. These respondents would have had at least one child who was 12 years of age or younger at the time of interview for the 12-month survey.[16] As is shown among these respondents in the control group, use of child care is relatively common in Dayton — 61.8 percent have used it and 59.0 percent use it regularly — and less so in San Diego, where 37.4 percent have used it and 24.8 percent use it regularly. This measure of child care usage encompasses both formal child care arrangements, such as day care centers and nursery schools, and informal arrangements, such as a babysitter, including siblings, parents, or other relatives who live outside the household. When respondents in the control group using child care were asked whether they received subsidized child care, less than half in both sites said they did — that is, 28.5 percent in Dayton and 11.6 percent in San Diego said they received subsidies for child care. Thus, the benchmark that WASC would need to improve upon in order to show impacts on use of subsidized child care is about equal to the national average in Dayton and below the national average in San Diego. The lower benchmark in San Diego is likely a consequence, in part, of the limited access to subsidized child care that eligible low-wage workers have in California.

As shown in Table 5.2, neither the WASC program in Dayton nor the program in San Diego generated an impact on receipt of subsidized child care services, as measured among

[14]Matthews (2008).

[15]U.S. Government Accountability Office (2005).

[16]It is possible that the youngest child of some respondents was just about to turn 12 years of age at the time of random assignment and that those respondents also were interviewed a month or two after their twelfth month subsequent to random assignment. If that was the case, then it is possible that they no longer had a child at the time of survey interview who was 12 years of age or younger. It is unlikely, however, that more than a few survey respondents fall into that category.

respondents to the 12-month survey.[17] The WASC program in San Diego, however, did increase the percentage of respondents who used (formal or informal) child care regularly by 14.8 percentage points (60 percent) above the control group figure of 24.8 percent and the percentage that had ever used child care since time of random assignment. Most of the increase in ever-used child care was a result of the increase in regular use of child care. This finding suggests that low-income families with children may be more likely to use child care if they receive help finding a provider or get referrals for it, and may have afforded some respondents in the San Diego WASC group the opportunity to participate in employment-related activities, like job search, education, or training.

Publicly Funded Health Care Coverage

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau, released August 26, 2008, show that the percentage of uninsured people under age 65 with income less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level was 40.3 percent for adults and 18.5 percent for children in 2007. Nationwide, from 2006 to 2007, the number of people without health insurance decreased, but the years from 2000 to 2009 have otherwise seen a steady increase in the number of uninsured people (primarily related to a decrease in employer-provided coverage).[18]

The main reason for the 2006–2007 decline in the number of uninsured was an increase in publicly funded health care coverage,[19] whose rate among low-wage workers varies considerably by state. In Dayton and San Diego, WASC increased the percentage of respondents who received help getting publicly funded health care coverage for themselves and their children (described in Chapter 4).

- **WASC increased the percentage of adults in San Diego with publicly funded health care coverage by 7.6 percentage points above the control group average of 31.4 percent. More respondents in Dayton and San Diego, relative to the control group, received health care coverage for their dependent children, but these effects were in part offset by a decrease in the use of privately funded health care coverage. The WASC program in San Diego also increased the percentage of parents with health care coverage for both themselves and their children.**

[17]MDRC is collecting administrative child care subsidy records for study participants in Dayton and San Diego and will present impacts on measures derived from these data in later reports. Impacts on measures of child care subsidies from administrative records data are usually given more weight in the analysis than similar measures from survey data because they are not affected by survey response bias, which is shown in the survey for San Diego, and study participants' recollection of benefit receipt.

[18]Holahan and Cook (2008).

[19]Holahan and Cook (2008).

The fourth panel of Table 5.2 ("Health care coverage") includes information about health care coverage (publicly or privately funded) for respondents and/or their children during the month prior to their interview for the 12-month survey. It shows that the percentage of uninsured individuals in the Dayton and San Diego control groups were lower than the nation-wide averages (among those with an income less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level) for both respondents and their children. The percentage with health care coverage for themselves was 64.8 percent in Dayton and 61.9 percent in San Diego, while the percentage of respondents with coverage for dependent children was 89.1 percent and 78.6 percent, respectively.

WASC increased the percentage of participants with publicly funded health care coverage for their dependent children by 9.9 percentage points in Dayton and by 14.7 percentage points in San Diego above their respective control group averages of 67.6 percent and 57.2 percent. Neither program, however, increased the percentages with any health care coverage (privately or publicly funded) for their dependent children, presumably because the increase in publicly funded health care coverage in part was offset by a decrease in privately funded health care coverage. It is not unusual for this type of substitution to occur with increased access to public or other low-cost health coverage.[20] The net effect for the participant is unclear. Participants might be better off financially, for example, if they were paying costly premiums covering their children through employer-provided care and then got publicly funded health care coverage. Alternatively, publicly funded health care coverage for children might help ensure continuity of coverage if participants changed or lost their jobs. Nonetheless, substitution of public for private coverage is an issue to consider in the effort to connect low-wage workers to work supports.

In San Diego, WASC also increased the percentage of adults with publicly funded health care insurance by 7.6 percentage points above the control group average of 31.4 percent. The increase in the percentage of adults with any health care coverage was of a similar magnitude, but this effect just missed statistical significance. The effects on health care coverage in San Diego led to an increase in the percentage of parents with health coverage for themselves and their dependent children of 14.8 percentage points above the control group average of 63.5 percent.

Impacts on Employment and Earnings

This section describes the impacts of WASC on employment and earnings as well as some benchmarks (employment and earnings outcomes for individuals in the control group) that the WASC program had to improve upon in order to show impacts. The administrative records of quarterly earnings in jobs covered by unemployment insurance (UI) provide data for one year after time of random assignment for all study participants included in this report. The survey

[20]See, for example, Miller et al. (2008) for evidence from the New Hope project.

findings contribute information on employment for a subset of study participants.[21] Unless otherwise noted, all impacts discussed in the text are statistically significant, and all comparisons (of earnings, hours worked, and hourly wages in particular) include both those who are working and those who are not working; those who are not working are included with zero values.

As described in Chapter 1, the long-term objective of WASC is to help low-wage workers stay employed, build skills, and advance, where advancement is defined as obtaining an increase in wages or work hours, obtaining employer-provided benefits, or obtaining better work hours.[22] The program models in Dayton and San Diego were generally well implemented, with a slightly greater focus in San Diego on helping WASC group members with job leads, encouraging them to negotiate pay raises or better job terms, and to think about whether they would be better off increasing their hours of work or moving to a new job. In Dayton, WASC staff and individuals in the WASC group were more focused on education or training. Impacts on advancement might take longer to emerge than the one-year follow-up period covered by this report, especially for those enrolled in education and training.

The economic environment under which the Dayton and San Diego WASC programs operated worsened in 2006 (as discussed in Chapter 1), with unemployment rates gradually increasing through late 2008, which is the last year for which data are available.[23] The situation was worse in Dayton, with unemployment rates well above the national average as a consequence of its heavy reliance on the manufacturing industry, which has continued to lose jobs since 2006.[24] Unemployment rates in San Diego, which has a large share of jobs in the government sector and in service and trade, also climbed above the national average in 2007. The average hourly wage in 2006 for individuals in the service sector was $10.58 in Dayton and $12.41 in San Diego.[25]

Information about UI-covered employment and earnings is shown in Table 5.3 (summarized over year 1 in the first panel and presented for quarter 5 in the second panel) and Appendix Table A.1 (by quarter).

- **WASC had no short-term effect on employment in Dayton, but reduced employment somewhat in San Diego.**

As Table 5.3 shows, the average quarterly employment rate for individuals in the control group is 85.2 percent in Dayton and 81.8 percent in San Diego. Although participants were

[21]The survey response analysis is presented in Appendixes B and C.

[22]This is how advancement is defined for the WASC project, but others may have other criteria such as better hours, work-family balance, and so forth.

[23]Bureau of Labor Statistics (2008).

[24]See www.bls.gov/data/#unemployment.

[25]Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009c).

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Table 5.3

Year 1 and Quarter 5, Impacts on UI-Covered Employment and Earnings

Dayton and San Diego

	Dayton				San Diego			
Outcome	WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Year 1								
Ever employed (%)	95.9	95.0	0.8	0.470	90.7	90.9	-0.2	0.935
Average quarterly employment (%)	87.0	85.2	1.7	0.237	78.6	81.8	-3.1	0.132
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	74.8	73.7	1.1	0.653	63.2	69.7	-6.5 **	0.036
Total earnings ($)	12,669	12,913	-244	0.547	13,447	14,408	-961	0.146
Earned over $10,000 (%)	58.1	58.8	-0.6	0.810	57.4	59.1	-1.7	0.573
$1 - $1,999	7.3	6.2	1.1	0.435	10.4	5.5	4.8 **	0.011
$2,000 - $4,999	8.3	9.9	-1.6	0.327	8.7	7.7	0.9	0.631
$5,000 - $10,000	22.1	20.1	1.9	0.409	14.3	18.5	-4.2	0.108
Quarter 5								
Ever employed (%)	83.4	81.4	2.0	0.346	73.7	78.2	-4.5	0.117
Total earnings ($)	3,234	3,280	-46	0.742	3,300	3,638	-338	0.113
Sample size (total = 1,977)	595	589			397	396		

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) administrative records from the states of Ohio and California.

NOTES: This table includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the Ohio and California UI program. It does not include employment outside Ohio and California or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs; self-employment; any small employers who are not required to report to/participate in the UI system, such as some agricultural jobs; and federal government jobs).

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

working when they entered the study,[26] some lost their jobs over time. For example, only 73.7 percent in Dayton and 69.7 percent in San Diego worked during all quarters of year 1, whereas a much higher fraction — 95 percent in Dayton and 90.9 percent in San Diego — reported working in a UI-covered job at some point during the follow-up period.[27] Thus, about 21 percent of individuals in the Dayton and San Diego control groups may have encountered a spell of unemployment during the course of year 1 that lasted for at least one quarter. This is problematic, because changes in jobs that occur with no other job lined up, whether the change is voluntary or not, are often associated with wage stagnation or even decline.[28] However, not all job change is for the worse. Research shows that infrequent voluntary job changes where individuals move quickly into other jobs often have positive effects on earnings.[29] By the end of year 1, about two-fifths of the individuals in the Dayton and San Diego control groups had left the employer for whom they had worked in the quarter of random assignment (their "initial employer"),[30] and about two-fifths were working for an employer other than their initial employer (shown in Appendix Table A.1, sixth panel).

The WASC program in Dayton had no effect on employment over the one-year follow-up period as a whole (Table 5.3) or by quarter relative to time of random assignment (Appendix Table A.1, fourth panel).[31] In San Diego, however, WASC decreased the percentage of partici-

[26]The fourth panel in Appendix Table A.1 shows the percentage of individuals in the control group who were employed by quarter, relative to each individual's quarter of random assignment. In quarter of random assignment, the percent employed was about 93 percent in Dayton and about 87 percent in San Diego. The baseline data, however, show that the employment rate at time of random assignment was 100 percent in both sites. The gap between full employment as measured in the baseline data and the percentages employed in a UI-covered job during the quarter of random assignment is likely in part caused by participants working in jobs that are not covered by the UI system — for example, "off-the-books" jobs; self-employment; any small employers who are not required to report to or participate in the UI system, such as some agricultural jobs; and federal government jobs. It is also possible, however, that some participants said they were employed at baseline in order to qualify for the study, while, in fact, they were unemployed.

[27]Table 5.5 also includes a measure of the percent individuals in the control group who worked at some point since time of random assignment. As shown, about 97 percent of control group members in Dayton and about 94 percent of control group members in San Diego had worked at some point since time of random assignment. These percentages are somewhat higher than the equivalent measure extrapolated from the UI wage data. This is mainly because the survey includes both jobs that are covered and those that are not covered by the UI system.

[28]Bartel and Borjas (1981); Royalty (1998).

[29]Holzer and Martinson (2005).

[30]The percentage who left the employer for whom they were working during the quarter of random assignment ("initial employer") is calculated by subtracting the percentage employed in quarter 5 from the percentage employed in the quarter of random assignment. The fifth panel in Appendix Table A.1 shows the percentage who were still working for their initial employer, by quarter.

[31]The 12-month survey findings show that the WASC program in Dayton increased the percentage of individuals in the WASC group who were employed at some point between time of random assignment and survey interview by 2.5 percentage points above the control group average of 97 percent (shown in Table 5.5). Other measures of employment on the survey, however, show no effect, and neither do the UI data.

pants employed in all four quarters of year 1 by 6.5 percentage points (9 percent) below the control group average of 69.7 percent. But the program generated no effects, positive or negative, on other measures of employment over the one-year follow-up period. This outcome suggests that individuals in the WASC group were more likely than those in the control group to encounter a spell of unemployment (or a lack of UI-covered employment) that lasted for at least one quarter. The quarterly data show that these effects occurred in the later quarters of the follow-up period.

- **WASC had no effect on average earnings over the one-year follow-up period in Dayton or San Diego.**

The average earnings over year 1 for individuals in the control group were $12,913 in Dayton and $14,408 in San Diego (shown in Table 5.3). On average, individuals in the Dayton and San Diego control groups earned $3,073 and 3,284, respectively, during the quarter of random assignment, and $3,280 and $3,638 during quarter 5. Thus, the quarterly earnings in Dayton and San Diego were, on average, about $250 and $350 higher in quarter 5 than in the quarter of random assignment , or about $710 and $860, respectively, among those who were employed (not shown). This increase suggests that some individuals are advancing on their own.[32]

Table 5.3 shows that the WASC program in Dayton had no effects on average total earnings over the one-year follow-up period or over time by quarter. Over year 1, the WASC program in San Diego also had no impact on average total earnings, but increased the percentage with low earnings. As shown for San Diego, WASC increased the percentage of individuals with earnings between $1 and $1,999 over year 1 by 4.8 percentage points above the control group average of 5.5 percent. This increase seems to be largely associated with a decrease in the percent earning $5,000 or higher (which is not statistically significant). The quarterly impacts on earnings (shown in Appendix Table A.1), which were not always statistically significant, might also be decreasing over the short term. These effects on earnings may in part be a result of the increase in part-time employment.

- **The 12-month survey shows that WASC had no effect on average employment, hours worked, or hourly pay in San Diego and Dayton.**

The 12-month survey is also a source of information about the employment and earnings of study participants in Dayton and San Diego. While only a subset of study participants

[32]Table 5.6 shows that weekly earnings over year 1 — that is, between time of random assignment and survey interview — increased for 51.4 percent and decreased for 27.6 percent of the individuals in the control group in Dayton. In San Diego, they increased for 57.1 percent and decreased for 16.6 percent. Very few in Dayton and San Diego had weekly earnings that stayed the same.

were interviewed, the 12-month survey does provide information about all current or most recent jobs, compared with the UI wage data, which do not cover all types of jobs. Thus, the 12-month survey is an important source of information about job change, jobs not covered by the UI wage system, and the current job (job benefits, hours worked, weekly earnings, and hourly pay). Some respondents who were unemployed at the time of the survey provided information about their most recent job.

Table 5.4 shows that the WASC program in San Diego generated an impact among respondents to the 12-month survey on job retention, or the frequency of job changes. As shown, the San Diego WASC program increased the percentage of respondents in the WASC group who had held only one job during year 1 by 12.1 percentage points above the control group average of 44.4 percent. This increase seems to be largely caused by a decrease in the percentage of respondents in the WASC group who worked two or three jobs. The fact that respondents in the WASC group were less likely to change jobs and at the same time more likely to participate in job search activities than their counterparts in the control group (as described in Chapter 4) suggests that the increase in job search did not lead to an increase in job change. The reduction in job changing, however, may have contributed in part to the decrease in the rate of employment in a UI-covered job among respondents to the 12-month survey.

The survey data tell a somewhat different story, although one that is ultimately consistent with the findings related to UI-covered employment. For San Diego, Table 5.5 shows that respondents in the WASC group were just as likely as those in the control group to be ever employed and currently employed at the time of the survey interview. A key difference between the survey measure of employment and UI-covered employment (as measured by the administrative records data and noted earlier) is that the survey captures employment in both UI-covered jobs and jobs that are not covered by UI. Findings from both data sources, therefore, suggest that the San Diego WASC program led to an increase in the rate of employment in jobs that are not covered by the UI system. One possible hypothesis for this trend is that individuals in the WASC group, who were less likely to change jobs and more likely to receive food stamps and/or publicly funded health care coverage, may have been more likely to retain a job that was not covered by the UI system with fewer hours for a longer period of time, or, upon losing a job, to take more time to find a UI-covered job. A longer-term follow-up and a more comprehensive analysis is needed to discover whether these trends will prevail over time and to determine what might have caused them. The WASC program in Dayton generated no impacts on measures of job change over year 1.

Advancement over year 1 in hours of work and hourly pay is measured, on average, for the job held at the time of the survey interview and over time as the percentage change between the job held at time of random assignment and the job held at the time of the survey interview, which may or may not be the same job. At the time of the survey interview, the average control

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Table 5.4

Year 1, Impacts on Employment Retention

Dayton and San Diego

Outcome	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Average number of months employed in current or most recent job since random assignment	11.3	11.8	-0.5	0.329	11.4	11.2	0.3	0.629
Total months employed in current or most recent job since random assignment (%)								
0	0.9	3.2	-2.3 *	0.082	4.7	6.4	-1.7	0.444
1 to 3	10.8	9.1	1.7	0.530	10.2	11.0	-0.8	0.796
4 to 7	17.5	16.2	1.3	0.705	11.8	11.3	0.6	0.863
8 to 10	9.4	6.4	3.0	0.229	10.9	8.8	2.2	0.468
Greater than 10	61.3	65.1	-3.8	0.390	62.4	62.6	-0.2	0.969
Number of jobs since random assignment (%)								
0	0.9	3.2	-2.3 *	0.071	4.6	6.2	-1.6	0.457
1	45.7	50.4	-4.7	0.301	56.5	44.4	12.1 **	0.013
2 or 3	45.7	41.9	3.8	0.399	32.9	40.9	-8.0 *	0.091
4 or more	7.7	4.6	3.1	0.149	6.1	8.5	-2.5	0.331
Sample size (total = 929)	254	248			219	208		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from responses to the WASC 12-Month Survey.

NOTE: Sample sizes vary because of missing values.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

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Table 5.5

Year 1, Impacts on Characteristics of Current Job

Dayton and San Diego

Outcome	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Employment status (%)								
Ever employed since random assignment	99.4	96.9	2.5 **	0.043	95.4	93.9	1.5	0.499
Currently employed	83.1	81.1	1.9	0.578	80.7	78.8	1.9	0.647
No longer employed	16.4	15.8	0.6	0.869	14.8	15.1	-0.4	0.922
Hours								
Current working status								
Full time[a]	46.6	40.2	6.4	0.142	46.6	52.9	-6.3	0.208
Part time	36.4	40.2	-3.8	0.371	33.9	25.0	8.9 *	0.052
Hours worked not reported	0.1	0.7	-0.7	0.254	0.1	0.9	-0.8	0.289
Average hours per week	26.6	25.9	0.7	0.625	27.1	27.3	-0.2	0.907
Average hourly wage[b] ($)	*10.71*	*10.04*	--	--	*11.24*	*11.00*	--	--
Less than $5.00 (%)	1.7	2.0	-0.3	0.839	1.4	1.0	0.5	0.681
$5.00 - $6.99 (%)	3.6	3.3	0.3	0.840	2.8	4.0	-1.1	0.539
$7.00 - $8.99 (%)	19.3	22.7	-3.4	0.350	18.5	15.6	3.0	0.438
$9.00 or more (%)	51.2	45.0	6.2	0.155	51.2	49.0	2.2	0.659
Hourly wage not reported (%)	7.3	8.2	-0.9	0.707	6.7	9.3	-2.6	0.332
Earnings ($)								
Average weekly earnings[c]	286	261	25	0.171	288	289	-1	0.964

(continued)

Table 5.5 (continued)

Outcome	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Benefits (%)								
Employer-provided benefits at current job								
Sick days with full pay	31.7	27.6	4.1	0.315	30.5	30.0	0.5	0.915
Paid vacation	43.3	38.4	4.9	0.268	39.7	36.0	3.7	0.438
Paid holidays other than Christmas and New Year's	45.8	43.1	2.8	0.534	38.1	36.8	1.3	0.788
Dental benefits	40.9	34.6	6.3	0.141	35.2	31.9	3.4	0.470
A retirement plan	39.5	36.5	3.1	0.482	29.7	26.9	2.9	0.521
A health plan or medical insurance	45.7	39.2	6.5	0.144	39.2	38.6	0.6	0.899
Enrolled in a work health or medical insurance plan	24.4	25.2	-0.8	0.824	23.9	23.8	0.2	0.969
Not enrolled in a work health or medical insurance plan	21.3	14.0	7.3 **	0.038	15.4	14.9	0.5	0.884
Main reason did not enroll in employer's health insurance plan [d]								
Covered by Medicaid	*15.3*	*8.8*	--	--	*33.1*	*10.7*	--	--
Covered by other insurance	*14.7*	*15.9*	--	--	*8.8*	*17.6*	--	--
Too expensive	*48.8*	*46.0*	--	--	*31.6*	*57.2*	--	--
Started job too recently	*17.5*	*23.5*	--	--	*23.1*	*11.7*	--	--
Other reason	*3.9*	*5.9*	--	--	*3.6*	*2.9*	--	--
Sample size (total = 929)	254	248			219	208		

(continued)

Table 5.5 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the WASC 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: Sample sizes vary because of missing values. Italicized measures indicate that they are nonexperimental; thus, statistical tests were not performed, so cells are blank.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]"Full time" is defined as working at least 35 hours per week.

[b]Indicates average hourly wage among those working. Hourly wage is before taxes and is shown only for the primary, current job. If a participant works more than one job, then the job with the most hours is considered primary.

[c]Weekly earnings are shown for primary, current job only. If a participant works more than one job, then the job with the most hours is considered primary.

[d]Among sample members who were offered an employer's health insurance plan, but did not enroll.

group respondent worked 25.9 hours per week in Dayton and 27.3 hours per week in San Diego (see Table 5.5). This outcome represents the benchmark that WASC programs had to improve upon in order to show impacts. The average hourly wage among working respondents in the control group was about $10 in Dayton and $11 in San Diego (see Table 5.5), which is somewhat below the average hourly wage in 2006 for individuals working in the service sector in these sites. While the percentage of control group respondents in both sites working in the service sector was large, many also worked in the retail trade sector (shown in Appendix Table A.4). Very few of the Dayton control group respondents worked in manufacturing.

Table 5.5 shows that the WASC program in Dayton generated no impacts on average hours of work or hourly pay for the job held at the time of the survey interview, but the percentage point impacts on full-time employment just missed statistical significance. Relative to the job held at time of random assignment, the percentage of respondents in the Dayton WASC group who had increased their hours (most by 20 percent or more) at the job held at the time of the survey interview was 9.6 percentage points higher than the control group average of 33.9 percent (see Table 5.6). Thus, WASC appears to have increased the hours of work for some respondents, but, again, not enough to increase the hours of work, on average, at the time of the survey interview. These results are encouraging, given that the WASC program in Dayton also increased the percentage of respondents who were participating in education and training during the one-year follow-up period (described in Chapter 4). These results are also consistent with the generous cash incentives offered to individuals in the WASC group for maintaining steady employment, for participating in training while working, and for completing training.

The San Diego WASC program did not generate impacts on any measures of hours worked or hourly pay. The only exception was part-time employment, which captures the percentage of those working less than 35 hours per week at the job held at the time of the survey interview. As shown in Table 5.5, WASC increased the percentage of respondents in San Diego who were employed part time by 8.9 percentage points above the control group average of 25 percent. This finding is consistent with the decrease that WASC generated in average total earnings over year 1 among respondents to the 12-month survey in San Diego (shown in Appendix Table B.4) and with the finding raised earlier that WASC increased the rate of employment in jobs that are not covered by the UI system.

These results should be viewed in light of the fact that the WASC programs in Dayton and San Diego focused on long-term advancement goals, which may not show immediate returns, especially for those enrolled in education or training. Thus, one year of follow-up might not be enough to capture any positive effects on advancement.

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Table 5.6

Year 1, Impacts on Advancement

Dayton and San Diego

Outcome (%)	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Employed at random assignment and at interview	82.8	81.1	1.7	0.628	80.5	78.5	2.0	0.617
Change in weekly earnings								
Increased	57.9	51.4	6.4	0.172	60.8	57.1	3.7	0.483
Increased by less than 20 percent	14.2	15.9	-1.6	0.630	19.1	16.4	2.7	0.494
Increased by 20 percent or more	43.6	35.6	8.1 *	0.075	41.7	40.7	1.0	0.848
Decreased	21.1	27.6	-6.6	0.105	16.5	16.6	-0.1	0.989
Stayed the same	2.3	0.4	1.9 *	0.081	1.8	2.5	-0.7	0.646
Change in hours worked								
Increased	43.4	33.9	9.6 **	0.025	42.7	43.3	-0.7	0.894
Increased by less than 20 percent	6.4	9.6	-3.1	0.209	8.7	12.7	-4.0	0.195
Increased by 20 percent or more	37.0	24.3	12.7 ***	0.002	34.0	30.6	3.4	0.469
Decreased	21.2	24.7	-3.5	0.357	15.5	13.9	1.6	0.646
Stayed the same	18.1	22.4	-4.3	0.216	22.4	21.1	1.3	0.747
Change in hourly pay								
Increased	61.1	55.4	5.7	0.228	60.5	55.7	4.7	0.367
Increased by less than 20 percent	36.3	33.5	2.8	0.540	35.4	29.5	5.9	0.235
Increased by more than 20 percent	24.8	22.0	2.9	0.470	25.0	26.2	-1.2	0.800
Decreased	14.6	20.3	-5.7	0.113	14.7	13.4	1.3	0.727
Stayed the same	5.5	3.8	1.8	0.377	3.9	7.3	-3.4	0.164
Sample size (total = 929)	254	248			219	208		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from responses to the WASC 12-Month Survey and Baseline Information Form.

NOTES: Sample sizes vary because of missing values. Measures' impacts are relative to baseline measure, calculated using data at time of random assignment and at time of the survey interview.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Impacts on Key Subgroups

This section describes impacts on UI-covered employment, earnings, and food stamp receipt over the one-year follow-up period for key subgroups of individuals in Dayton and San Diego. The three subgroups that are considered in this section include those defined by food stamp receipt at baseline, hours working at baseline, and month of study entry. There are reasons to suggest that program effects might vary across each of these groups. For example, individuals who did not receive food stamps may have benefited more from the simplified access offered through WASC and the efforts that WASC staff made to connect eligible individuals to these benefits compared with those who were already receiving food stamps; individuals who were employed part time may have had more room to increase their hours of work and therefore to advance over a shorter period of time than those who were employed full time. Similarly, individuals who entered the WASC study at a later date may have benefited more from the program, as it improved over time, than did the early enrollees. Further analyses of additional subgroups, using the full research sample, will be presented in a later report.

The difference between impacts for two subgroups must be statistically significant in order for it to be considered a true difference, rather than one arising by chance. The p-value for this test of statistical significance is shown in the far-right columns of the tables that follow. (The lower the p-value, which indicates the exact level of statistical significance, the more meaningful the results. See Appendix D, "How to Read an Impact Table.") Only differences between subgroups that are statistically significant are discussed in the text.

- **Among those who were not receiving food stamps at baseline, WASC increased food stamp receipt during the follow-up year by 10.4 percentage points in Dayton and by 7.9 percentage points in San Diego.**

Table 5.7 presents impacts by food stamp receipt at baseline according to interviews with study participants at the time of random assignment.[33] The group of individuals who did not receive food stamps at the time of random assignment includes both those who were and those who were not eligible to receive food stamps at that point in time.[34] However, individuals who were eligible to receive food stamps at baseline may have become ineligible to enroll in the Food Stamp programs in Dayton and San Diego, whereas others who were ineligible may have

[33]Estimates of food stamp receipt from administrative records data sometimes differ from estimates of food stamp receipt as reported by study participants at time of random assignment. As a result, the percentage receiving food stamps at some point during the follow-up period, according to the administrative records data, may not add up to 100 percent among individuals who said they received food stamps at time of random assignment.

[34]Eligibility was determined based on their reported household income and family size at time of random assignment. However, other restrictions for eligibility apply, such as other countable resources.

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Table 5.7

Year 1, Impacts on UI-Covered Employment, Earnings, and Financial Work Supports, by Receipt of Food Stamps at Time of Random Assignment

Dayton and San Diego

Outcome, Quarters 2-5	Received Food Stamps at Baseline				Did Not Receive Food Stamps at Baseline				P-Value for Subgroup Differences
	WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	
Dayton									
Ever employed (%)	95.9	93.6	2.3	0.270	96.0	95.8	0.2	0.894	0.395
Average quarterly employment (%)	87.2	82.5	4.7 *	0.074	86.7	86.8	-0.1	0.948	0.129
Total earnings ($)	10,982	10,652	330	0.580	13,484	14,266	-782	0.149	0.168
Ever received food stamps (%)	93.0	96.0	-3.0	0.165	40.0	29.6	10.4 ***	0.001	0.000 †††
Amount of food stamps received ($)	2,684	2,624	59	0.699	688	512	176 **	0.011	0.486
Sample size (total = 1,177)	199	229			390	359			
San Diego									
Ever employed (%)	92.6	86.5	6.0	0.231	90.6	91.3	-0.7	0.740	0.214
Average quarterly employment (%)	82.9	79.6	3.4	0.521	78.1	81.8	-3.8	0.100	0.211
Total earnings ($)	13,724	13,363	362	0.862	13,378	14,611	-1,233 *	0.082	0.466
Ever received food stamps (%)	79.8	88.9	-9.1	0.163	19.8	11.9	7.9 ***	0.002	0.014 ††
Amount of food stamps received ($)	2,004	2,189	-184	0.595	348	190	159 ***	0.006	0.327
Sample size (total = 791)	66	60			331	334			

(continued)

Table 5.7 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) administrative records from the states of Ohio and California.

NOTES: This table includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the Ohio and California UI programs. It does not include employment outside Ohio and California or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs; self-employment; any small employers who are not required to report to/participate in the UI system, such as some agricultural jobs; and federal government jobs).

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as:
*** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Differences between subgroup impacts were tested for statistical significance. Statistical significance levels are indicated as ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

become eligible over time. It is hypothesized that the impact on ever receiving food stamps, noted earlier, should be larger among those who did not receive food stamps at the time of random assignment.

As shown in the columns for individuals who did not receive food stamps at the time of random assignment, WASC increased the percentage of those ever receiving food stamps by 10.4 percentage points above the control group average of 29.6 percent in Dayton and by 7.9 percentage points above the control group average of 11.9 percent in San Diego. There are no impacts on this measure of food stamp receipt among individuals who received food stamps at the time of random assignment in Dayton and San Diego. Thus, the increase in food stamp receipt over year 1 seen for the report sample at large — that is, for the two groups combined — is likely a result of WASC connecting individuals to food stamps who did not receive this benefit at the time of random assignment in Dayton and San Diego.

- **The impacts varied somewhat by cohort in Dayton, but most were not statistically significant. In San Diego, WASC decreased employment somewhat among individuals who were randomly assigned later in the sample build-up period.**

Table 5.8 presents impacts by cohort. The early cohort is defined as individuals who were randomly assigned from October 2005 through May 2006 in Dayton and from November 2005 through May 2006 in San Diego, whereas the late cohort includes individuals who were randomly assigned from June 2006 through March 2007. As noted in Chapter 3, the WASC programs in Dayton and San Diego grew stronger over time as staff were able to spend less time on recruitment and focus more on service delivery. Thus, the impacts on work supports discussed earlier in this chapter would be expected to be clustered among individuals in the late cohort.

As shown in the first panel of Table 5.8, the WASC program in Dayton increased the percentage employed in an average quarter during year 1 by 3.6 percentage points above the control group average of 84.5 percent among individuals in the early cohort. WASC had no effect on this outcome among individuals in the late cohort. It is possible that more intensive career coaching services early in the study period, because of a lower customer-to-staff ratio (primarily WASC staff from the WIA system), may have contributed to this increase. Among individuals in the late cohort, the program also increased the percentage of individuals in the WASC group who received food stamps at some point during the one-year follow up by 9.6 percentage points above the control group average of 30 percent. The late cohort impact on food stamp receipt relative to the impacts for those in the early cohort just missed statistical significance. Thus, the increase in food stamp receipt appears to have emerged once program staff, primarily human service workers, were able to spend less time on recruitment and focus more on service delivery.

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Table 5.8

Year 1, Impacts on UI-Covered Employment, Earnings, and Financial Work Supports, by Random Assignment Cohort

Dayton and San Diego

Outcome, Quarters 2-5	Early Cohort (Through May 2006) WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	Late Cohort (June 2006 and Later) WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	P-Value for Subgroup Differences
Dayton									
Ever employed (%)	96.4	94.9	1.5	0.290	95.1	95.2	-0.1	0.977	0.503
Average quarterly employment (%)	88.0	84.5	3.6 *	0.056	85.0	86.6	-1.6	0.511	0.091 †
Total earnings ($)	11,994	12,108	-114	0.818	13,706	14,276	-571	0.420	0.596
Ever received food stamps (%)	71.3	68.9	2.4	0.369	39.6	30.0	9.6 ***	0.008	0.110
Amount of food stamps received ($)	1,806	1,635	171 *	0.092	779	701	78	0.418	0.500
Sample size (total = 1,184)	370	363			225	226			
San Diego									
Ever employed (%)	89.1	88.0	1.1	0.717	91.9	92.9	-1.0	0.674	0.584
Average quarterly employment (%)	79.2	78.4	0.8	0.802	78.0	84.3	-6.3 **	0.021	0.091 †
Total earnings ($)	13,832	13,768	64	0.951	13,165	14,866	-1,701 **	0.049	0.191
Ever received food stamps (%)	43.3	36.7	6.6	0.103	19.9	14.8	5.1 *	0.082	0.757
Amount of food stamps received ($)	1,050	800	250 *	0.100	343	254	88	0.199	0.331
Sample size (total = 793)	167	165			230	231			

(continued)

Table 5.8 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) administrative records from the states of Ohio and California.

NOTES: This table includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the Ohio and California UI programs. It does not include employment outside Ohio and California or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs; self-employment; any small employers who are not required to report to/participate in the UI system, such as some agricultural jobs; and federal government jobs).

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as:
*** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Differences between subgroup impacts were tested for statistical significance. Statistical significance levels are indicated as ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

In San Diego, WASC decreased the percentage who were employed in an average quarter during the one-year follow-up period by 6.3 percentage points below the control group average of 84.3 percent among individuals in the late cohort. This is primarily the result of a decrease in the percentage who were employed during quarters 4 and 5 (not shown). WASC generated no effect on this outcome among individuals in the early cohort. It is unclear what might have caused this impact among individuals in the late cohort, but longer-term follow-up will be key to finding out whether it persists.

There were no statistically significant differences across the subgroup employed full time versus those who were employed part time (shown in Table 5.9).

Discussion

The evidence in this chapter provides encouragement for the approach that WASC has taken to increase the take-up of work supports among low-wage workers in Dayton and San Diego. While the sites did face some obstacles along the way, WASC was implemented as designed in both Dayton and San Diego. The two programs provided easier access to work supports for their customers, and increased the likelihood that customers would be helped and encouraged to apply for the full range of available work supports relative to individuals in the control group. As a result, WASC increased the usage of food stamps during year 1 — both in terms of the percentage who ever received food stamps and the average number of months received — above the control group levels in both sites. Most of the increase in the number of months that food stamps were received in San Diego was a result of WASC connecting more individuals to food stamps, but in Dayton a sizable portion of the food stamp recipients also received the benefit for more months. The increase in usage of food stamps led to an increase in the average total amount of food stamps received over year 1 in both Dayton and San Diego. The two sites also saw an increase in the percentage of program group members who were receiving publicly funded health care coverage for dependent children, but these effects were offset, in part, by a decrease in privately funded health care coverage. The WASC program in San Diego, on the other hand, also increased the percentage of adults with publicly funded health care coverage — where the effect on adults with any health coverage was similar in size to the effect for publicly funded coverage but just missed statistical significance — and parents with health care coverage for both themselves and their dependent children. Neither program increased the receipt of other work supports, including the EITC and subsidized child care, but the San Diego program did increase the use of child care (formal or informal) more generally.

Impacts on employment and earnings are discussed in this report, even though they may take longer to emerge than the one year allotted for follow-up, especially for individuals in education or training. WASC generated no impacts on employment or earnings over year 1 in Dayton, but decreased the number of individuals employed in all four quarters of year 1 in San

The Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

Table 5.9

Year 1, Impacts on UI-Covered Employment, Earnings, and Financial Work Supports, by Employment Status at Time of Random Assignment

Dayton and San Diego

Outcome, Quarters 2-5	Employed Full Time at Baseline				Employed Part Time at Baseline				P-Value for Subgroup Differences
	WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	
Dayton									
Ever employed (%)	94.3	94.0	0.4	0.862	96.7	95.7	1.1	0.441	0.773
Average quarterly employment (%)	86.1	86.0	0.1	0.966	87.2	85.0	2.2	0.240	0.479
Total earnings ($)	15,652	15,766	-114	0.870	10,745	11,228	-483	0.335	0.669
Ever received food stamps (%)	54.7	52.2	2.5	0.499	62.2	54.9	7.3 ***	0.006	0.288
Amount of food stamps received ($)	1,257	1,265	-9	0.943	1,495	1,309	186 **	0.036	0.201
Sample size (total = 1,179)	216	228			374	361			
San Diego									
Ever employed (%)	93.8	93.5	0.3	0.911	88.1	89.1	-1.1	0.700	0.718
Average quarterly employment (%)	81.7	84.1	-2.4	0.421	76.0	80.1	-4.1	0.162	0.698
Total earnings ($)	16,482	16,979	-497	0.651	11,202	12,343	-1,140	0.175	0.641
Ever received food stamps (%)	30.5	27.0	3.5	0.326	28.9	22.0	6.9 **	0.037	0.479
Amount of food stamps received ($)	737	661	76	0.563	537	373	165 *	0.060	0.577
Sample size (total = 792)	172	173			225	222			

(continued)

Table 5.9 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) administrative records from the states of Ohio and California.

NOTES: This table includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the Ohio and California UI program. It does not include employment outside Ohio and California or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs; self-employment; any small employers who are not required to report to/participate in the UI system, such as some agricultural jobs; and federal government jobs).

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as:
*** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Differences between subgroup impacts were tested for statistical significance. Statistical significance levels are indicated as ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

Diego. Although it is not clear what caused this reduction in UI-covered employment, one hypothesis may be that the increase in work supports allowed individuals to work part time, to retain a job not covered by the UI system for a longer period of time, or, if unemployed, to take more time to reenter the labor market. A longer-term follow-up period and more comprehensive analysis are needed to find out whether these trends will persist over time.

The impact results presented here should be considered a preliminary assessment of the WASC program, given that they rely on a partial sample in San Diego and do not include findings from the Bridgeport site. In addition, effects on advancement may take more than one year to emerge, particularly if participants pursue training as a route to higher earnings.

Appendix A

Year 1, Impacts on Selected Outcomes

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Appendix Table A.1

Impacts on Quarterly UI-Covered Employment, Earnings, and Receipt of Financial Work Supports

Dayton and San Diego

	Dayton				San Diego			
Outcome	WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever received food stamps (%)								
Quarter of random assignment	48.9	42.3	6.5 ***	0.000	21.4	19.9	1.5	0.340
Q2	50.3	46.3	3.9 *	0.063	23.6	17.5	6.2 ***	0.002
Q3	50.5	43.2	7.3 ***	0.001	22.5	17.3	5.2 **	0.024
Q4	47.8	41.7	6.1 ***	0.007	20.2	15.9	4.2 *	0.070
Q5	44.3	40.8	3.4	0.141	17.0	13.8	3.3	0.159
Amount of food stamps received among full research sample[a] ($)								
Quarter of random assignment	341	330	11	0.558	153	125	28 *	0.090
Q2	339	330	8	0.683	162	130	32	0.118
Q3	361	328	34	0.113	173	124	49 **	0.024
Q4	367	314	53 **	0.014	149	128	20	0.366
Q5	344	312	32	0.173	144	111	33	0.138
Amount of food stamps received among those receiving ($)								
Quarter of random assignment	*699*	*780*	--	--	*715*	*628*	--	--
Q2	*673*	*713*	--	--	*686*	*745*	--	--
Q3	*716*	*758*	--	--	*769*	*718*	--	--
Q4	*767*	*753*	--	--	*738*	*806*	--	--
Q5	*776*	*764*	--	--	*849*	*808*	--	--

(continued)

Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

Outcome	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Ever employed (%)								
Quarter of random assignment	90.5	92.7	-2.2	0.131	85.0	86.6	-1.6	0.447
Q2	90.5	89.9	0.6	0.730	83.4	85.6	-2.3	0.320
Q3	87.5	85.5	1.9	0.302	81.1	82.6	-1.6	0.540
Q4	86.5	84.1	2.4	0.215	76.5	80.7	-4.2	0.127
Q5	83.4	81.4	2.0	0.346	73.7	78.2	-4.5	0.117
Ever employed by initial employer[b] (%)								
Quarter of random assignment	90.5	92.7	-2.2	0.131	85.0	86.6	-1.6	0.447
Q2	80.4	84.7	-4.3 **	0.038	74.3	77.3	-3.0	0.275
Q3	64.5	64.9	-0.4	0.870	59.9	65.0	-5.1	0.102
Q4	52.8	56.7	-3.9	0.157	51.5	52.9	-1.3	0.688
Q5	46.5	47.7	-1.2	0.661	41.4	46.9	-5.4 *	0.098
Ever reemployed (%)								
Quarter of random assignment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.735	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.130
Q2	25.7	24.8	0.9	0.735	23.6	28.3	-4.7	0.130
Q3	36.8	31.9	4.9 *	0.073	33.7	35.4	-1.7	0.622
Q4	43.9	38.7	5.2 *	0.066	35.1	41.9	-6.8 **	0.048
Q5	45.4	43.1	2.3	0.424	41.2	42.7	-1.5	0.668
Earnings ($)								
Quarter of random assignment	3,058	3,073	-15	0.848	3,240	3,284	-44	0.742
Q2	3,042	3,019	22	0.823	3,291	3,557	-266 *	0.086
Q3	3,161	3,252	-91	0.454	3,420	3,569	-149	0.422
Q4	3,232	3,362	-130	0.324	3,435	3,644	-208	0.320
Q5	3,234	3,280	-46	0.742	3,300	3,638	-338	0.113

(continued)

Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

Outcome	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Ever received food stamps and employed (%)								
Quarter of random assignment	44.7	38.8	5.9 ***	0.003	17.7	18.1	-0.4	0.847
Q2	46.3	40.2	6.1 ***	0.006	19.7	15.4	4.3 **	0.038
Q3	43.9	35.6	8.3 ***	0.000	18.1	14.7	3.4	0.130
Q4	40.6	33.2	7.5 ***	0.002	13.8	13.2	0.7	0.756
Q5	35.6	31.6	4.0 *	0.088	10.7	11.2	-0.5	0.800
Sample size (total = 1,977)	595	589			397	396		

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from administrative records from Ohio and California.

NOTES: This table includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the Ohio and California unemployment insurance (UI) program. It does not include employment outside Ohio and California or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs; self-employment; any small employers who are not required to report to/participate in the UI system such as some agricultural jobs; and federal government jobs). Italicized measures indicate that they are nonexperimental; thus, statistical tests were not performed, so the cells are blank.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]Includes individuals who were receiving food stamps, individuals who were eligible but not receiving food stamps, and individuals who were ineligible, with the latter two categories included as zero values.

[b]The initial employer is the employer for whom the study participant was working during the quarter when random assignment took place.

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Appendix Table A.2

Months 2 and 8, Impacts on Amount of Food Stamps Received

Dayton and San Diego

	Dayton				San Diego			
Outcome (%)	WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Received food stamps in month 2								
Any amount	33.7	28.3	5.5 **	0.013	19.7	16.4	3.2 *	0.058
$1 - $50	1.8	1.6	0.2	0.831	0.7	0.6	0.2	0.785
$51 - $150	6.2	2.4	3.8 ***	0.001	3.9	3.9	0.0	0.995
$151 - $300	12.9	11.6	1.3	0.493	7.9	6.0	1.8	0.264
More than $300	12.9	12.6	0.2	0.894	7.2	5.9	1.3	0.431
Received food stamps in month 8								
Any amount	41.5	35.0	6.6 ***	0.004	19.1	14.2	5.0 **	0.022
$1 - $50	1.2	1.5	-0.2	0.727	1.0	0.3	0.7	0.214
$51 - $150	5.9	4.2	1.7	0.174	2.5	2.8	-0.3	0.768
$151 - $300	18.8	15.1	3.7 *	0.073	7.7	3.9	3.8 **	0.015
More than $300	15.5	14.2	1.4	0.450	8.0	7.2	0.8	0.648
Sample size (total = 1,977)	595	589			397	396		

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from administrative records from Ohio and California.

NOTE: A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

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Appendix Table A.3

Year 1, Impacts on Household Composition

Dayton and San Diego

Outcome	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Household composition								
Number in household	3.0	3.2	-0.2	0.168	4.0	3.9	0.1	0.606
Ever married[a] (%)	35.2	31.3	3.8	0.305	62.7	58.4	4.3	0.296
Living with partner (%)	7.5	8.2	-0.7	0.768	6.9	12.1	-5.2 *	0.077
Current marital status (%)								
Married and living with spouse	13.2	10.0	3.2	0.259	23.9	22.8	1.1	0.784
Separated or living apart from spouse	9.3	5.9	3.4	0.158	13.6	11.8	1.9	0.570
Divorced	11.7	13.5	-1.8	0.532	24.3	23.3	1.1	0.791
Widowed	0.6	1.8	-1.1	0.251	0.9	0.5	0.3	0.704
Number of children[b] (%)								
0	38.2	37.5	0.7	0.816	41.1	41.0	0.2	0.956
1	26.0	21.3	4.7	0.151	19.0	20.6	-1.6	0.651
2	20.8	26.1	-5.3	0.133	20.3	17.8	2.6	0.479
3 or more	15.0	15.1	-0.1	0.987	19.5	20.6	-1.2	0.730
Average number of children	1.2	1.3	-0.1	0.438	1.2	1.3	0.0	0.956
Sample size (total = 929)	254	248			219	208		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from responses to the WASC 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: Sample sizes vary because of missing values.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]One respondent reported being "ever married" but incorrectly skipped the question about current marital status; thus, percentages for marital status do not exactly match percentages ever married.

[b]This measure includes only children under 18.

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Appendix Table A.4

Year 1, Impacts on Selected Characteristics of Current Job

Dayton and San Diego

Outcome (%)	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Select current job characteristics								
Schedule[a]								
Regular	42.8	42.1	0.8	0.860	46.9	58.6	-11.7 **	0.018
Split	1.3	2.0	-0.8	0.515	0.3	2.1	-1.8	0.100
Irregular	8.6	10.6	-2.1	0.442	3.6	5.6	-2.0	0.331
Evening shift	11.3	7.0	4.3	0.104	9.1	5.3	3.8	0.150
Night shift	11.6	6.4	5.2 *	0.051	7.8	1.2	6.6 ***	0.001
Rotating shift	6.7	12.9	-6.2 **	0.023	13.0	6.0	7.0 **	0.020
Other schedule	0.8	0.0	0.7	0.208	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.000
Odd job	7.1	8.8	-1.8	0.483	5.4	3.4	2.0	0.336
Works out of state	1.4	1.1	0.3	0.788	1.8	0.6	1.3	0.254
Has been promoted or possibility of promotion	56.0	48.4	7.7 *	0.098	43.7	49.6	-5.9	0.250
Promoted to a higher position/job title	18.4	15.7	2.7	0.440	16.3	19.4	-3.2	0.417
Has job with promotion possibilities	55.8	48.4	7.4	0.109	43.4	48.1	-4.7	0.353
Job type								
Occasional, odd job	7.1	8.8	-1.8	0.483	5.4	3.4	2.0	0.336
Seasonal job	4.1	4.6	-0.5	0.794	6.8	5.8	1.0	0.690
Works for “temp” agency	5.6	4.2	1.5	0.462	1.7	9.2	-7.5 ***	0.001
Currently employed at unionized job	9.5	7.4	2.1	0.412	9.0	14.5	-5.5 *	0.091
Type of industry								
Construction	2.4	1.3	1.1	0.371	3.3	3.0	0.3	0.851
Manufacturing	2.6	1.9	0.7	0.633	2.0	3.4	-1.4	0.385
Transportation and utilities	4.5	2.9	1.6	0.344	3.3	3.4	-0.1	0.952

(continued)

Appendix Table A.4 (continued)

Outcome	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Wholesale trade	0.3	0.5	-0.2	0.769	0.1	0.4	-0.3	0.590
Retail trade	33.1	30.5	2.7	0.533	28.0	23.4	4.7	0.288
Finance, insurance, and real estate	1.5	3.8	-2.4	0.114	1.3	2.1	-0.7	0.570
Services	34.6	34.6	0.0	0.994	35.7	29.6	6.2	0.181
Other industries	3.0	3.9	-0.9	0.599	5.0	6.6	-1.6	0.497
Industry not reported	1.1	1.7	-0.6	0.562	1.8	7.0	-5.2 ***	0.009
Type of occupation								
Sales	6.8	7.1	-0.3	0.886	6.7	7.8	-1.1	0.684
Clerical	13.3	15.7	-2.4	0.464	14.8	10.6	4.2	0.199
Services	39.6	32.5	7.1	0.106	27.7	23.3	4.4	0.313
Operatives/laborers	10.2	9.3	0.9	0.746	16.4	19.9	-3.6	0.356
Other	10.1	10.3	-0.3	0.923	11.4	10.3	1.1	0.727
Occupation not reported	3.2	6.2	-3.1	0.110	3.8	7.0	-3.2	0.161
Sample size (total = 929)	254	248			219	208		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the WASC 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: Sample sizes vary because of missing values.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]A split shift is defined as one consisting of two distinct periods each day. An irregular schedule is defined as one that changes from day to day. A rotating shift is one that changes regularly from days to evenings to nights. Percentages may add up to more than the percentage currently working because a person can have an odd job that can be defined as any of the following: split, irregular, evening, night, rotating, or other schedule.

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Appendix Table A.5

Year 1, Impacts on Health

Dayton and San Diego

Outcome	Dayton				San Diego			
	WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Average Body Mass Index (BMI)[a]	29.0	29.5	-0.5	0.463	27.7	27.7	0.0	0.957
Underweight (%)	2.1	0.7	1.4	0.193	0.8	2.6	-1.8	0.150
Normal weight (%)	27.6	24.6	2.9	0.453	35.6	28.8	6.8	0.139
Overweight (%)	28.4	26.9	1.5	0.718	29.7	30.3	-0.6	0.889
Obese (%)	34.4	37.4	-3.0	0.488	27.5	30.7	-3.2	0.481
Unreported BMI (%)	7.6	10.4	-2.8	0.284	6.5	7.6	-1.1	0.649
Self-rated health (%)								
Excellent	12.9	16.2	-3.3	0.295	14.8	14.3	0.4	0.900
Very good	34.3	28.2	6.1	0.148	21.7	22.0	-0.4	0.932
Good	34.3	37.9	-3.6	0.406	38.3	39.7	-1.5	0.765
Fair	18.0	15.8	2.2	0.513	18.7	18.4	0.3	0.936
Poor	0.5	1.9	-1.4	0.167	6.6	5.6	1.1	0.656
Psychological Distress Scale[b] (K6)	6.3	5.9	0.4	0.392	6.2	6.1	0.1	0.826
Experienced serious psychological distress in the past month[b] (%)	11.1	9.7	1.4	0.623	14.3	10.7	3.6	0.276
Needed to go to doctor or hospital in past 12 months but couldn't because of cost or insurance (%)	41.8	44.1	-2.3	0.605	33.2	33.6	-0.4	0.938
Number of times saw the following professionals in past 12 months								
Doctor for routine care	3.0	3.0	0.0	0.908	2.7	2.0	0.6 *	0.079
Doctor for pregnancy-related care	1.0	0.9	0.2	0.618	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.946

(continued)

Appendix Table A.5 (continued)

Outcome	Dayton WASC Group	Dayton Control Group	Dayton Difference (Impact)	Dayton P-Value	San Diego WASC Group	San Diego Control Group	San Diego Difference (Impact)	San Diego P-Value
Number of times saw the following professionals in past 12 months (continued)								
Dentist for routine check-up or exam	1.1	1.1	0.0	0.884	1.5	1.0	0.5 **	0.016
Doctor for urgent care	0.9	1.2	-0.3 *	0.069	0.5	0.7	-0.2	0.257
Doctor for scheduled treatment or surgery	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.955	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.892
Mental health professional	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.279	0.5	0.7	-0.2	0.434
Self-rated to have disability (%)	8.7	10.2	-1.5	0.573	15.8	14.5	1.3	0.722
Rated by others to have disability (%)	7.6	7.8	-0.2	0.939	10.8	13.4	-2.6	0.413
Personal Mastery Scale[c]	1.8	1.9	-0.1	0.104	1.9	1.9	0.0	0.380
Sample size (total = 929)	254	248			219	208		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the WASC 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: Sample sizes vary because of missing values.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]National Institutes of Health weight categories.

[b]Based on the K6 scale, which includes six questions about how often a respondent experienced symptoms of psychological distress during the past 30 days. The response codes (0-4) of the six items for each person are summed to yield a scale with a 0-24 range. A value of 13 or more for this scale is used here to define serious psychological distress. Web site: www.hcp.med.harvard.edu/ncs/k6_scales.php.

[c]Based on Pearlin's Personal Mastery Scale, which includes seven questions about how well a respondent is able to cope. The table shows the average of the mean of the response codes (1-4) of the seven items. Therefore, the range of the scale is from 1-4, with a lower score indicating a greater ability to cope. Web site: www.bsos.umd.edu/socy/faculty/docs/Pearlin_Mastery.doc.

Appendix B

Work Advancement and Support Center, San Diego: 12-Month Survey Response Analysis

As part of the Work Advancement and Support Center (WASC) demonstration, a select group of study participants were interviewed about their contact with program staff or any case manager, areas in which they received help, messages they received relating to employment retention and/or advancement, participation in employment and/or education/training-related activities, receipt of work supports, current or most recent job, household composition, and their health. Interviews were conducted about 12 months after each individual entered the study. This analysis examines whether the cumulative outcomes of these interviews can be generalized to those in the research sample covered by this report.

The sections that follow describe who was eligible to be interviewed for the 12-month survey, who was fielded, and who responded to the survey effort. The analysis further examines how respondents differ from nonrespondents, how respondents in the WASC group differ from those in the control group, and how key administrative records data outcomes differ across individuals in the research sample, the survey-eligible sample, the fielded sample, and the respondent sample.

Key Findings

- Survey respondents were more likely than nonrespondents to be WASC group members, female, enrolled in the study in the first quarter of 2007, have a longer employment history than the average nonrespondent, and have a high school degree or above, and were less likely to be black.
- There are no statistically significant differences, however, between the average respondent in the WASC group and those in the control group.
- Among those in the research sample, the effects of the program differ when comparing those who were surveyed with those who were not surveyed. The survey data are not representative of the full research sample in terms of impacts, but they are fairly representative of the 81.7% of the research sample covered by the survey cohort.
- Comparison of unemployment insurance (UI)-covered earnings and employment and food stamp outcomes between individuals in the research, survey-eligible, fielded, and respondent samples shows differences in averages across samples and research groups. For example, the average earnings for survey-eligible individuals in the WASC group are about $670 lower than for WASC group members in the research sample, whereas they were about $53 lower for those in the control group.

Sample Selection and Survey Response Rates

Appendix Figure B.1 illustrates the enrollment period for different groups of individuals discussed in the following analysis. It shows that the enrollment period for the 971 individuals in the *impact study sample* (row 1) covers calendar months November 2005 through October 2007. The enrollment period for the *research sample* covered in this analysis, however, only extends through March 2007, as shown in the first bar of row 2 (N = 793); individuals who were randomly assigned from April 2007 through October 2007 are excluded from this analysis and are shown in the far-right column of row 2 (N = 178). Almost all of these additional individuals from the last period (N = 177) will be added to the survey analysis for the next report.

All individuals in the research sample who spoke English or Spanish and who were randomly assigned from January 2006 through June 2006 (N = 329) and from September 2006 through March 2007 (N = 314), as shown in the first two bars of row 3, were eligible to participate in the 12-month survey. Based on these criteria and summarizing across these two time periods, 643 out of the 793 individuals in the research sample (or 81 percent) were eligible.[1] Of those who were eligible, 545 individuals were selected to be surveyed (*fielded sample,* shown in the first two bars of row 4), split equally between the WASC group (N = 270) and the control group (N = 275) (not shown). Individuals who completed the WASC 12-Month Survey are referred to as the *respondent sample* (N = 427), shown in row 5, whereas the group of individuals who did not complete the survey are referred to as the *nonrespondent sample* (N = 118), shown in row 6.

The goal of the survey effort was to interview 80 percent of those in the fielded sample. As shown in Appendix Table B.1, a survey response rate of 78 percent was achieved for WASC and control group members combined (N = 427), or 81 percent of the WASC group (N = 219) and 76 percent of the control group (N = 208). Of the 118 individuals who did not respond, 76 were not located before the fielding period ended, 21 were never located, 19 refused to be interviewed, and 2 did not respond for other reasons.

[1]Eight individuals, who were initially identified as eligible and interviewed for the 12-month survey, were subsequently dropped from the impact study sample and therefore also from the survey-eligible sample. Most of these individuals were dropped from the impact study sample because the administrative records data showed that they were living in a household with another study participant who was randomly assigned to the opposite research group.

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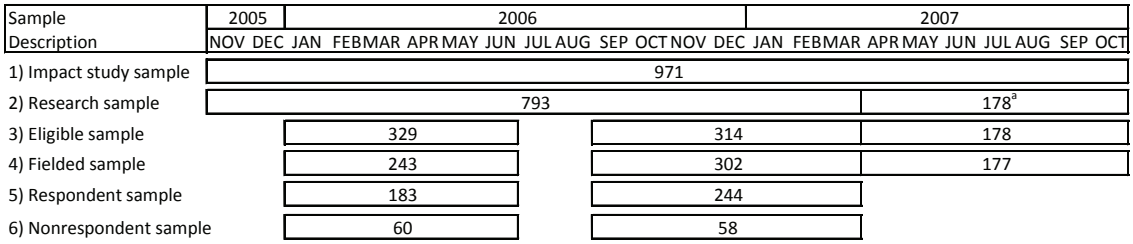
Appendix Figure B.1

Enrollment Periods for the San Diego Sample



NOTES: The number in each bar is the number of sample members in that group.

[a]Excluded from the survey analysis described in this appendix.

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Appendix Table B.1

Response Rates for WASC 12-Month Survey

San Diego

Description	WASC Group	Control Group	Total
Eligible (N)	321	322	643
Fielded (N)	270	275	545
Responded (N)	219	208	427
Response rate (%)	81.1	75.6	78.3

Survey Comparisons

Respondents and Nonrespondents

Survey respondents' characteristics are expected to be similar, on average, to the characteristics of individuals in the fielded sample who did not respond to the survey. A dichotomous survey response indicator (1 = survey respondent; 0 = survey nonrespondent) was created in order to measure the difference between the two groups, and regressed on a range of baseline characteristics, which are shown in Appendix Table B.2.

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Appendix Table B.2

Estimated Regression Coefficients for the Probability of Being a Respondent on the WASC 12-Month Survey

San Diego

Variable	Fielded Sample Parameter Estimate		P-Value
WASC group	0.060	*	0.0888
Filed tax return during the past 12 months	0.027		0.5626
Became a Dislocated Worker during the previous 2 years	-0.023		0.5806
Family income exceeds 130 percent of the federal poverty level	0.049		0.2493
Black, non-Hispanic	-0.204	***	0.0031
Hispanic	-0.015		0.7446
Age	-0.002		0.3230
Female	0.072	*	0.0798
High school diploma/GED certificate or above	-0.077	*	0.0797
Age of youngest child 0 - 5 years	-0.046		0.3421
One child	0.016		0.7510
Two or more children	0.053		0.2480
Sample member's children have coverage	0.014		0.7811
Enrolled during quarter 2 of 2006	0.067		0.2263
Enrolled during quarter 3 of 2006	0.107		0.1666
Enrolled during quarter 4 of 2006	0.091		0.1059
Enrolled during quarter 1 of 2007	0.112	*	0.0820
UI-covered earnings in year prior to random assignment	0.000		0.1867
Number of quarters employed in a UI-covered job during the 2 years prior to random assignment	0.017	**	0.0419
Received food stamps in year prior to random assignment	0.042		0.6143
Number of months receiving food stamps in year prior to random assignment	0.003		0.7668
Ever received food stamps in month prior to random assignment	-0.069		0.3598
R-square	0.0757		
F-statistic	1.94		
P-value of F-statistic	0.0065		
Sample size	545		

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from administrative records data from San Diego and from the WASC Baseline Information Survey.

NOTES: GED = General Educational Development. UI = unemployment insurance.
Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

These 22 predictors account for only 7.6 percent of the variance in survey responses (R^2 = 0.076), but the model is statistically significant (p-value = 0.007). Significant effects were found for being a member of the WASC group, non-Hispanic black, female, holding a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) certificate or above, being enrolled in the study during the first quarter of 2007, and the number of quarters employed in a UI-covered job during the two years prior to random assignment.

This analysis shows that respondents, compared with nonrespondents, were more likely to be in the WASC group, less likely to be black, less likely to have a high school diploma or GED certificate or higher, more likely to be female, more likely to be enrolled in the study during the first quarter of 2007, and more likely to have been employed for a longer period of time during the two years prior to random assignment.

Research Groups in the Respondent Sample

Survey-eligible individuals selected to be fielded shared similar characteristics across research groups. Thus, respondents are also expected to have similar characteristics across research groups. The difference in average characteristics between respondents in the WASC group and the control group was measured across a few key characteristics in a multivariate regression and across a wider set of characteristics in a bivariate analysis relying on chi-square and t-test statistics.

The multivariate analysis included the same 22 predictors used in the comparison of respondents and nonrespondents. The predictors were regressed on a WASC group dichotomous indicator (E = 1 = WASC group; E = 0 = control group). Appendix Table B.3 shows that the predictors account for only 5.06 percent of the variance between individuals in the WASC group and those in the control group (R^2 = 0.0506) and that the model is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.427). WASC and control group members are therefore similar across the key characteristics selected for this analysis.

Appendix Table B.4 shows a bivariate analysis of the difference, on a wider variety of baseline measures, in average characteristics between respondents in the WASC group and those in the control group. Respondents in the WASC group were less likely to be living with a partner, more likely to be single and childless, more likely to be enrolled in vocational training, less likely to have physical or mental health problems that limit work, less likely to have filed a tax return during the past 12 months, less likely to have claimed the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), less likely to have claimed the Child Tax Credit (CTC), and less likely to have children with health care coverage than those in the control group. This analysis shows that while individuals in the WASC group are similar to those in the control group on key characteristics at baseline, they do differ substantively on other key characteristics. The difference in percentage claiming the EITC is problematic as the 12-month survey is the only source of outcome measurement on participants' receipt of the EITC.

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Appendix Table B.3

Estimated Regression Coefficients for the Probability of Being a WASC Group Respondent on the WASC 12-Month Survey

San Diego

Variable	Respondent Sample Parameter Estimate	P-Value
Filed tax return during the past 12 months	-0.138 **	0.0354
Became a Dislocated Worker during the previous 2 years	0.007	0.9066
Family income exceeds 130 percent of the federal poverty level	-0.074	0.2011
Black, non-Hispanic	0.005	0.9605
Hispanic	-0.014	0.8345
Age	0.001	0.5519
Female	0.071	0.2315
High school diploma/GED certificate or above	0.022	0.7209
Age of youngest child 0 - 5 years	0.030	0.6577
One child	-0.075	0.2835
Two or more children	0.031	0.6292
Sample member's children have coverage	-0.099	0.1537
Enrolled during quarter 2 of 2006	-0.033	0.6806
Enrolled during quarter 3 of 2006	-0.041	0.7126
Enrolled during quarter 4 of 2006	-0.038	0.6460
Enrolled during quarter 1 of 2007	-0.081	0.3882
UI-covered earnings in year prior to random assignment	0.000	0.1415
Number of quarters employed in a UI-covered job during the 2 years prior to random assignment	0.005	0.6591
Received food stamps in year prior to random assignment	-0.004	0.9706
Number of months receiving food stamps in year prior to random assignment	-0.018	0.2044
Ever received food stamps in month prior to random assignment	0.082	0.4332
R-square	0.0506	
F-statistic	1.03	
P-value of F-statistic	0.4274	
Sample size	427	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from administrative records data from San Diego and from the WASC Baseline Information Survey.

NOTES: GED = General Educational Development. UI = unemployment insurance.
Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

Appendix Table B.4

Selected Baseline Characteristics for Survey Respondents Randomly Assigned from January 2006 through March 31, 2007

San Diego

Characteristic	WASC Group	Control Group	Total		N
Demographic characteristics					
Gender (%)					
Female	77.2	73.1	75.2		427
Age in years (%)					
18 - 24	19.6	22.6	21.1		427
25 - 34	29.2	28.8	29.0		427
35 - 44	25.6	21.2	23.4		427
45 - 62	25.6	27.4	26.5		427
Average age (years)	36.1	35.6	35.8		427
Race/ethnicity (%)					
Hispanic	71.2	72.9	72.1		426
White	10.5	11.1	10.8		426
Black	8.2	7.2	7.7		426
Asian	6.4	5.8	6.1		426
Other	3.7	2.9	3.3		426
Citizenship (%)					
Born in U.S.	50.5	48.1	49.3		426
Naturalized	21.6	24.0	22.8		426
Non-citizen	28.0	27.9	27.9		426
English proficiency (%)					
Speaks English very well	86.2	81.5	83.9		423
Family status (%)					
Marital status					
Single, never married	43.6	52.9	48.1		424
Married and living with spouse	21.1	20.4	20.8		424
Married, but living apart from spouse	13.8	9.7	11.8		424
Legally separated, divorced, or widowed	21.6	17.0	19.3		424
Living with a partner	4.6	9.6	7.0	**	427
Number of children					
0	35.6	35.1	35.4		427
1	18.3	24.0	21.1		427
2 or more	46.1	40.9	43.6		427

(continued)

Appendix Table B.4 (continued)

Characteristic	WASC Group	Control Group	Total		N
Age of youngest child in years[a]					
0 - 2	28.7	24.1	26.4		269
3 - 5	19.1	23.3	21.2		269
6 - 12	30.9	36.8	33.8		269
13 - 18	21.3	15.8	18.6		269
Single and childless	36.1	31.7	34.0	*	427
Single-parent household	42.2	40.8	41.5		424
Two-parent household	22.0	23.8	22.9		424
Education status (%)					
Highest grade (%)					
No high school diploma or GED certificate	26.9	28.0	27.5		426
GED certificate	7.3	2.9	5.2		426
High school diploma	15.1	11.1	13.1		426
Some college or advanced training courses	37.9	42.0	39.9		426
Associate's degree	4.1	5.3	4.7		426
4-year college degree or higher	8.7	10.6	9.6		426
Currently enrolled in education or training program[b]	25.6	22.1	23.9		427
English as a Second Language (ESL)	3.2	5.3	4.2		427
Adult Basic Education (ABE)	0.9	2.4	1.6	[ ]	427
High school/GED preparation course	1.4	2.4	1.9	[ ]	427
Vocational training	9.1	4.3	6.8	**	427
College course toward associate's/two-year degree	7.8	9.1	8.4		427
College course toward bachelor's/four-year degree	5.5	6.3	5.9		427
Other	0.9	1.4	1.2	[ ]	427
Current employment status					
Number of months in current job (%)					
Less than 1 year	55.3	59.9	57.5		424
Between 1 and 2 years	13.8	15.9	14.9		424
More than 2 years	30.9	24.2	27.6		424
Working full time (35 hours or more) (%)	44.7	42.3	43.6		427
Average hourly wage ($)	9.15	8.89	9.02		427
Less than $ 5.15	2.7	3.4	3.0		427
$5.15 - $6.99	7.8	7.7	7.7		427
$7.00 - $8.99	35.2	41.8	38.4		427
$9.00 - $10.99	37.4	30.3	34.0		427
$11.00 - $15.00	16.9	16.8	16.9		427
Average weekly earnings ($)	262	253	258		427

(continued)

Appendix Table B.4 (continued)

Characteristic	WASC Group	Control Group	Total		N
Fringe benefits from employer[b] (%)					
Time off with pay	39.4	34.5	37.0		422
Health plan offered	39.2	38.3	38.8		423
Dental plan offered	31.6	25.5	28.6		419
Retirement plan	24.4	22.9	23.7		422
Other	4.1	3.9	4.0		424
Enrolled in employer-provided health or medical insurance plan (%)	18.9	16.0	17.5		423
Circumstances that may affect job retention or job change (%)					
Has driver's license	83.6	84.6	84.1		427
Has access to a car to drive to work	75.8	77.4	76.6		427
Currently receiving help finding new or additional job	6.4	9.1	7.7		427
Physical or mental health problem that limits work	5.5	10.6	8.0	*	426
Became a dislocated worker during previous 2 years[b] (%)	27.5	25.4	26.5		408
Current wages compared with wages at pre-layoff job[c] (%)					
A lot less or somewhat less	76.2	63.6	69.8		43
Income and work supports					
Average monthly family income ($)	1,360	1,406	1,382		425
Family income exceeds (%)					
130 percent of federal poverty level	27.4	31.7	29.5		427
Currently receiving income or work support (%)					
Earnings from spouse or partner	11.0	15.5	13.1		426
Food stamps	0.0	0.0	0.0		0
Child support	11.1	14.0	12.5		424
Child care subsidy	7.3	5.8	6.6		425
Other types of assistance	2.3	2.0	2.2	[ ]	418
Received tax credits (%)					
Filed tax return during past 12 months	70.3	77.8	73.9	*	426
Aware of Earned Income Tax Credit	43.2	50.8	46.8		380
Claiming Earned Income Tax Credit	30.8	40.2	35.3	*	385
Aware of Child Tax Credit	32.9	38.7	35.6		404
Claiming Child Tax Credit	26.3	34.9	30.4	*	401

(continued)

Appendix Table B.4 (continued)

Characteristic	WASC Group	Control Group	Total		N
Medical coverage (%)					
Sample member has coverage	57.5	51.0	54.3		427
Employer-provided or other private health plan	29.7	25.5	27.6		427
Publicly funded coverage	30.0	29.1	29.6		423
Sample member's children have coverage[a]	66.0	75.2	70.4	*	274
Publicly funded coverage	54.0	60.6	57.2		271
Housing status (%)					
Current living arrangement					
Owns home or apartment	9.6	10.1	9.8	[ ]	427
Rents home or apartment	53.9	59.1	56.4	[ ]	427
Lives with family/friends and pays part of the rent	22.8	17.8	20.4	[ ]	427
Lives with family/friends and pays no rent	12.8	11.5	12.2	[ ]	427
Lives in a group shelter	0.5	0.5	0.5	[ ]	427
Other housing arrangements	0.5	1.0	0.7	[ ]	427
Lives in public housing, receives Section 8 rental assistance, or pays reduced rent because of low income	18.8	20.3	19.5		425
Sample size (total = 427)	219	208			

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from WASC Baseline Information Form.

NOTES: This table includes impact sample members only. Sample sizes vary because of missing values. In order to assess differences in characteristics across research groups, chi-square tests were used for categorical variables and t-tests were used for continuous variables. Significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1%; ** = 5%; * = 10%. Sample members randomly assigned before January 12, 2006, were not asked to report dislocated worker status. Sample members randomly assigned before November 22, 2005, were not asked to report their monthly family income.

Square brackets indicate that the chi-square test may not be valid due to small sample sizes within the cross-tabulation distribution.

[a]Child-related measures were calculated for sample members with children.

[b]Detail can sum to more than 100 percent, because sample members can record more than one response.

[c]Current wages compared with wages at pre-layoff job is measured among dislocated workers.

Employment, Earnings, and Food Stamp Outcomes in the Research, Eligible, Fielded, and Respondent Samples

Individuals are expected to have, on average, similar levels of employment, earnings, and food stamp receipt across the research, eligible, fielded, and respondent samples. Appendix Table B.5 shows adjusted means and impacts on UI-covered employment and earnings and food stamp outcomes for the four analysis samples.

The Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

Appendix Table B.5

Impacts on Food Stamp Receipt, Employment, and Earnings for Research, Survey-Eligible, Fielded, and Respondent Samples

San Diego

Outcome, Quarters 2-5	WASC Group Average	WASC Group N	Control Group Average	Control Group N	Difference (Impact)	Percentage Difference	P-Value
Ever employed (%)							
Research sample	90.6	397	91.0	396	-0.3	-0.4	0.864
Not in survey cohort	94.9	71	92.8	74	2.1	2.2	0.602
In survey cohort	89.5	321	90.6	322	-1.1	-1.2	0.602
Eligible sample	89.5	321	90.6	322	-1.1	-1.2	0.602
Fielded sample	89.1	270	90.7	275	-1.6	-1.7	0.511
Respondent sample	88.5	219	92.4	208	-3.9	-4.2	0.141
Average quarterly employment (%)							
Research sample	78.7	397	81.7	396	-3.1	-3.8	0.142
Not in survey cohort	79.6	71	79.7	74	-0.1	-0.1	0.987
In survey cohort	78.0	321	82.4	322	-4.4 *	-5.3	0.061
Eligible sample	78.0	321	82.4	322	-4.4 *	-5.3	0.061
Fielded sample	77.1	270	82.7	275	-5.5 **	-6.7	0.031
Respondent sample	77.6	219	85.7	208	-8.1 ***	-9.5	0.004
Total earnings ($)							
Research sample	13,564	397	14,290	396	-726	-5.1	0.275
Not in survey cohort	16,100	71	14,746	74	1,355	9.2	0.436
In survey cohort	12,894	321	14,236	322	-1,341 *	-9.4	0.065
Eligible sample	12,894	321	14,236	322	-1,341 *	-9.4	0.065
Fielded sample	12,367	270	14,262	275	-1,894 **	-13.3	0.011
Respondent sample	12,702	219	14,673	208	-1,971 **	-13.4	0.019
Ever received food stamps (%)							
Research sample	29.6	397	24.1	396	5.5 **	22.9	0.021
Not in survey cohort	21.2	71	16.1	74	5.1	31.6	0.371
In survey cohort	30.9	321	25.7	322	5.2 *	20.0	0.057
Eligible sample	30.9	321	25.7	322	5.2 *	20.0	0.057
Fielded sample	28.9	270	23.6	275	5.3 *	22.6	0.059
Respondent sample	30.6	219	24.1	208	6.5 **	27.0	0.045
Number of months receiving food stamps							
Research sample	2.0	397	1.6	396	0.4 **	25.2	0.037
Not in survey cohort	1.2	71	1.2	74	0.0	-2.2	0.947
In survey cohort	2.1	321	1.7	322	0.5 **	27.3	0.040
Eligible sample	2.1	321	1.7	322	0.5 **	27.3	0.040
Fielded sample	1.9	270	1.4	275	0.5 **	33.8	0.029
Respondent sample	2.2	219	1.6	208	0.6 **	36.5	0.027

(continued)

Appendix Table B.5 (continued)

Outcome, Quarters 2-5	WASC Group Average	WASC Group N	Control Group Average	Control Group N	Difference (Impact)	Percentage Difference	P-Value
Amount of food stamps received ($)							
Research sample	631	397	491	396	139 *	28.4	0.062
Not in survey cohort	285	71	384	74	-98	-25.7	0.457
In survey cohort	690	321	506	322	184 **	36.4	0.034
Eligible sample	690	321	506	322	184 **	36.4	0.034
Fielded sample	619	270	422	275	197 **	46.6	0.019
Respondent sample	705	219	434	208	271 ***	62.6	0.007

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from administrative records for San Diego for sample members who were randomly assigned through March 2007.

NOTE: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Impacts vary across analysis samples for all outcomes. Among those in the research sample, the effects of the program differ when comparing the survey cohort with those enrolled in the nonsurvey cohort — that is, individuals who were randomly assigned from November through December of 2005 and from July through August of 2006.

Thus the survey data are not representative of the research sample at large in terms of impacts, but are fairly representative of 81.7 percent of the research sample.[2] In general, the nonsurvey cohort and the research sample look similar in terms of baseline characteristics, with the following exceptions: the nonsurvey cohort was less likely to be female, to have health care coverage for their children, and to have publicly funded health care coverage for their children (not shown). The research sample was also more likely to be single and childless than the non-survey cohort.

The difference in impacts is mostly a result of large positive effects on earnings for a subset of individuals in the nonsurvey cohort who were randomly assigned between November and December 2005. As shown in Appendix Table B.5, the program increases average total earnings by $1,355 for the nonsurvey cohort, but decreases average total earnings by $1,341 for the survey cohort. Why the nonsurvey cohort experiences large positive effects is unclear, but what seems to be occurring for the survey cohort is a reduction in earnings. Negative effects on earnings also occurred for the eligible and fielded samples.

Similar trends are seen across the other employment-related outcomes. WASC increases the percent ever employed in year 1 by 2.1% for the nonsurvey cohort but decreases this

[2] 81.7% is the proportion of individuals in the research sample who were not randomly assigned during November through December of 2005, and July through August 2006 (145/793 ≈ 0.817).

measure by 1.1% for the survey cohort. The program also reduces the average quarterly employment rate by a greater magnitude for the survey cohort at –4.4%, compared with the non-survey cohort at –0.1%. Differences in impacts between the survey and non-survey cohorts account for most of the difference between the full and respondent samples. In contrast, the impacts for the eligible and respondent samples are fairly similar, although they are somewhat more negative for the respondent sample.

The average percentage of individuals who ever received food stamps remains generally consistent across samples, but WASC program impacts are larger for the respondent sample (significant) than for the research sample (significant). This outcome might be a result of response bias because the increase occurs between the fielded and respondent samples.

On average, WASC has a larger effect on the average amount of food stamps received for the respondent sample than for the research sample; both effects are significant. This difference is due in part to the "cohort effect," and in part to a difference between the eligible and respondent samples.

These analyses indicate that impacts on employment and earnings for the respondent sample are generally similar to impacts for the survey cohort but quite different from those for the full sample. This difference should be kept in mind when interpreting results from the survey. Attempts to weight the survey did not change the results.[3]

[3]Outcomes for the respondent sample in San Diego were weighted using two different weighting procedures. First, a logistic regression was run on the fielded sample where the regressant, a dichotomous indicator for whether the individual was a respondent (1 = respondent; 0 = nonrespondent), was regressed on the covariates from the time of random assignment. For each member of the fielded sample, this generates an individual probability for being sampled, which is then divided into the response weight. The resulting quotient is each individual's weight. The second weighting procedure addressed a potential cohort effect (different from the one discussed earlier). Individuals who were randomly assigned prior to July 1, 2006, were considered members of the early cohort, whereas those who were randomly assigned on or after July 1, 2006, were considered members of the late cohort. Within each respective cohort, the weight for each individual is the proportion of individuals who were respondents in the research sample divided by the proportion of individuals who were respondents in the respondent sample.

Appendix C

Work Advancement and Support Center, Dayton: 12-Month Survey Response Analysis

As part of the Work Advancement and Support Center (WASC) demonstration, a select group of study participants in Dayton were interviewed about their contact with program staff or with any case manager, areas in which they received help, messages received relating to employment retention and/or advancement, participation in employment and/or education/training-related activities, receipt of work supports, their current or most recent job, their household composition, and their health. Interviews were conducted about 12 months after each individual entered the study. This analysis examines whether the cumulative outcomes of those interviews can be generalized to the members of the research sample who are covered by this report.

The following sections describe who was eligible to be interviewed for the 12-month survey, who was fielded, and who responded to the survey effort. The analysis further examines how respondents differ from nonrespondents, how respondents in the WASC group differ from those in the control group, and how key administrative records data outcomes differ across individuals in the research sample, survey-eligible sample, fielded sample, and respondent sample.

Key Findings

- The differences in selected characteristics between the average survey respondent and the average nonrespondent were not statistically significant.
- Similarly, the differences between the average respondent in the WASC group and the average respondent in the control group were not statistically significant. Comparison of unemployment insurance (UI)-covered earnings, employment, and food stamp outcomes between individuals in the research, survey-eligible, fielded, and respondent samples shows a fair amount of consistency across samples and between research groups. Survey outcomes are fairly representative of the research sample.

Sample Selection and Survey Response Rates

All individuals in the research sample who spoke English or Spanish and who were randomly assigned from January 2006 through March 2007 were eligible to participate in the 12-month survey. Based on these criteria, 1,093 of the 1,184 individuals in the research sample (or 92 percent) were eligible (see Appendix Box C.1).[1] Of those who were eligible, 616

[1]Eight individuals, who were initially identified as eligible and interviewed for the 12-month survey, were subsequently dropped from the impact study sample and therefore also from the survey-eligible sample. Most of these individuals were dropped from the impact study sample because the administrative records data showed that they were living in a household with another study participant (or participants) who had been randomly assigned to the opposite research group.

Appendix Box C.1

Definitions of Key Analysis Samples

- **Research sample (for this report):** Everyone who was randomly assigned from November 2005 through March 2007 (N = 1,184).
- **Eligible sample:** Individuals who met the criteria for inclusion in the study. The criteria for eligibility in Dayton were ability to speak English or Spanish and enrolled from January 2006 through March 2007 (N = 1,093).
- **Fielded sample:** Eligible individuals who were selected at random to be interviewed for the 12-month survey (N = 616).
- **Respondent sample:** Sample members in the fielded sample who completed the WASC 12-Month Survey (N = 502).
- **Nonrespondent sample:** Individuals in the fielded sample who were not interviewed because they were not located, refused to be interviewed, were located after the fielded period expired, or were unable to be interviewed for other reasons (N = 110).

individuals were selected to be included in the survey (herein identified as the *fielded sample*), split equally between the WASC group (N = 309) and the control group (N = 307). Individuals who completed the WASC 12-Month Survey are referred to as the respondent sample (N = 502). The group of individuals who did not complete the survey are referred to as the nonrespondent sample.

The goal of the survey effort was to interview 80 percent of those in the fielded sample. As shown in Appendix Table C.1, this goal was exceeded in Dayton with a survey response rate of 81.5 percent for WASC and control groups combined (N = 502), or 81.9 percent of the WASC group (N = 253) and 80.8 percent of the control group (N = 248). Of the 114 individuals who did not respond, 98 were not located before the fielding period ended, 14 refused to be interviewed, 3 asked not to be called, and 3 were never located.

Survey Comparisons

Respondents and Nonrespondents

On average, survey respondents' characteristics are expected to be similar to the characteristics of individuals in the fielded sample who did not respond. A dichotomous survey response indicator (1 = survey respondent; 0 = survey nonrespondent) was created in order to measure the difference between the two groups and regressed on a range of baseline characteristics, which are shown in Appendix Table C.2.

The Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

Appendix Table C.1

Response Rates to WASC 12-Month Survey

Dayton

Description	WASC Group	Control Group	Total
Eligible (N)	549	544	1,093
Fielded (N)	309	307	616
Responded (N)	253	248	502
Response rate (%)	81.9	80.8	81.5

These baseline characteristics account for only 4.8 percent of the variance in survey responses ($R^2 = 0.0479$) and the model is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.1628). Survey respondents and nonrespondents are therefore similar across key characteristics selected for this analysis.

Research Groups in the Respondent Sample: Baseline Characteristics

Survey-eligible individuals selected to be fielded shared similar characteristics across research groups. Thus, survey respondents are expected have similar characteristics across research groups as well. The difference in average characteristics between respondents in the WASC group and the control group were measured across a few key characteristics in a multivariate regression and across a wider set of characteristics in a bivariate analysis relying on chi-square and t-test statistics.

A WASC group dichotomous indicator (E = 1 = WASC group; E = 0 = control group) was regressed on several baseline characteristics. Appendix Table C.3 shows that these predictors account for only 4.2 percent of the variance between individuals in the WASC group and those in the control group ($R^2 = 0.0416$), and that the model is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.536). WASC and control groups are therefore similar across the key characteristics selected for this analysis.

Appendix Table C.4 shows a bivariate analysis of the difference, on a wider variety of baseline measures, in average characteristics between respondents in the WASC group and those in the control group. As shown in Appendix Table C.4, WASC group respondents were more likely to report receiving child care subsidies and more likely to report being aware of and claiming the Child Tax Credit (CTC).

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Appendix Table C.2

Estimated Regression Coefficients for the Probability of Being a Respondent on the WASC 12-Month Survey

Dayton

Variable	Fielded Sample Parameter Estimate		P-Value
WASC group	0.008		0.8075
Filed tax return during the past 12 months	0.051		0.2817
Currently enrolled in any education or training	0.033		0.3403
Became a dislocated worker during the previous two years	0.010		0.8158
Family income exceeds 130 percent of the federal poverty level	0.028		0.4705
Black, non-Hispanic	0.004		0.8986
Hispanic	0.015		0.9185
Age	0.003		0.1634
Female	0.135	***	0.0011
High school diploma/GED or above	0.000		0.9962
Age of youngest child 0-5	-0.001		0.9898
One child	0.036		0.4392
Two or more children	0.033		0.4675
Sample member's children have coverage	0.040		0.5806
Enrolled during quarter 2 of 2006	0.058		0.258
Enrolled during quarter 3 of 2006	0.043		0.4594
Enrolled during quarter 4 of 2006	0.029		0.608
Enrolled during quarter 1 of 2007	0.015		0.7724
UI-Covered earnings in year prior to random assignment	0.000		0.7543
Number of quarters employed in a UI-covered job during the 2 years prior to random assignment	0.001		0.9364
Received food stamps in year prior to random assignment indicator	-0.046		0.4558
Number of months receiving food stamps in year prior to random assignment	-0.003		0.6631
Ever received food stamps in month prior to random assignment	0.093	*	0.0812
R-square	0.0479		
F-statistic	1.29		
P-value of F-statistic	0.1628		
Sample size	616		

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from administrative records data from Dayton and from the WASC Baseline Information Survey.

NOTE: GED = General Educational Development. UI = unemployment insurance.
Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

Appendix Table C.3

Estimated Regression Coefficients for the Probability of Being a WASC Group Respondent on the WASC 12-Month Survey

Dayton

	Respondent Sample	
Variable	Parameter Estimate	P-Value
Filed tax return during the past 12 months	0.113	0.1195
Currently enrolled in any education or training	0.049	0.3085
Became a dislocated worker during the previous two years	0.018	0.77
Family income exceeds 130 percent of the federal poverty level	-0.101 *	0.0714
Black, non-Hispanic	-0.010	0.8366
Hispanic	0.194	0.3604
Age	0.004	0.1067
Female	0.034	0.5824
High school diploma/GED or above	0.075	0.3927
Age of youngest child 0-5	0.132 **	0.0419
One child	0.099	0.1456
Two or more children	0.024	0.7121
Sample member's children have coverage	-0.074	0.4659
Enrolled during quarter 2 of 2006	-0.073	0.3148
Enrolled during quarter 3 of 2006	-0.044	0.5982
Enrolled during quarter 4 of 2006	-0.008	0.9195
Enrolled during quarter 1 of 2007	0.001	0.9921
UI-Covered earnings in year prior to random assignment	0.000	0.9137
Number of quarters employed in a UI-covered job during the 2 years prior to random assignment	-0.003	0.7981
Received food stamps in year prior to random assignment indicator	-0.101	0.2597
Number of months receiving food stamps in year prior to random assignment	0.001	0.953
Ever received food stamps in month prior to random assignment	-0.004	0.9561
R-square	0.0416	
F-statistic	0.94	
P-value of F-statistic	0.536	
Sample size	502	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from administrative records data from Dayton and from the WASC Baseline Information Survey.

NOTE: GED = General Educational Development. UI = unemployment insurance.
Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

The Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

Appendix Table C.4

Selected Baseline Characteristics for Survey Respondents Randomly Assigned from January 2006 through March 31, 2007

Dayton

Characteristic	WASC Group	Control Group	Total	N
Demographic characteristics				
Gender (%)				
Female	82.2	79.8	81.0	501
Age in years (%)				
18 - 24	35.4	41.5	38.4	502
25 - 34	33.9	35.1	34.5	502
35 - 44	20.5	13.3	16.9	502
45 - 62	10.2	10.1	10.2	502
Average age (years)	30.1	29.4	29.7	502
Race/ethnicity (%)				
Hispanic	1.6	0.8	1.2 [ ]	500
White	30.3	30.5	30.4 [ ]	500
Black	61.8	65.4	63.6 [ ]	500
Asian	0.4	0.4	0.4 [ ]	500
Other	5.9	2.8	4.4 *	500
Citizenship (%)				
Born in U.S.	95.7	97.6	96.6 [ ]	502
Naturalized	2.0	0.8	1.4 [ ]	502
Non-citizen	2.4	1.6	2.0 [ ]	502
English proficiency (%)				
Speaks English very well	100.0	100.0	100.0	497
Family status (%)				
Marital status				
Single, never married	67.6	76.1	71.8 [ ]	500
Married and living with spouse	11.9	8.1	10.0 [ ]	500
Married, but living apart from spouse	6.7	3.6	5.2 [ ]	500
Legally separated, divorced, or widowed	13.8	12.1	13.0	500
Living with a partner	6.7	6.9	6.8	502
Number of children				
0	38.2	43.3	40.7	501
1	24.4	19.4	22.0	501
2 or more	37.4	37.2	37.3	501

(continued)

Appendix Table C.4 (continued)

Characteristic	WASC Group	Control Group	Total		N
Age of youngest child in years[a]					
0 - 2	27.7	34.3	30.8	**	295
3 - 5	34.8	19.3	27.5	**	295
6 - 12	23.9	32.9	28.1	**	295
13 - 18	13.5	13.6	13.6	**	295
Single and childless	35.2	41.1	38.1		501
Single-parent household	48.2	45.3	46.8		500
Two-parent household	13.4	11.0	12.2		499
Education status (%)					
Highest grade					
No high school diploma or GED certificate	6.7	9.0	7.8		497
GED certificate	6.3	9.0	7.6	[ ]	497
High school diploma	24.2	24.1	24.1	[ ]	497
Some college or advanced training courses	52.0	49.4	50.7	[ ]	497
Associate's degree	7.9	4.9	6.4	[ ]	497
4-year college degree or higher	2.8	3.7	3.2	[ ]	497
Currently enrolled in education or training program[a]	42.9	36.7	39.8		502
English as a Second Language (ESL)	0.8	0.4	0.6	[ ]	502
Adult Basic Education (ABE)	1.6	1.2	1.4	[ ]	502
High school/GED preparation course	1.2	2.8	2.0	[ ]	502
Vocational training	4.7	3.2	4.0		502
College course toward associate's/two-year degree	27.6	22.6	25.1		502
College course toward bachelor's/four-year degree	9.8	8.9	9.4		502
Other	0.8	2.4	1.6	[ ]	502
Current employment status					
Number of months in current job (%)					
Less than 1 year	49.0	52.8	50.9		501
Between 1 and 2 years	17.8	19.4	18.6		501
More than 2 years	33.2	27.8	30.5		501
Working full time (35 hours or more) (%)	36.8	42.3	39.5		501
Average hourly wage ($)	9.07	9.00	9.04		501
Less than $5.15 (%)	3.2	1.2	2.2		501
$5.15 - $6.99 (%)	15.8	17.3	16.6		501
$7.00 - $8.99 (%)	29.2	30.6	29.9		501
$9.00 - $10.99 (%)	28.9	29.0	28.9		501
$11.00 - $19.99 (%)	22.9	21.8	22.4		501

(continued)

Appendix Table C.4 (continued)

Characteristic	WASC Group	Control Group	Total		N
Average weekly earnings ($)	259	268	263		501
Fringe benefits from employer[b] (%)					
Time off with pay	45.8	49.4	47.6		500
Health plan offered	52.8	55.2	54.0		502
Dental plan offered	41.7	45.2	43.4		502
Retirement plan	37.4	38.3	37.8		502
Other	21.3	16.2	18.8		500
Enrolled in employer-provided health or medical insurance plan (%)	23.2	23.8	23.5		502
Circumstances that may affect job retention or job change (%)					
Has driver's license	83.1	83.9	83.5		502
Has access to a car to drive to work	78.7	78.6	78.7		502
Currently receiving help finding new or additional job	5.1	6.5	5.8		502
Physical or mental health problem that limits work	2.4	4.9	3.6		500
Became a dislocated worker during previous 2 years[b] (%)	17.3	17.7	17.5	[ ]	502
Current wages compared with wages at pre-layoff job[c] (%)					
A lot less or somewhat less	57.9	37.5	48.6		35
Income and work supports					
Average monthly family income ($)	1,248	1,281	1,264		501
Family income exceeds (%)					
130 percent of federal poverty level	29.5	34.3	31.9	[ ]	502
Currently receiving income or work support (%)					
Earnings from spouse or partner	7.5	6.9	7.2		501
Food stamps	28.1	31.2	29.6		500
Child support	16.5	15.7	16.1		502
Child care subsidy	19.3	13.3	16.3	*	502
Other types of assistance	2.0	1.6	1.8	[ ]	499
Received tax credits (%)					
Filed tax return during past 12 months	88.6	82.7	85.7	[ ]	502
Aware of Earned Income Tax Credit	75.1	71.8	73.5		501
Claiming Earned Income Tax Credit	52.6	46.2	49.4		500
Aware of Child Tax Credit	47.6	33.6	40.7	***	499
Claiming Child Tax Credit	33.5	21.2	27.4	***	493

(continued)

Appendix Table C.4 (continued)

Characteristic	WASC Group	Control Group	Total	N
Medical coverage (%)				
Sample member has coverage	68.5	69.8	69.1	502
Employer-provided or other private health plan	39.8	41.1	40.4	502
Publicly funded coverage	31.9	31.5	31.7	502
Sample member's children have coverage[a]	55.1	52.0	53.6	502
Publicly funded coverage	70.1	72.3	71.1	298
Housing status (%)				
Current living arrangement				
Owns home or apartment	16.9	8.1	12.6 [**]	501
Rents home or apartment	56.3	61.9	59.1 [**]	501
Lives with family/friends and pays part of the rent	9.8	14.6	12.2 [**]	501
Lives with family/friends and pays no rent	15.7	14.2	15.0 [**]	501
Lives in a group shelter	0.4	0.8	0.6 [**]	501
Other housing arrangements	0.8	0.4	0.6 [**]	501
Lives in public housing, receives Section 8 rental assistance, or pays reduced rent because of low-income	17.7	23.1	20.4	501
Sample size (total = 502)	254	248		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from WASC Baseline Information Form.

NOTES: This table includes impact sample members only. Sample sizes vary because of missing values. In order to assess differences in characteristics across research groups, chi-square tests were used for categorical variables and t-tests were used for continuous variables. Significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1%; ** = 5%; * = 10%. Sample members randomly assigned before January 12, 2006, were not asked to report dislocated worker status. Sample members randomly assigned before November 22, 2005, were not asked to report their monthly family income.

Square brackets indicate that the chi-square test may not be valid due to small sample sizes within the cross-tabulation distribution.

[a]Child-related measures were calculated for sample members with children.

[b]Detail can sum to more than 100 percent, because sample members can record more than one response.

[c]Current wages compared with wages at pre-layoff job is measured among dislocated workers.

Research, Eligible, Fielded, and Respondent Samples: Employment, Earnings, and Food Stamp Outcomes

Individuals are expected to have, on average, similar levels of employment, earnings, and food stamp receipt across the research, eligible, fielded, and respondent samples. Appendix Table C.5 shows regression-adjusted means and impacts on UI-covered employment and earnings and food stamp outcomes for each of the four analysis samples.

The Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration

Appendix Table C.5

Impacts on Financial Work Supports, Employment, and Earnings for Research, Survey-Eligible, Fielded, and Respondent Samples

Dayton

Outcome, Year 1	WASC Group Average	WASC Group N	Control Group Average	Control Group N	Difference (Impact)	Percentage Difference	P-Value
Ever employed (%)							
Research sample	96.0	595	94.9	589	1.1	1.1	0.342
Eligible sample	95.7	549	95.2	544	0.5	0.5	0.668
Fielded sample	94.8	309	94.5	307	0.2	0.2	0.897
Respondent sample	94.5	254	94.0	248	0.5	0.5	0.804
Average quarterly employment (%)							
Research sample	87.1	595	85.1	589	2.0	2.3	0.178
Eligible sample	86.7	549	85.4	544	1.3	1.6	0.388
Fielded sample	85.8	309	85.0	307	0.8	0.9	0.716
Respondent sample	85.3	254	85.5	248	-0.3	-0.3	0.910
Total earnings ($)							
Research sample	12,738	595	12,843	589	-105	-0.8	0.797
Eligible sample	12,830	549	13,008	544	-178	-1.4	0.675
Fielded sample	13,213	309	13,530	307	-317	-2.3	0.603
Respondent sample	13,250	254	13,535	248	-284	-2.1	0.663
Ever received food stamps (%)							
Research sample	59.6	595	53.7	589	5.9 ***	10.9	0.006
Eligible sample	57.7	549	52.2	544	5.5 **	10.5	0.014
Fielded sample	50.0	309	44.4	307	5.6 *	12.6	0.061
Respondent sample	51.1	254	45.7	248	5.4	11.8	0.107
Number of months receiving food stamps							
Research sample	4.8	595	4.1	589	0.7 ***	16.4	0.000
Eligible sample	4.6	549	4.0	544	0.7 ***	17.1	0.001
Fielded sample	3.9	309	3.4	307	0.4 *	12.9	0.082
Respondent sample	4.0	254	3.6	248	0.4	11.3	0.156
Amount of food stamps received ($)							
Research sample	1,412	595	1,282	589	130 *	10.1	0.073
Eligible sample	1,365	549	1,219	544	146 *	12.0	0.050
Fielded sample	1,116	309	1,044	307	72	6.9	0.449
Respondent sample	1,127	254	1,081	248	46	4.2	0.664

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from administrative records for Dayton sample members who were randomly assigned through March 2007.

NOTE: A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

As shown in Appendix Table C.5, WASC impacts remain generally consistent across analysis samples. Survey outcomes are thus fairly representative of the research sample.

The percentage of individuals ever employed at some point during year 1 and the average level of quarterly employment remain generally consistent across analysis samples. The impact of WASC on the percentage ever employed decreases from 1.1% for the research sample to 0.5% for the respondent sample. The impact of WASC on the average level of quarterly employment is positive across the research, eligible, and fielded samples, but becomes negative for the respondent sample. None of the impacts on employment-related outcomes is significant, however. WASC has a greater negative impact on average total earnings for the respondent sample at –$284 than for the research sample at –$105, though neither is statistically significant.

On average, impacts on food stamp receipt are slightly smaller for the respondent sample than for the research sample, but remain generally consistent across analysis samples. WASC impacts are positive across food stamp outcomes, but become statistically insignificant for the respondent sample on the percentage that ever received food stamps and on the number of months receiving food stamps, and for both the fielded and respondent samples on amount of food stamps received.

Overall, impacts for the survey sample are generally consistent with impacts for the research sample. However, impacts on food stamp receipt are somewhat smaller for the latter group. These differences should be kept in mind when interpreting the survey results.

Appendix D

How to Read an Impact Table

Most tables in this report use a similar format, illustrated below. The top panel in the table shows a series of participation outcomes for the Work Advancement and Support Center (WASC) group and the control group in Dayton. For example, the first row of the table shows that about 44 (44.2) percent of the WASC group members and about 19 (18.7) percent of the control group members received help with job retention/advancement. Because individuals were assigned randomly either to the WASC program or to the control group, the effects of the program can be estimated by the difference in outcomes between the two groups. The "Difference" column in the table shows the differences between the two research groups' participation rates — that is, the program's *impacts* on participation. For example, the impact on receipt of help with retention/advancement can be calculated by subtracting 18.7 percent from 44.2 percent, yielding an impact of 25.5 percentage points.

Differences marked with asterisks are "statistically significant," meaning that it is quite unlikely that the differences arose by chance. The number of asterisks indicates whether the impact is statistically significant at the 1 percent, 5 percent, or 10 percent level. (The lower the level, the less likely that the impact is a chance occurrence. One asterisk corresponds to the 10 percent level; two asterisks, the 5 percent level; and three asterisks, the 1 percent level.) For example, as shown below, the WASC program had a statistically significant impact of 24.2 percentage points at the 1 percent level on receipt of help with a career assessment, meaning that there was less than a 1 percent likelihood that the difference between the WASC and control group outcomes occurred by chance, and was very likely a true impact of the program. The p-value shows the exact level of significance. MDRC considers any estimated impact with a p-value less than 0.10 to be statistically significant.

Outcome (%)	WASC Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)		P-Value
Received help with retention/advancement	44.2	18.7	25.5	***	0.000
Career assessment	40.9	16.8	24.2	***	0.000
Dealing with problems on the job	9.3	6.2	3.0		0.220
Received help with job preparation	33.6	24.2	9.3	**	0.022
Enrolling in job readiness or training classes	18.9	15.0	3.9		0.255
Looking for a job while employed	14.9	11.9	3.0		0.335
Looking for a job while unemployed	13.1	13.4	-0.3		0.925
Finding clothes, tools, or supplies for work	14.7	8.8	5.9	**	0.040

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About MDRC

MDRC is a nonprofit, nonpartisan social policy research organization dedicated to learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people. Through its research and the active communication of its findings, MDRC seeks to enhance the effectiveness of social and education policies and programs.

Founded in 1974 and located in New York City and Oakland, California, MDRC is best known for mounting rigorous, large-scale, real-world tests of new and existing policies and programs. Its projects are a mix of demonstrations (field tests of promising new program approaches) and evaluations of ongoing government and community initiatives. MDRC's staff bring an unusual combination of research and organizational experience to their work, providing expertise on the latest in qualitative and quantitative methods and on program design, development, implementation, and management. MDRC seeks to learn not just whether a program is effective but also how and why the program's effects occur. In addition, it tries to place each project's findings in the broader context of related research — in order to build knowledge about what works across the social and education policy fields. MDRC's findings, lessons, and best practices are proactively shared with a broad audience in the policy and practitioner community as well as with the general public and the media.

Over the years, MDRC has brought its unique approach to an ever-growing range of policy areas and target populations. Once known primarily for evaluations of state welfare-to-work programs, today MDRC is also studying public school reforms, employment programs for ex-offenders and people with disabilities, and programs to help low-income students succeed in college. MDRC's projects are organized into five areas:

- Promoting Family Well-Being and Child Development
- Improving Public Education
- Promoting Successful Transitions to Adulthood
- Supporting Low-Wage Workers and Communities
- Overcoming Barriers to Employment

Working in almost every state, all of the nation's largest cities, and Canada and the United Kingdom, MDRC conducts its projects in partnership with national, state, and local governments, public school systems, community organizations, and numerous private philanthropies.